

"THAT AIN'T OLD-TIME": THE SHIFTING AMBASSADORSHIP OF APPALACHIAN
OLD-TIME MUSIC

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A Thesis

by

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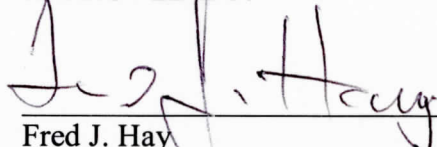
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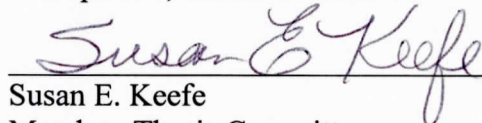
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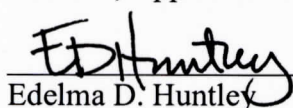
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ABSTRACT

"THAT AIN'T OLD-TIME": THE SHIFTING AMBASSADORSHIP OF APPALACHIAN OLD-TIME MUSIC. (May 2009)

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Appalachian old-time music, or acoustic folk music from the southern Appalachians before the mid-1920s, was first disseminated to a national audience during the nascent years of the recording industry. Now, depending on which old-time music festival one attends during the summer, the winning fiddle player could be from Galax, Virginia or New York City. Non-Appalachian musicians who come into old-time from other traditions (e.g. classical, punk, folk, jam bands) are winning first place ribbons, recording highly acclaimed albums, and in some cases, making music videos and touring the country playing a pastiche of old-time and quasi-traditional folk/pop. Some of the more established of these musicians make a full-time living as old-time musicians. They teach workshops, record instructional videos, play concerts, give private lessons, and an even smaller number have the opportunity to play this music abroad. Many of these non-native Appalachian musicians have permanently relocated to the mountains to be around the music, and are now considered to be experts in the nuances of the style. Several of these musicians now teach old-time music to local children here in Boone and throughout the mountains. In Mount Airy, NC, an area that was home to scores of the old-time musicians who were recorded during both the golden age of old-time and the revival years, the *de facto* hub of old-time music is now a farmhouse owned by two self-described “hippies” from Connecticut and New York.

Few scholars or players of the music seem particularly interested in broaching what I think are the most important issues regarding the music's relation to Appalachia: which group is now the tradition bearer of old-time Appalachian folk music – native Appalachians or outsiders, in what form and in what context is this tradition being passed on, and what does this suggest for future trends involving outsiders being responsible for the preservation and dissemination of other aspects of traditional Appalachian culture (i.e. crafts, dance, folktales)? This thesis is an examination of these issues through interviews I conducted and observations I made in Mount Airy, North Carolina and Boone, North Carolina.

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the cooperation of my interviewees and consultants in the old-time music community who invited me into their homes and gave up valuable jam time to talk to me and answer my questions. Several people in the old-time community expressed interest in my research and pointed me in the direction of valuable human and non-human resources. I will also thank my family for making my time at Appalachian State possible and my girlfriend, Robyn, for her sage advice, patience, and for giving me the digital recorder that I used to record my interviews. Travel expenses were made possible by the William C. Friday Research Fellowship in Appalachian Studies.

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Introduction

"I used to be very, very strict about not deviating from how I felt the old-timers played it. But, after playing this music for more than half my life and feeling like it was somebody else's music, I woke up one morning and realized that, 'Hey, this is mine – this is my personal expression.'"

-Revivalist old-time musician Bruce Molsky, 2004

"A lot of people said 'Aw, that ain't old-time music,' but if you really listen to it, they're still stickin' to the traditional music, they're just putting a little extra something in it"

-Traditional Surry County musician talking about the local response to a popular revivalist band, 2009

I have been playing old-time music for about six years. At the College of William and Mary, in tidewater Virginia, I took a course called "Music from the Southern Appalachians" and signed up for the accompanying ensemble course. In that ensemble, thirty or so well-intentioned liberal arts students (and three or four students from Appalachia who were raised in a musical tradition) attempted to play tunes that we learned from both recordings and tablature, sing songs about life in the rural South, and not make too many banjo jokes. Some students would dress the part – especially for our end of the year performance. This was neither encouraged nor discouraged by our professor, so students from prestigious pedigrees would play Appalachian dress up, complete with overalls, bandanas, and maybe even a piece of hay in their mouth. We felt we were being taught "the real thing" when musicians like Bruce Molsky and Mike Seeger came to our school to give workshops and concerts. When I saw Bruce Molsky perform, I had been into old-time for about four weeks. When he played

the fiddle and sang at the same time, I felt like I had been hit in the heart with a sledgehammer – in a good way. No music had ever done that to me, and since then I have been a consumer of and consumed by old-time music. After graduating college I moved to Arizona and played old-time with the small old-time community there as much as I could. After two years, my quest to immerse myself in this music had grown to a head, and there was no other choice but to move to western North Carolina to study this music firsthand.

When I moved to Boone, there was more old-time music than I imagined. It was like Eden compared to the desert. Upon first glance, I figured that most of the older players were from the mountains. I couldn't believe that I was getting to play music with the people who first produced it. But through casual conversation I found out, one by one, that only a minority of the people I was playing with had been born and raised near Boone, much less in North Carolina, or even the South, for that matter. I met people from New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Arizona, Texas, Ohio, and coastal South Carolina – all fabulous musicians. But where were all the locals?

Two musicians with whom I played often were from areas where old-time music *was* played by locals, and through talking with them I began to realize the dichotomy between native Appalachian musicians and transplants that I had not noticed before. As I began to view my activities in the old-time music community through this different lens, it became apparent that Boone represents what I believe is the new paradigm in Appalachian old-time music – that is, the music is played, taught, and disseminated to the public almost exclusively by non-natives. In contrast, Mount Airy is home to both an active native community, in addition to a long-standing non-native community. By studying the old-time communities in Boone and Mount Airy, I have attempted to shed light on the differences in the current state

of old-time music in those areas, the differences between traditional and revivalist old-time music, and the implications that the changes in old-time music have for Appalachian culture.

Folk Revival

My research is but a snapshot in a musical integration that is at least fifty years old. For many music historians and musicians, the folk revival in Appalachia began with the release of the Harry Smith *Anthology of American Folk Music* in 1952. Six years later, three young men from New York: Mike Seeger, John Cohen, and Tom Paley, formed the New Lost City Ramblers. They became, essentially, the touring act for the artists on the Harry Smith recordings, duplicating sounds and styles from a bygone era for young audiences all over the country. Four years before the Harry Smith collection was released, Pete Seeger (Mike's half-brother) had put out his seminal *How to Play the 5 String Banjo*.

By the start of the 1960s, the folk revival was turning more and more commercial (which alienated many fans), bluegrass music was being listened to and played by increasing numbers outside of the mountain South, and the stage was set for the resurrection of Appalachian folk music. Folk music producer Ralph Rinzler brought Deep Gap, NC musician Doc Watson to a national audience in the early 1960s, and other folklorist/musicians embarked on similar discover and document missions in Appalachia. The importance of the initial work done not only by the Lomaxes, but by folklorists like Mike Seeger and John Cohen, cannot be overstated. By discovering or rediscovering older Appalachian musicians who were active regional tradition bearers, they caused two things to happen: 1) these older musicians were venerated and given attention for their music that they never had before, and 2) they made it possible for a young generation, dissatisfied with folk

groups like the Weavers, to not only access recordings of this strange, indelible mountain music, but to see and learn from these old musicians in person.

Several volumes could be written about what has happened in Appalachia in regards to traditional music since the folk revival, but I will attempt to list some of the major events that have helped build the old-time revival of the present. Concurrent to what would become the old-time string band revival in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s was the back-to-the-land / hippie commune movement. This was an attempt to recreate an idealized version of agrarian nineteenth-century living, and it brought many thousands of bright-eyed, left leaning people out of the cities and into the woods. Many who made this choice also identified with the rural, ancient sounds of old-time music, and ended up making their permanent home in rural North Carolina or Virginia. Tommy Jarrell's house, in Toast, North Carolina, became a revolving door of aspiring fiddle players and partiers. At the same time that musicians, dancers, and dissidents from the North were pouring into the southern mountains, music from those mountains was making its way up north. Ralph Rinzler helped resurrect bluegrass music founder Bill Monroe's career and introduce him to a wider audience. Many Jewish people were playing bluegrass in New York City, and banjos could be heard daily in Greenwich Village. Building on the euphoric feelings of the Woodstock festival in 1969, traditional music festivals became all the rage in the 1970s. Many new festivals came about, but other long-standing ones such as the Old Fiddler's Convention in Galax, Virginia, were infiltrated by peaceful longhaired musicians, ne'er-do-wells like the Hell's Angels, and revelers looking for a good time. Probably the most extreme of these festivals was in Union Grove, North Carolina. The drug and alcohol fueled debauchery of the

thousands upon thousands of hippies and bikers was too much, and did not impress the locals, who up until that point viewed these newcomers as a sort of amusing spectacle.

However, many transplanted musicians and dancers were taking this musical tradition seriously, especially in North Carolina. Traditional dance groups like the Green Grass Cloggers were becoming popular, as were string bands like the Fuzzy Mountain String Band, the Hollow Rock String Band, and the Highwoods String Band. A community of old-time musicians and dancers was coming together out of a shared love for and fascination with Appalachian music. Some of these musicians sought out parent tradition musicians and attempted to specialize in a regional style, while others were having so much fun playing music with each other that a new, "festival" version of old-time was beginning to develop (Woolf, 1990). The organic, acoustic sound became mixed with a rock and roll aesthetic, and jam circles of bearded and tie-dyed twenty-somethings offered an escape from mainstream music. The rural lifestyle that many transplants adopted offered a reprieve from the increasing violence, pollution, and impersonal way of life in the cities. Traditional musicians like Tommy Jarrell were reinvigorated by this youthful energy, and many musicians who had stopped playing for decades after World War II were now picking up their instruments and making music again. Record labels like Rounder, County, Rebel, and Smithsonian Folkways recorded traditional music from old musicians who would likely have never played music again. It was a time of great cultural change and exchange in Appalachia, especially in the area around Galax, Virginia and Mt. Airy, North Carolina. Paul Brown (1995), who now works for National Public Radio, had perhaps the best characterization of the time:

Two streams of energy were meeting and augmenting each other: that of young enthusiasts from around the country, and that of the local Surry County musicians in

their prime who were continuing a distinct traditional sound. The combination helped boost interest nationally in old-time music through the 1970s, and began to increase attendance at area fiddlers conventions which had been somewhat stagnant. It gave local musicians such as the Camp Creek Boys and Tommy Jarrell additional self-respect and the impetus to play their music with even more intensity (p.20).

This mixing of cultures resulted in inevitable collaborations between transplant and native musicians, many of whom were glad to be playing music again regardless of who it was with. In the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, many recordings featured a token revivalist who had been brought into the band to fill a vacant spot. Paul Brown, for example, played banjo with native Surry County musician Benton Flippen. Another acclaimed Surry County musician, Fred Cockerham, was joined by revivalists in 1973. Fred was having trouble with his vision, but "Barry and Sharon Poss, originally from Canada and now living in North Carolina, were able to arrange an operation that corrected Fred's impaired vision in one eye. They now all play together as the New Ruba-Tonic Entertainers" (Alden, 1975, p.16). Another reason for the welcoming of young revivalists into bands mostly composed of older native musicians was the dearth of native musicians who were still active. Bluegrass, country music, and rock and roll had captured the attention of many young natives. This was part of the cause for the lull in old-time music between the end of World War II and the 1960s – hence the term "revival." In fact, according to musician/scholar Ray Alden (1975), "Almost all the young southern banjo players have taken up the bluegrass style. In so far as there are virtually no country clawhammer banjo players, several urban clawhammer banjoists such as Barry Poss, Blanton Owen, and the author, have played with Ernest East

and the Pine Ridge Boys. Steve Roberts, their current banjo player, is originally from Ohio" (p.16).

Not every native musician was willing to play with Northerners, however. Stories abound within the current old-time community of native musicians who were never recorded by the revivalists because they simply weren't as welcoming as Tommy Jarrell. Many traditional musicians who were active in the "golden era" of string band music (1880-1930) refused to be recorded because they feared that other people would get rich from their music. Revered Kentucky fiddler John Salyer made a series of home recordings, but instructed his son to never let them get in the hands of a record company. It was only through the efforts of revivalist fiddler Bruce Greene that Salyer's genius was ever brought to the public. Even Fred Cockerham, whose instrumental prowess at least matched Tommy's (if it didn't surpass it), is thought by many to have been snubbed by folklorists. Mt. Airy now holds a weekend in honor of Tommy Jarrell that features concerts, competitions, and dances, yet no such thing exists for Fred. Many traditional musicians are still upset about these issues, and according to one traditional musician whom I interviewed:

People from this area get hurt easily by people that come in, and a good majority of them have been from the North. You talk about folklorists, I'm not saying all folklorists are bad, but there have been some who have knowingly taken advantage of people and their families, and that's something you don't mess with in any culture is people's families or stuff that is theirs. Their property, you don't take somebody's property and sell it as your own... [Folklorists] can be excellent. They can be amazingly good. They can help people get out and be amazingly popular and bring back this kind of stuff into pop culture, into the modern mainstream media. At the

same time they can promote stereotypes, they can present false images, they can put together bands that never really existed for the sake of a more pure sound. It just goes on and on. I think that's why people are leery...

There was also the issue of regional identity and musical competition. Tommy Jarrell, North Carolina's most famous old-time fiddler, and by far the most welcoming and generous of the old-timers in Surry County, would sometimes tell the most talented of his young musical pilgrims, who traveled south to learn from Tommy in the 1970s, that "you Yankees beat us in the war and now you want to beat us in the music" (Alden, 1975, p.16). Tommy was mostly kidding, but in his statement lies an indication of an often unspoken battle over musical ownership, access to tradition, and a fight against acculturation.

Old-Time Music Today

Old-time music now is certainly different from what it was a century ago. Today there are numerous publications, websites, fiddler's organizations, festivals, instructional camps, concerts, recordings, and even movies that feature old-time music. According to some in the old-time community, we are in the midst of another revival of old-time music. There has been an enormous influx of young people into old-time from other genres, especially punk and rock musics. Also, there appears to be a renewed interest among young native Appalachians in learning the music of their ancestors. Courses at Appalachian State University and other colleges and local Junior Appalachian Musician programs are opening the door through which both natives and transplants can enter old-time music.

The movies *O, Brother Where Art Thou?* (2000) and *Cold Mountain* (2003) did much to popularize old-time and rural Southern music, and were both wildly successful. Both of

these soundtracks featured a good mix of native musicians and transplants. Old Crow Medicine Show, now arguably the most popular face of old-time music, was given their big break by Watauga County musician Doc Watson. Old Crow has had their music videos played on CMT and have released several successful albums. Also, there has been interaction with string bands and rock stars in the popular arena. All-female string band Uncle Earl's album was produced by Jon Paul Jones of Led Zeppelin fame. At the 2008 Grammy's, Robert Plant (also from Led Zeppelin) thanked traditional old-time musician Riley Baugus for his contributions to *Raising Sand*, Plant's album of mostly traditional American music with bluegrass musician Alison Kraus. For many old-time musicians, this was exciting news and validation of the worth of old-time.

I did not set out to document the presentation of old-time music on a national level, but this is a topic that should be thoroughly researched. Rather, I set out to look at the situation in two places with active old-time music scenes, and I also chose those places as the grounds for a comparison of what I believe are two different incarnations of old-time music. As the makeup of Appalachia changes, so does its culture. For the small number of Appalachians who still play old-time music, the music has the same significance within their community as it did a century or more ago: old-time music is inextricably linked to dance traditions, is passed down within families and small communities, provides a small source of income, and allows healthy competition to take place among local bands. For a number of revivalists now living in the mountains, old-time music is less of a community event and more for personal enjoyment. The music becomes divorced from its original context, yet it remains in the same geographic area. Why is this happening, what are the interactions

between these groups, and can a current assessment of the situation predict whether Appalachians will continue to be the bearers of their own tradition?

Methods

For this thesis, I conducted interviews with a total of 21 old-time musicians between February 2008 and March 2009, 10 of whom live in or close to Boone, NC, 11 of whom live around Mt. Airy, NC. Nine of the 21 musicians grew up in Appalachia, while the others came from Arizona, Illinois, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and coastal North and South Carolina. I also attended events in both locations: dances, parties, jams at houses, concerts, and the Tommy Jarrell Days festival in Mt. Airy (February 26 -28). In some situations I was a participant observer, that is, I played the music with my interviewees or danced to their music. Being a member of the old-time community is a double-edged sword: by virtue of being *in* a jam or a dance with a recorder hidden below my shirt, rather than standing *outside* of it with a notebook in one hand and a recording device in the other, I believe I colored the behavior of my respondents less than had I not been a participant. On the other hand, due to my involvement in the old-time community, the friendships I've formed with other musicians, and the fact that I knew the majority of my respondents before I began this research, it is likely that I did not get the type of candid answers that a stranger might have gotten, despite my promise of anonymity and confidentiality.

I first investigated young revivalists in Boone and attempted to document how they have formed a community based on old-time music, how that community functions, and those musicians' attitudes towards authenticity, identity, and preservationism. Two of these

musicians were traditional musicians from other areas and were in Boone attending college at Appalachian State University. Next, I made a film and developed an accompanying paper about Carter Miller,* a traditional banjo player and builder from Low Gap, North Carolina. If the Boone scene is one end of the old-time spectrum, this musician is the opposite end; he is a true tradition-bearer – kin to dozens of notable Surry County old-time musicians and possessing an encyclopedic knowledge of their playing styles and repertoire. This musician is a product of the culture that has sustained traditional old-time music in his area, and has made it his life's mission to preserve those traditions. Finally, I made multiple visits to other Boone area musicians, as well as musicians from Mt. Airy and the surrounding areas, in order to observe musical events and conduct interviews with both transplants and natives.

Sample Selection

All of my first batch of Boone musicians shared the following characteristics: direct involvement in the Boone area old-time music scene and the informal social group to which they belong, primary self-identification as an old-time musician (i.e. old-time is the style most commonly played, makes up the majority of the interviewee's musical repertoire, and is the style of music most listened to or patronized), interaction with other local old-time musicians in both musical and non-musical contexts, a recent (within the past ten years) relocation to the Boone area, and an age between late teens and early thirties.

For the second set of interviews in Mt. Airy and Boone, I attempted to achieve an even balance of traditional and revivalist musicians. There was no age requirement for this group, therefore the ages ranged from early twenties to late seventies. These interviewees also were directly involved in their respective old-time communities, self-identified as an

old-time musician, and interacted with other old-time musicians in both musical and non-musical contexts.

Interview Methods

For the first set of interviews in Boone, all interviewees were asked the same set of questions. For the second set of interviews, I also used a common interview guide, but I also asked more specific questions to musicians whom I had gathered information on prior to our interview. The common interview guides are included in appendices A and B. The semi-structured interviews took place in a variety of locations, each with its own positive and negative characteristics. Some were conducted at the interviewees' homes, some took place at a restaurant or a bar, others took place at parties or jams, and still others took place backstage at a concert. Obviously, planned one-on-one interviews with a specific time and location are easier to conduct than interviews in which the informant has made only a vague affirmation of their plan to be present at an event or party. Tracking down these interviewees and sequestering them from their friends and fellow musicians at an old-time music party often proved difficult, but it turned out to be an efficient way of collecting data, since it saved me considerable travel time. On one occasion a friend of the interviewee came into the room and proceeded to ask the remaining questions on my interview guide. Although I was at first taken aback, this did not prove to be problematic. In fact, this person asked his own questions in the same vein as mine, which elicited useful responses from my interviewee. Most interviews lasted between 40 and 60 minutes, with some simultaneous interviews (with couples or families) lasting well over two hours.

In each interview, I recorded our conversations on an Olympus digital recorder and used a notepad as a backup. Once transferred to my computer, I used free software (NEH Express Scribe) to assist in transcription into Microsoft Word. I visited some of my interviewees multiple times as new questions came up, and also consulted them either over the phone or in person to clarify facts or omissions in their responses. In addition to these interviewees, I also consulted music teachers, dance callers, and other researchers about information specific to old-time music in Mt. Airy.

Research Areas

Boone. Boone is an uncommon Appalachian town in many ways. A huge university and a progressive downtown caters to both tourists and college kids interested in beads, records, energy crystals, and vegetarian food. On the other side of town is a Wal-Mart, a Lowe's, and several fast food restaurants. Boone seems to represent a transitional Appalachia where the influx of transplants with different cultural values has almost created two Boones. The old-time music that surrounds Boone includes the rich Beech Mountain tradition of banjo, dulcimer, and ballad singing, and the Watson family to the east in Deep Gap. However, the regional tradition in Boone is not as strong as the one that exists now in the triangle between Mt. Airy, Galax, VA and Sparta, NC. Part of this is the kind of old-time music that was recorded in Mt. Airy – the "Round Peak" sound lent itself to jamming and dancing and having fun, while the lack of a strong fiddle tradition around Boone was not conducive to string band music. As for funded support of old-time music, the Watauga Arts Council hosts a series of traditional music concerts in the summer, runs a JAM program, and hosts a weekly old-time jam. Bluegrass is not played at the Jones House Community Center,

where the jam takes place, but there is a weekly bluegrass jam/open mic night at the La Quinta Inn. For the purposes of this research, "Boone" musicians may not necessarily mean those musicians whose domicile is in the town of Boone; however, the old-time scene in Boone tends to draw musicians from surrounding towns and counties. Two of my Boone area interviewees live in the Trap Hill community north of Boone, but make weekly trips to Boone for jams and other musical events.

Mt. Airy. Old-time music in Mt. Airy is strong and an integral part of the culture for the small section of the population who still play and dance to the music. Traditional music has been played in the area as long as anywhere in Appalachia, many people consider it to be the hub of old-time music due to the quality of the music and the large number of musicians from the area who have been recorded, and there is still a strong dance tradition that is intimately linked to the music. WPAQ, an AM radio station founded in 1948, plays all sorts of old-time, bluegrass, and gospel music, and hosts a live old-time and bluegrass jam and radio show every Saturday at the downtown cinema. Every summer, Mt. Airy hosts the Bluegrass and Old-Time Fiddler's Convention, and they also host the annual Tommy Jarrell Festival. According to a Surry County transplant, Surry County

was isolated enough to keep it from getting infused with modern music and so forth, but enough people were here doing millwork and furniture work and all that kinda thing that it was enough dynamic to keep the music alive. And they have continuously had square dances and these high schools and Ruritan clubs for a hundred and fifty years. They've had 'em every Friday night or Saturday night forever and they're still going on, and so the kids – they carry their kids when they go and

they do it, so it's truly a tradition, and I don't think there's anywhere else in the U.S.

that maintained that at that level, as far as this area goes.

It is important to realize that very few of my Mt. Airy informants live in Mt. Airy proper.

Some are from Low Gap, some are from Pine Ridge, some are from just over the Virginia

border, and some live east and southeast of downtown – all areas that are much less

developed than the town itself, and therefore possess different varieties of the same, inter-

connected culture.

Anonymity and Pseudonyms

Due to the contentious nature of some of the questions, especially those regarding the interactions between traditionalists and revivalists, I have given some of my interviewees pseudonyms. On the first occasion that a pseudonym is used, the name will be followed by an asterisk.

Revivals, Culture Clashes, and Round Peak Music: A Review of the Literature

As this thesis examines several issues regarding old-time music and culture, I drew upon literature from several disciplines. Because I was primarily concerned with establishing the presence of a revivalist old-time community in Boone for the chapter on that topic, I consulted works regarding the motivation for and function of revivalist communities. Other work has been done regarding native/non-native music cultures and the interactions between those two groups. This applied more to my study of Mt. Airy musicians, but is also relevant to my first Boone informants. I also referenced studies of revivalist old-time music and how this differs from the old-time music played by traditionalists. The specific style of old-time music played by my Mt. Airy informants is known as "Round Peak" style, and I have included a brief discussion of its history and characteristics. Finally, I will discuss the effect of outsiders on Appalachian music, beginning with the settlement schools of the early twentieth century.

Motivations for Revivals

Scholars generally agree that the first revival of old-time music – the traditional, acoustic, fiddle-based music played in homes and at community events in the southern Appalachians since the 18th century – occurred with the boom of the recording industry in the 1920s. The second revival, in the 1970s, grew out of both the folk revival of the 1950s and 1960s and the ethos of the Woodstock-era counterculture. A third revival, much less studied,

occurred sometime in the 1990s. Perhaps, in a few years, scholars will argue that a fourth revival occurred in this first decade of the 21st century, prompted by groups such as Old Crow Medicine Show and Uncle Earl. Despite the differences in these revivals, some generalizations can be applied to the revivalists regardless of temporal or geographic location: 1) the music represents a connection to the past or an idealized, rural lifestyle, 2) revivals often occur as a result of cultural alienation or turbulence within greater society, and 3) revivalists, often disillusioned with contemporary society, seek to create a culture and community based around the preservation and reenactment of a no longer popular music tradition. The following works outline some of these generalizations, and attempt to provide context for the revival ethos specific to the works' respective time periods.

Forging a New Culture / Revival Theory

Scholars from several different disciplines have collectively developed what is known as "revival theory," or an attempt to explain the motivating factors and operational rubric for music revivals. Several of the most prominent authors on the subject are featured in a collection of essays edited by Neil V. Rosenberg. Rosenberg's *Transforming Tradition* (1993) examines several of the major issues which are the focus of my project, including class, culture, authenticity, musical transformation, preservationism, and revival theory.

Rosenberg's introduction to the essays provides invaluable insights into the motivating factors for revivalism, such as an escape from the alienating forces of modernity and a search for cultural roots. The essays are grouped into three parts: the *great boom* of revivals in the 1950s and 60s, the *new aesthetic*, or the creation of a separate music culture that is conscious of some sort of social message, and finally *named-system revivals* which

build upon already active music cultures. Even before the essays start, however, the quintessential champion of American folk music, Alan Jabbour, makes the following statement: "we [revivalists] sought out – and created – a music to express simultaneously our quest for cultural roots, our admiration of democratic ideas and values, our solidarity with the culturally neglected, and our compulsion to forge our own culture for ourselves" (p. xiii).

Jabbour mentions the word "culture" three times in the above statement, and it becomes apparent that the formulation of this new culture trumps the means by which it is formed (i.e. shared love of a music tradition). Urbanization, mass communication, and improved transportation infrastructure had left many with feelings of separation from local community and culture, although they were technically more connected to people than ever before.

Music revivals are not limited to America, as Bert Feintuch proves in his essay on the Northumbrian smallpipe revival in Great Britain. In this essay, Feintuch makes universal points common to all folk music revivals. First, he asserts that there is a subtle irony in the inevitable transformation that occurs when revivalists recast the music and culture to fit their idealized, outsider's perspective. When Feintuch was involved in the old-time music revival of the 1970s, he noticed that many musicians "combined a romanticized view of rural life with an accrual of information from influential, although not necessarily authoritative, sources" (p.186). Feintuch goes on to mention the definitive recordings of old-time revival groups that codified the repertoire for later revivalists, and in doing so, essentially subverted the natural evolution of the music by eschewing the paths that it had taken before the influence or interference of revivalists. Another ethnomusicologist, Amy Wooley, argues that old-time communities maintain themselves through "ritual enactment of the sacred texts (musical repertoire) and resistance to commodification and therefore corruption of the sacred

texts" (2003, p.x). Stated another way, these old-time communities maintain their identity by performing certain tunes and songs in a particular way (honest to the original source) and are staunch advocates of not letting the music be changed due to popular tastes or aspirations of commercial success (although I will argue that these revivalists have, ironically, changed not only the music but the function of that music). Wooley synthesized the current revival theories with her participatory research of old-time communities, and as this is a comprehensive study of the transformation of revival groups into actual communities, and posits the argument that the existence of these communities is based on the same ideals as previous revivals (e.g. the search for culture, resistance to modernism, romanticized views of history), it is an invaluable source for anyone researching the modern old-time music revival. Adding a modern twist to the theory of a rejection of mass-media, Wooley argues that it was actually mass-media technologies that have allowed old-time communities to form and proliferate, and makes the case that according to ethnomusicologist Mark Slobin's classification system of what he calls "micro-musics," old-time music communities are considered *diasporic musical affinity group communities* because the original community of musicians became dispersed due to modernity, and was later reformed by both Appalachian natives and outsiders out of a shared love of the music. The case of old-time music is especially interesting because usually diasporas involve geographic relocation. Although there were many musicians who left the Appalachian region when the economy in the area began to fail, the majority of the musicians who remained stopped playing the music together. Their musical communities faded and were later revived by outsiders who had fallen in love with the old-time music they had heard on recordings.

During her research, Wooley developed the idea of the old-time community as a model for a new type of community structure which would stand as an affront to a society at once brought together and driven further apart than ever before by the forces of modernity. In her study of the modern old-time music community, Wooley found that it is both "progressive and regressive, liberal and conservative, reactionary and nostalgic, a response to as well as a product of postmodern mass-mediation, and has no real geographic, ethnic, religious or kinship cohesiveness, yet is as tightly-knit a community as any that is based upon. . . more traditional systems" (p. 31). This paradox makes sense when one considers the generalized characteristics of revivalists: most lean to the progressive political left but are drawn to an idealized past that they don't want changed in the wake of progress. The musicians are disillusioned with the modern recording industry, but would not have developed an interest in the music were it not for the recording industry. Few of the revivalist musicians are related to one another, are from the same towns as other revivalists, or even have the same ethnic makeup – yet have formed a close community based on unorthodox community-building factors. Also, Wooley outlines a rubric for local old-time communities (such as the ones in Boone and Los Angeles, who have no affiliation with or knowledge of one another) which includes "festivals, regular jam sessions, dances, and parties called potlucks" (p. 210). I have attended all of these forms of old-time community expression in Boone and have found overwhelming similarities to Wooley's experiences – so many, in fact, that it is as if there was a secret manual on how to run an old-time community that had made its way from Los Angeles to the mountains of North Carolina, or possibly vice-versa. These similarities are strong evidence for the existence of parallel communities of old-time

musicians nationwide, and they provide support for Wooley's idea of a new model for communities in the 21st century.

Music as Escape from Modernity / Return to the Past

In addition to models of community building, folk music revival scholars agree that a main factor for revivals is dissatisfaction with modernity and the idea that recreating earlier modes of living will provide a viable alternative to modern society. Richard Blaustein's essay, "Rethinking Folk Revivalism: Grass-roots Preservationism and Folk Romanticism," examines the rise of old-time fiddling revivals following World War II, and offers compelling reasons for the revival that, I believe, still hold true in the modern era. According to Blaustein (1993), old-time music organizations "fulfill enduring expressive needs and desires that mainstream popular entertainment and mass media cannot satisfy," and provide traditionalists with "enclaves of cultural stability in nontraditional environments" (p. 260). Central to these ideas is a need for close human interaction rather than the removed, impersonal experience of watching television or communicating through electronic mediums. Current revivalists view pop culture as frenzied and vapid, and the most popular television programs ("reality" shows) are based around a winner-take-all, intensely competitive ethos that goes against the communal desires of revivalists. Blaustein also examines the culture of old-time fiddling festivals as a means of recreating the more intimate culture that the revivalists believe existed in the old rural communities before modernization. Viewed in this light, folk revivals are a means of defense against rapid social change facilitated by mass-media and the loss of local community due to the increasing reach of globalism. The participants described in the second chapter of this thesis are, for one reason or another,

living in Boone, North Carolina, a microcosm of this idea of constructed rural romanticism (arguably the most "modern" city over 3,000 ft in the southern Appalachians, yet within spitting distance from "authentic" mountain culture), and therefore are already exemplars of a modern reaction to the loss of cultural identity.

The remainder of Blaustein's essay is a tour-de-force review of the extant literature on revival theory and the construction of identity, including the following quotation from folklorist R. Raymond Allen: "this romanticizing of rural living through old-time music suggests that what is actually being revived is not only a genre of folk music but cultural elements of a bygone era that symbolize a better way of life" (p. 270). Although the appeal of the music itself cannot be denied, I am confident that Allen's idea of finding a better way of life through old-time music is the main impetus for my Boone participants' involvement with old-time music.

Revivalists realize that they cannot simply transport themselves to an earlier time, and therefore must reconcile the community values from the past that they seek to embody with the modern society in which they live. Ethnomusicologist Tamara E. Livingston (1999) argued that the two main purposes for revivals are "to serve as cultural opposition and as alternative to mainstream culture, and to improve existing culture through the values based on historical value and authenticity expressed by the revivalists" (p. 68). Essentially, it is the goal of revivalists to change the paradigm of modern culture by expanding the influence and accessibility of their revival communities, even if only on a small scale. Livingston also lists several ingredients which are key to making revivals work, including informants (old musicians or recordings) and an ideology (rural romanticism).

Identity / Authenticity

Because revivalists come from geographic or temporal areas outside of the tradition they seek to revive, and are often of a different social class than the members of the parent tradition communities, issues of identity and authenticity often arise. The issue of authenticity is frequently brought up when trying to categorize folk artists, but according to one of my younger traditional informants: "There is no such thing as authentic. There are no musicians out there who have not been influenced by pop radio or not heard country-western radio, and if they go out in the woods and find some family like that, they're going to be really messed up people – really sheltered from society to be a pure old-time musician and there's nobody like that anymore." American Studies professor Robert Cantwell's *Ethnomimesis: Folklife and the Representation of Culture* (1993), provides an extensive academic study on revival theory and the search for identity. Cantwell devotes several pages to defining his neologism ("ethnomimesis") as more complex than simply the parsed-out meaning of the term (the imitation of cultural groups), and argues that ethnomimesis originates in "the basic human capacity and need for close community" and is catalyzed by "noetic vacuums or culturally vacant spaces of complex societies" (p. 7). By imitating other cultures, revivalists hope to marry the sought-after community values of a foreign community with the revivalists' existing communities. Cantwell is also concerned with class as it relates to the transformation of culture, arguing that what revivalists seek is not necessarily the re-creation of historical truth, but rather the creation of a pseudo-historical ideal. He paints the picture of a young folk musician "with ever deeper seriousness styling himself or herself as a marginal or alienated social type" who instead of understanding the "extraordinarily unsophisticated, underprivileged, and often primitive culture-bearers" as

being just that, instead interpret the culture bearer to be full of "beauty, ideality, and desire" (p. 235). Also the first author I've encountered to address the wardrobe of revivalists as being carefully planned in accordance with the ethos of the revival, Cantwell asks "for what, as an object of social aspiration, can be more accessible, or as a symbol of achieved status more thoroughly egalitarian, than a pair of dusty old boots, a pair of worn jeans, a mass of tousled, home-shorn hair, and a few guitar chords?" (p.237).

Echoing almost every author I've read on the issue of what revivalists are after, Cantwell closes his work with the following statement: "In the great consuming feast of the twentieth century, it is hardly surprising that we should feel our spirits squandered and our identities fragmented or false," and that the great hope of all revivalists is the "resurrection of our human community" (p. 300). Cantwell likens rampant consumerism to the death of the human spirit and the crushing of identity. A rejection of this way of life is inextricably linked with the revivalist ethos: you are more than what you own. It is no surprise that the majority of revivalists come from at least middle-class backgrounds and have probably fallen victim to the pull of consumer society. Cantwell is admitting that it takes participation in the capitalist system in order to develop a strong rejection for it. While members of communities that are not entrenched in a consumer-based society would be unlikely to have any reason for seeking a more rewarding community lifestyle elsewhere, members of a late 20th century American society most certainly would. If the counterculture revolution of the sixties can be seen as a rejection of the picket-fence, two and a half kids, cookie-cutter suburban culture of post-World War II American society, then these new revival groups are a testament to the triumph of consumerism in the modern age. For modern revivalists, it is their cultural duty to

combat the alienating forces of consumerism by developing communities based around something more meaningful.

Tamara Livingston also writes that the search for personal authenticity vis-à-vis historiography is a key motivating factor for revivalists; however, Livingston traces this idea all the way back to the rise of the nation-state and enlightenment ideals (in the form of sentimental nationalism). By recreating and having a working knowledge of the past, revivalists are somehow more "American," and therefore more "authentic" and at ease with living in the storm of capitalist homogenization raging all around them in the new, less "authentic" America of today. If this is the case, the argument could be made that revivals such as that of old-time music are inextricably linked to modernity or any other force that threatens local culture with homogenization. For the majority of my participants, this music culture was (in a sense) lost before they were even born, and although it is likely that none of their direct ancestors were ever involved in local, pre-industrial, rural old-time music traditions, old-time music represents an idealized cultural past and does not require direct genetic affiliation for participation.

While the above authors have outlined general motivating factors for revivals (dissatisfaction with the alienating and impersonal forces of modern society and a compulsion to recreate idealized close communities of the past), and have linked them to the various social movements of the 20th century, the question remains as to what drives the young revivalists in the early stages of the 21st century. Do they have a sense of the revivalists before them? Are they after the same things? Should one automatically assume that there are extra-musical factors for their affiliation with old-time music? Are these new communities of young revivalists the logical evolution of the previous groups, and do they

have the capacity and desire to carry the community-building ideas of their predecessors to their logical conclusion? Have they already done so? While much more research would need to be done, it is my hope that the young old-time revivalists in the Boone area will shed some light into the current state of folk revivalism and utopian community building in the post-modern era.

Southern vs. Northern / Insider vs. Outsider / Clashes and Compromises

Andrew Woolf (1990), in his examination of revivalist old-time music, dismissed the study of revivalism vs. traditionalism as such: "Such questions can be argued endlessly. They generate conflict. Emotions are quickly aroused, sides taken, positions stated, and the great debate begins...The argument is engrossing and divisive, yet somehow trivial...Why argue when we should be playing old-time music?" (p.385). Despite encouraging musicians to keep their heads in the sand in regards to what I believe is a highly relevant topic, Woolf appears to disparage the musical work of many revivalists. Earlier on that same page he wrote that "only an individual with a folk identity can play folk music authentically, and since revivalists can never really achieve a folk identity, they can never play traditional folk music authentically." To his credit, Woolf does address the issue in a general sense, citing articles and dialogue from the comments section of the *Old-Time Herald*, though without conducting any firsthand research. Woolf argues that the relationship between traditional and revivalist players has become more and more cordial since the hippie presence has waned. He also acknowledges that some traditionalists do not make themselves open to the prying ears of revivalists interested in learning the music from the source: "Perhaps other traditionalist players dislike or look down upon revivalists, think them silly, not able to play the music, or

interlopers, thieves of heritage. Perhaps friendly traditionalists are hiding their feelings of distrust or scorn under a veneer of cordiality" (p.387). Woolf came across as afraid to broach this topic and unsure of the rewards to be gained by doing so. But his observation that revivalists "have come to dominate the Southern fiddle conventions, by numbers and by style" (p. 391) is, I believe, worthy of investigation by those interested in what is happening to Appalachian culture.

Perhaps the study most relevant to mine was Kara Rogers Thomas's exploration of regional identity and old-time music in and around Asheville, North Carolina. Thomas (2004) found that "Appalachian regional music is both constructed and affirmed by the interplay between outsiders' and insiders' conceptualizations of regional identity" (p.vii). In order to classify these musicians, Thomas developed a *traditionalist / revivalist* system that I also made use of for my informants. Thomas discovered four physical centers for old-time music in Asheville, which fit neatly along a continuum ranging from eclectic music played by traditionalists/natives outside of town to strict old-time played by mostly revivalists at a pub downtown. This is similar to the physical distribution of different music groups in Boone, but unlike the situation in Mt. Airy. Thomas discovered traditional musicians who had experienced firsthand behavior they considered to be elitist and discouraging toward musicians from the area. Thomas found a native of Madison County who made the grievous error of not knowing "jam etiquette" when attending an old-time music party hosted by revivalists (p.219). Another traditional musician described the revivalist scene as "territorial" (p.220). Currently, "traditional" acoustic music played non-professionally by community members around Asheville ranges from old-time to more modern country. The native musicians' tastes have progressed naturally over time, and reflect the changing popularity of

various styles of music in the mountain South. In contrast to this "natural, organic community," Thomas found that "the old-time jam can be perceived as an artificial community." While this is not discussed in detail in later chapters, it was my observation that the music the revivalists I interviewed were interested in (e.g. rock, pop, blues, or metal), aside from old-time, were different than the other musics that the traditional musicians in this study listened to (e.g. old country, bluegrass, gospel, or rockabilly).

However, the most interesting of Thomas's findings is an analogue to Carter Miller,* who is the subject of a later chapter. Roger Howell, like Carter, is a *tradition-inspired, non-continuous traditionalist* (more on this in the next chapter) who is as full of reverence for old traditional players as he is of vitriol for some local revivalists. Howell feels that "revivalists overlook the fact that a vibrant living tradition continues to exist and that tradition is constantly evolving." Howell's "biggest complaint is that instead of absorbing local styles, many of the musicians who moved to the area because of their attraction to the area's historic connections to traditional music have sought to impose their own techniques on the tradition" (p.253). This is identical to the attitude of Surry County musician Carter Miller, who has recorded and competed with revivalists dedicated to learning a local style, but who has strong negative opinions about local revivalists who do things their own way. In my discussion with Miller about revivalist musicians, he echoed, almost verbatim, the sentiments of Howell, whose advice to revivalists was: "Don't come in here and tell a native how to play his own music... Don't tell me where it came from when I grew up with the people you're writing about. Cause I grew up with them ..." (p.254).

The work that first inspired me to pursue this research is a collection of interviews and musings about the old-time revival entitled *How the Hippies Ruin't Hillbilly Music*.

Written by a hippie in 2007 in the vein of Hunter S. Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, the book is part fact and part creative license. Despite its seemingly doubly pejorative title, the tone of the book is mixed. On the one hand, the author and the interviewees seem at times genuinely self-conscious about the effect the great hippie influx had on traditional old-time music. On the other hand, there are some self-righteous affirmations of the positive elements of the hippie influx. Egregious drug use is given as much attention as the music itself, and some of the most self-deprecating (or self-aggrandizing?) depictions of hippie behavior at fiddler's conventions come with Mr. Wishnevsky's description of the Union Grove festival. Events such as an old mountain native drinking from a whiskey jug spiked with LSD and walking over fifty miles back home, a naked group clogging in a mud pit, and some festival-goers creating a communal drug concoction of "wine, moonshine, MDA, acid, [and] crystal meth" (Wishnevsky, 2007, p. 37), certainly illustrate the culture clashes that were taking place in the early days of the revival. According to Wishnevsky (2007), the Union Grove festival was host to "a hundred thousand crazed hippies pretending to be rednecks and about that many crazed rednecks trying to learn to be hippies" (p.37). Wishnevsky's choice of pejorative terms ("rednecks" and "hippies" instead of "conservative rural Southerners" and "young non-Appalachian members of the counterculture") is indicative of the bond that exists between the two groups: whatever they are, they are *not* part of mainstream American culture. Several of my interviewees were interviewed in Wishnevsky's book, and I was often able to build specific questions based on the information they provided the author.

Sacred Harp singing,¹ another "Southern" musical tradition that has attracted the interest of thousands of Northerners, shares many parallels with old-time music. Both musics have enjoyed recent popular interest thanks to Hollywood and are undergoing changes due to the influence of outsiders. Ethnomusicologist Kiri Miller, in her 2008 study of Sacred Harp singing, discovered fascinating and ironic interactions between "authentic" Southern singers and what Miller calls "diaspora" – referred to in my paper as "revivalist"– singers. Diaspora singers with Northern accents would not only sing the lyrics with an adopted Southern accent, but would sometimes take this code switching so far that they would call the song numbers (spoken voice) with a Southern accent. This travels in both directions, however. Miller found that "While Southerners often alter their own accents and mannerisms in order to 'pass,' they may also experience an obligation to perpetuate beliefs or practices bound up with essentialized Southernness. In certain contexts they choose to perform their difference rather than obscuring it" (p.169). Although my study chiefly concerns instrumental music, "performing their difference" still applies to both tunes and instrumental style. Traditional players might enjoy a so-called "hippie tune," but to play that tune at a traditional square dance in some areas of the mountain South would be akin to Bob Dylan plugging in at the Newport Folk Festival.²

When these cultural intersections between Southern and Northern, conservative and liberal, working and professional class, and hetero and homosexual take place at old-time music events, sometimes it is a union of disparate lifestyles so beautiful and uncommon in American society that it could be likened to the feeling of indiscriminate togetherness that

¹ Currently the most popular shape-note hymnal

² When folk musician Bob Dylan performed on electric guitar at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival, many of his fans felt they had been betrayed because of the symbolism inherent in embracing non-folk elements (e.g. electric guitars).

swept the country after the 9/11 events – although on a much smaller scale. While no revivalists would be chastised for interacting with traditional musicians, some traditional Sacred Harp singers have been "criticized by family or fellow singers and rejected by church brethren for singing with the known liberals, gays, and unbelievers ..." (p.170). At a western Massachusetts Sacred Harp convention that Miller attended, the leader made remarks that some Southern singers felt had disparaged the religious nature of the singing material. One such singer suggested that the leader had been "pandering [to] hippies who're scared to sing about Jesus" (p.179). Miller also noted throughout her work that diaspora singers, especially those with a classical music background, were likely to call more complicated tunes more frequently than traditional singers, perhaps in an effort to show off their mastery of their adopted musical tradition. The parallel in old-time music, discussed in chapter four, occurs when revivalists, in a jam situation with traditional musicians, play tunes that are musically irregular or uncommon to the traditionalists' home region.

While the few old-time songs with controversial lyrics have been censored (e.g. Tommy Jarrell was convinced to find another word for "nigger" in the song "Policeman"), the overtly Christian lyrics in many Sacred Harp songs force a cultural clash that can more easily be avoided by playing strictly instrumental music. However, there are certain old-time songs that are subject to *contrafacta*, or altered texts set to the same music. A 1986 video, *Music in the Old-Time Way*, shows a traditional Galax, Virginia string band singing such lyrics to the song "Sally Ann"³ in broad daylight in the middle of a sea of spectators at the Galax Fiddler's Convention. These singers substitute: "I love fuckin' Sally Ann" for the traditional lyric, "All night long with Sally Ann." While I have witnessed this *contrafacta* occur with revivalists, it is almost always in a lighthearted or goofy manner. For example,

³ Referred to by many old-time musicians as the "Surry County National Anthem"

revivalists have added lyrics to instrumental tunes (e.g. "Benton's Dream"), or will personalize lyrics to first person songs (e.g. a revivalist husband and wife making the tune "Let Me Fall" into a dialog: "Let me fall," "Oh, I will..."). But I have never witnessed any substitution of profane lyrics by old-time revivalists either in a closed jam or in front of traditional musicians, suggesting either a profound respect for the tradition, a healthy fear of disrespecting traditional musicians, or a self-conscious issue of insiders' rights. Miller found a similar situation in Sacred Harp singing: "Virtually all of the contrafacta I know have been invented or reported to me by longtime [mostly Southern] singers ..." (p. 182).

Miller found that some diaspora singers were so self-conscious about possibly tainting the Southern singing traditions, through their presence alone, that these singers would seek out singings where they would be one of only a handful of outsiders. These singers fear a slippery slope situation in which the more of their kind (diaspora singers) come to a singing, the less authentic (and desirable) that singing becomes (p.30-34). This is akin to American tourists traveling to Amsterdam in search of an authentic European experience only to find out that Americans outnumber the locals. When this influx of outsiders began to cause problems (e.g. when the Hell's Angels began to wreak havoc at the Union Grove festivals), the towns that hosted old-time festivals took action. Some would argue that because the removal of the stalls, a gathering place for revivalist musicians at the Galax festival, coincided with the first year of the Clifftop festival (1989), many revivalists have become more content to be around other revivalists than at Galax, where the cultural integration is too intense for some. Apparently nicknamed "Cliffstock," the festival is an "enactment of a 1970s enactment of nineteenth century agrarian utopianism, through the filter of 1960s counterculture egalitarian communalism. This contemporary romanticization

of communalist ritual connects all the elements of the revival together, including the feeling of religious fervor and ecstatic experience" (Wooley, 2003, p.84).

Round Peak Music

The area within the triangle formed between Mt. Airy, North Carolina; Galax, Virginia; and Sparta, NC has been especially prolific in its production of talented old-time musicians. In fact, the Virginia-North Carolina border means little in terms of the traditional music culture. It would take several pages to list just some of the most noteworthy musicians from this region, but when most old-time musicians think of Mt. Airy area old-time, the term "Round Peak" is used. This was a folklorist's neologism, and not every old-time musician from Surry County lived close to Round Peak Mountain, which lies about nine miles east of downtown. Round Peak is shadowed by the surrounding mountains, and its use is due to the large number of recorded musicians whose homeplaces were nearby. The most recognized of these deceased musicians are Kyle Creed, Fred Cockerham, Ernest East, Charlie Lowe, Dix Freeman, and Tommy Jarrell. Other Mt. Airy superstars still living include Benton Flippen, Mac Snow, Chester McMillian, and Verlon Clifton (of Camp Creek Boys fame).

Not all Round Peak musicians enjoyed the same amount of fame; those who were not as open to outsiders were often snubbed when it came time to make recordings. According to Amy Wooley (2003), "the more flamboyant and hospitable ones became the most highly influential and came to become almost canonized" (p.77). That Tommy Jarrell's tunes and playing style was so widely imitated had much to do with his patience for the throngs of young musicians who made pilgrimages to his house in Toast, NC. Because other musicians from the area have not enjoyed as much recognition as Tommy, some traditional musicians

are suspicious of outsiders interested in the music – especially anybody who resembles a folklorist.

Old-time music in Mt. Airy was functional music: that is, it would be played to facilitate events such as dances, apple peelings, corn shucking, and barn raisings (Alden, 1975, p.8). But according to Alden, traditional dancing and music in Mt. Airy underwent a significant change as early as the 1920s, when city factory workers would bring alcohol and swinging fists to these dances. The dances moved to dance halls, and the influence of the radio changed the way many fiddlers played the traditional tunes. By the end of the 1920s, "the relative isolation of the Round Peak community was gone" (Alden, 1975, p. 10). But the changes that occurred in the Round Peak area were happening all over Appalachia and all over the country. Radio, automobiles, and other modern inventions would create yet another shift in old-time music, perhaps a bigger shift than has happened to the music before or since.

Festival Music and Revivalist Behavior

That revivalists, by virtue of combining their love for old recordings with more modern musical aesthetics, have created a new form of music is not a novel insight. Debates have raged for years in the *Old Time Herald* over the effects that revivalists, folklorists, and other college-educated outsiders have on traditional old-time music. Andrew Woolf, in his 1990 dissertation, examined revivalist jam and cultural practices at fiddler's conventions. He found that the music being played by revivalists was enough of a derivation from the old-time music played by traditionalists that "revivalists, in attempting to preserve a music tradition, are transforming it" (p.17). Regional styles have been lost and/or amalgamated, a new rhythmic feel is applied to the melodies, and the lyrics to many songs still sung by

traditionalists are not sung by revivalists playing "festival music" (p. 251-252). Revivalist musician Linda Higginbotham (1987) found that "festival" old-time has a "particular energy and good-time feelings" and in 1987, was heard at "at least three major old-time festivals—Brandywine, Mount Airy, and Galax" (p.11). Updated for 2009, I can assert that "festival" old-time music is heard at any festival attended by more than a handful of revivalists, and is also played at jams or parties by revivalists. According to Higginbotham (1987) and Woolf (1990), this fast-paced, energy-over-nuance style of playing is more attractive to new players, is more consistent (and easier to play) than classic old-time, and gives the players a sense of ownership over the music.

When describing a typical festival scene, Woolf also touches on the issue of the closed, elitist, and sometimes disrespectful attitude of some revivalists. He notes that upon arriving at a festival, "if one is a newcomer to old-time music and the festival scene...one may feel left out during [the] initial period of fellowship. The outsider feels apart from the lively scene, socially isolated, wanting to join the camaraderie, but awkward about doing so" (p.48). Also, he addresses the awkward situation of "Southern joking" by non-Southern revivalists, whereby (in an echo of the Sacred Harp singers calling page numbers with a Southern accent) they "take on Southern accents, self-consciously imitating the manner of recorded string band humorists. Northern string band musicians may try to sound like 'good old boys,' engaging in banter, sometimes bawdy ..." (p.70). This imitation of rural Southerners is not confined to accent or vocal inflection, but also extends to the choice of music, dress, and behavior for the duration of the festival. According to Woolf's observations, the "festival revivalist imitates the repertory, playing style, rural values, and for a while, some of the 'plain' lifestyle of the traditionalist player" (p.196). Woolf even goes as

far as to write that "Northern city revivalists may bring their theatrical sensibility and urban sophistication to the fiddle convention, where it enlivens the jam" (p.370). None of the above observations implies anything other than a fascination and profound respect that revivalists have for their traditional old-time heroes; however, sometimes what should be flattering imitation can be seen as patronizing by some traditional musicians and native Southerners.

Outsiders' Influence on Appalachian Music

The influence of outsiders on Appalachian culture has a lengthy history, and it could be argued that the first major instance of outsiders changing Appalachian music traditions occurred through the work of the Hindman Settlement School, founded in 1902 in Knott County, Kentucky. In 1900, children in the area were being given music lessons from a Philadelphian, and were being taught to sing popular temperance songs. It is not just this teacher's Northern, urban origins that affected the way in which Appalachian children were taught music, it was the dismissive attitude she and her fellow instructors had for elements of Appalachian culture that they found undesirable. David Whisnant (1983) cites a 1901 diary entry from that Philadelphian music instructor, Katherine Pettit, in which she describes the typical Saturday night scene: "All the bad uns around here hev a gathering where they pick the banjo, dance, drink moonshine, swear and fight...Ever since we heard of the gatherins...we have been wondering what we can do to show them how the young people can meet in a social way and have a good time, without doing the dreadful things they do" (p.44). It turned out, therefore, that the music programs for these children were "concerned primarily with the preprofessional training of students destined to be classical musicians in the western European tradition" (p.45-46). Not only was the music itself affected, but the

settlement schools were instrumental in instituting "new Christmas" in place of the older Christmas traditions in the mountains. The events that I attended in Mt. Airy over New Year's Eve are holdovers of this old Christmas tradition in which raucous parties and dances, both featuring string band music, would be held for several weeks preceding Old Christmas on January 6th (p.49).

David Whisnant asserted that the White Top Folk Festival, held in Virginia between 1931 and 1939, was an "extraordinary example of manipulative cultural intervention" (p.11). Fiddlin' John Carson, a traditional southern musician from Georgia, was not above letting his music be used for profit, and cut the first country music recording in 1923. The White Top festival, however, was attempting to serve more purposes than profiteering from the folk – though that was one of the main motives. Whisnant noted that the White Top festival, while on the surface a celebration of local tradition in the same vein as the fiddle contests that had been taking place for centuries, was driven by "the insane racial-cultural-political agendas of a posturing elitist composer and pianist who tried to use WASP southern mountaineers and their culture in an effort to forestall ...race mixing" (p.12).

The various ways in which the White Top Festival's organizers manipulated tradition provide an early basis for the revival musicians discussed in this thesis. Mountain musicians entered the dulcimer contest although the dulcimer had been introduced to those musicians through outsiders and settlement schools. Contestants who played anything the judges considered to be "modern" were disqualified – it was even suggested early on that string bands not be allowed to compete on the basis of being antithetical to the "pure" traditions the festival promoters sought to preserve. Add to this the exclusion of many locals, who could not afford the admission fee, and the staged displays of Old World traditions (many of which

had never been found in America), and it quickly becomes apparent that neither White Top, nor the burgeoning hillbilly music industry, cared much about letting the mountaineers control the function or presentation of their own musical traditions. While the JAM program in Boone and Mt. Airy is certainly an artificial environment for the passing of traditional music, with a secondary goal of improving the children's scholastic performance, it does not have the same intent as the programs at the Hindman School, which were "designed to use that very imperiled cultural tradition as part of an educational program to help fit mountain children for life in the emerging new order without destroying the personal and social characteristics that made [mountain life] at once so attractive and so vulnerable" (Whisnant, 1983, p.19).

Based on this literature, it is apparent that the changes I am investigating in old-time music have been occurring for decades. The current situation between revivalists and traditionalists is the result of at least forty years of direct interaction and almost one hundred years of acculturation. However, while it is impossible to predict the future of old-time music, it is my hope that this thesis will provide the most recent snapshot of the old-time communities in Appalachia.

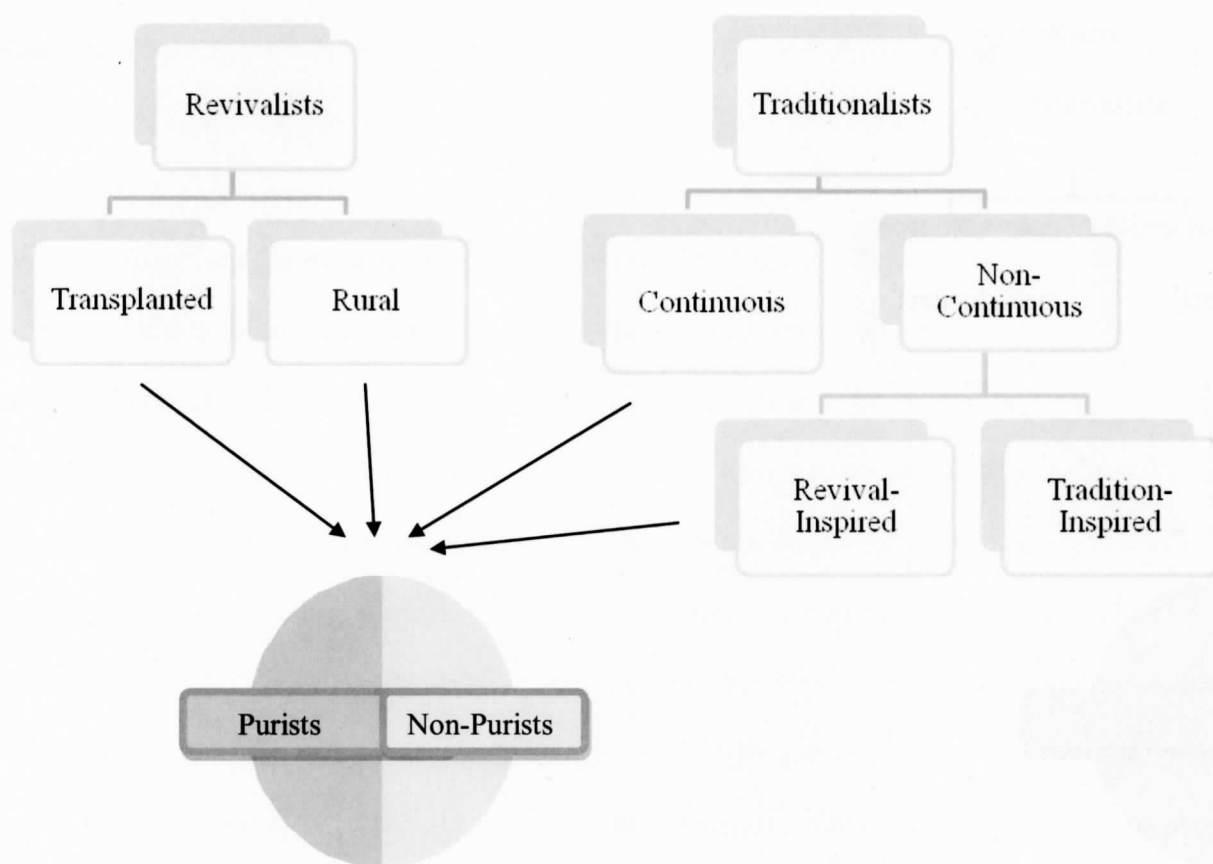
Regional and Musical Identity

Central to this study is the issue of identity; it delineates the boundaries between insider and outsider, traditionalist and revivalist, Appalachian and non-Appalachian, Southerner and non-Southerner, rural and suburban, and all of the other disparate characteristics that serve to divide groups of people. Were it not for these delineations, the responsibility for any change in old-time music or Appalachian culture could only be blamed on Appalachians themselves. However, non-Appalachians are enmeshed in this musical culture, and this gives some Appalachians a target (or maybe a scapegoat) for their hostility over acculturation and the loss of tradition. It is both unfortunate and difficult to have to classify people into distinct categories, as so many people defy absolute classification and might feel that characteristics like age, birthplace, and education level are irrelevant to something like their participation in a music community. But these classifications are necessary in order to understand the dynamics of these old-time communities and how old-time music (and therefore Appalachian culture) is changing.

Regional identity was an issue that I approached in two ways. I asked my informants where they were born and where they grew up, but I also asked them how they identified themselves. Although it is easy to categorize people based on geography, classifying them as a certain type of musician is often difficult, since everyone has a different musical background. Suppose someone had a genetic link to an area, and maybe dabbled in that area's traditional music but was mainly interested in electronic music. Would that person be a "traditional" musician by virtue of family heritage? Many of the native Appalachians learned

the music in the same way as the non-natives – from recordings and from playing with other people. However, by virtue of location, many of the native musicians were able to receive personal instruction from older native traditional players, as were some of the transplants who were around Mt. Airy in the 1970s. What if someone from Japan moves to that same area and spends twenty years learning the local style from old musicians? Is that person still a "revivalist" because he is from a foreign country, regardless of the time spent learning a tradition and the time spent living in that area?

Of course, it is important to remember that in today's world people still choose which music to play. Even if a musician has been groomed by his or her parents and kin to play a local traditional music, to do so goes against the mainstream, which, in Appalachia, is more and more becoming the same music that people in the rest of the country listen to. However, if we can agree that being raised and taught to play music in an area with an active indigenous traditional music qualifies someone as "traditional," there is also the question of *when* they come into the music. Musicians could *decide* to play the music of their area later in life, or might have a gap in their playing that stretches for decades. Furthermore, that musician might not be inspired to learn their local music from anything going on in their community; they might instead come into it through more popular, homogenized old-time music played by revivalists (e.g., a Bruce Molsky recording) and then develop an interest in the music from their own area. Also, not all "revivalists" are the same, and many reject that label because of its various connotations. Some revivalists go to great lengths to immerse themselves in a traditional culture, some actively seek out older traditional musicians, some learn exclusively from recordings, many do not live in the mountain South, and many are content to never meet a traditional musician.



In order to categorize the musicians whom I interviewed, I followed Kara Thomas's rubric, graphed above (w/modifications), and also added my own qualifiers based on other information I learned about each musician. According to Thomas (2004), a *traditional* musician is someone who is "of the tradition who grew up immersed in the culture and worldview that produced the folkloric forms they actively perpetuate" (p. 277). However, within the *traditional* category lie more layers of categorization. Traditional musicians are either *continuous*, meaning that those musicians learned to play and have kept playing throughout their lives, or *non-continuous*, which signifies either a lapse in playing the music learned when that musician was young or a late introduction to the music from their region.

Thomas further divides this category into *tradition-inspired*, in which local traditional musicians are the catalyst for the non-continuous musician to return to the local music, or *revival-inspired*, where that musician develops an interest in local traditions due to the influence of more popular styles of old-time music (e.g., a movie soundtrack).

Revivalist musicians, on the other hand, are from "*outside* the tradition [and] participate in a musical genre that was not strongly associated with their own upbringing" (p. 277). Again, there are subcategories within the revivalist framework. *Rural revivalists* became attracted to not only a foreign music, but a foreign lifestyle associated with that music. As such, when they eventually move to the areas where their music of choice is played traditionally, they attempt to adopt the local lifestyle, and seek out local traditional musicians. While all revivalists are obviously attracted to the music, some rural revivalists are equally attracted to the lifestyle itself. One revivalist from Boone told me that when making the decision to move to North Carolina from Arizona "the lifestyle had something to do with it. I was going through a time when I was really upset with political kind of stuff and modernization and cars and gasoline and that old-living kind of appealed to me." In contrast, *transplanted revivalists* lack this attraction to a simpler, rural lifestyle, and moved to the areas where their music of choice was played in order to be around other revivalists – not out of any particular interest in local traditional musicians (p.281-282).

An important distinction that I will add to this rubric is *purist* vs. *non-purist*, which can apply to either a traditional or a revivalist musician, although in slightly different ways. This distinction is chiefly based around repertoire, but can also encompass stylistic differences. A *traditional purist* will often have a set body of regional tunes that he or she plays. While this set of tunes can be added to, it will only include tunes associated with that

musician's region. If given the choice, in a festival or jam situation, a traditional purist will seek out other musicians who play the tunes from that same region. When confronted with a tune from outside that tradition, the traditional purist might attempt to follow along, and in some cases will stop playing altogether until another tune they already know is played.

Rarely would traditional purists incorporate a tune from outside their region into their repertoire, much less request that tune during a future jam session. This extends to their collection of recordings, which will contain few, if any, recordings by revivalists or even traditional musicians from other regions. Also, when playing a local tune, it is imperative that that tune be played in the "traditional" way (i.e. chord progression, instrumentation, and lyrics). Stylistically, a traditional purist will often play their instrument in their local style – regardless of whether or not that style complements the current tune.

In contrast, a *non-traditional purist* will likely not make as many regional distinctions, but will have a concrete definition of what old-time music *is* and what it *is not*. This can be a matter of incorrect instrumentation (e.g., playing old-time on a resonator banjo), incorrect playing technique (e.g., playing "bluegrass" back-up guitar), or especially questionable repertoire (e.g., "that's not an old-time tune"). The instrumentation facet can apply to both traditional and non-traditional purists: traditional purists may tell you that your guitar should be acoustic, but non-traditional purists might go as far as to tell you what model and year is optimal for their definition of "old-time."

Non-purists, who outnumbered *purists* in my study, are more open about how old-time should be played and what the definition of "old-time" is. *Traditional non-purists* may exhibit bi-musicality; that is, they can code-switch if necessary in order to play other styles of old-time outside of their regional repertoire. Although they have a regional repertoire and a

regional playing style, they will be eager to learn both new instrumental techniques and new tunes at jams and festivals, regardless of that tune's origin. They might also own recordings by revivalists and traditional musicians from other areas. *Non-traditional non-purists*, then, are bound by neither a regional playing style nor a tune repertoire, and represent the new paradigm in old-time music. For these musicians, the groove⁴ of the music is paramount, and specifics like chords, instrumentation, and song lyrics, are all free to be experimented with. One informant was especially vehement in his condemnation of musical purism. Although he learned the bulk of his tunes from face-to-face sessions with parent tradition Surry County musicians, he tried to develop his own approach to the music:

I never tried to pattern specific phrases. I play in that style but I don't play exactly like anybody. And that's one thing that really pisses me off about these *folk nazis* that put LED lights on the end of their bow to mimic [Tommy Jarrell]⁵... That's the most pussy shit I've ever seen in my life. If you've got the music in your soul just let it come out - that's the whole point of music, it's not imitation, it's creation.

Self-Classification

While these seem like perfectly sensible delineations – humans are notorious for not fitting into neat categories. While I found musicians who fit in each of these categories, each of them had qualities inherent to other categories. Therefore, in order to classify my informants, I asked them to place themselves on a spectrum of old-time musicians with traditionalists at one pole and revivalists at the other. I left the question open to interpretation

⁴ Groove refers to the rhythmic elements of the jam, which, if treated correctly, cause the musicians to "lock in" with one another.

⁵ This informant is referencing a video made of Tommy Jarrell playing fiddle in the dark with lights attached to his bow in order for students to more easily pick up on his bowing patterns.

in hopes that this would generate more candid responses. Possibly the most interesting result of this style of questioning is that it allowed the informants to classify themselves in their own terms, since it was up to them to provide their own definitions of "traditional" and "revivalist." Through my other interview questions and outside research I was able to classify them according to the above rubric; however, the flexible definitions of the terms I used resulted in what I intend to be a more thorough self-analysis. For example, almost all of my revivalist informants from Surry County rejected the label of "revivalist" on the grounds that for them, that word represents some sort of musical purism. These informants, regardless of their infatuation with "Round Peak" music, are neither technicians, nor are they especially particular about playing style: "You know I never really considered myself a revivalist because I never really felt like I was reviving anything .You know, it just felt like I was drawn to a music and I start playing. I wasn't born to it, but I feel like somewhere in the middle. But we're not really reviving anything and we're not real academic about what we do."

One revivalist musician placed himself three-fourths of the way toward the traditionalists, but was raised in coastal North Carolina in a community without a traditional music community. This musician has lived in Surry County for over twenty years, and he is very specific about why he moved there:

I made my choice – I wanted Round Peak music. Surry County was where the real guys were – that was Fred Cockerham, Tommy Jarrell, Chester McMillian, Ernest East...and they had never stopped playing.⁶ That was the honeyhole of old-time

⁶ Actually, many of these musicians stopped regularly playing old-time music for several decades following WWII. WPAQ, the local old-time, bluegrass, and gospel radio station, also stopped broadcasting old-time music in the 1960s.

music... and I moved up here and just kept learning to play the music and visiting the old-timers and getting to know them and they were all so welcoming.

On the one hand, this informant is suggesting that his two decades of living in the area might move him to the traditional category. On the other hand, he specifies a particular regional music (i.e., style and repertoire) that he has dedicated himself to learning. For this informant, there seem to be two equally important characteristics for a "traditionalist": 1) immersion in the physical area where a tradition exists, and 2) a specialization in a particular region's style and repertoire. We can assume that he is only three-fourths "traditional" because he was not born and raised in the area, but because this musician spent time learning both music and skills associated with a rural lifestyle from local traditional musicians, he is a *rural revivalist*, according to the above classification system. Surprisingly, this musician passionately argued against any sort of musical purism – although he absorbed the lifestyle and the music directly from traditional musicians, he has found a creative outlet within that framework, and encourages others to do the same.

Another revivalist musician from north of Boone has taken this creative attitude even farther. When asked to place himself on a line between traditional and revivalist, he placed himself on the *outside* of the revivalists: "I love it all. I don't care if we're doin Bob Seger...It's like 'Let's play!' And I love mixing genres and things like that, and so I love to sit down and play with anybody because of that...[at festivals] I play in the afternoons with [traditionalists] and at nighttime I go up on the hill and find the hippies and do that." While this musician, who moved from the city to a spacious, rural farm, has attempted to immerse himself in the agrarian lifestyle of the region, he prefers to play with revivalists more than traditionalists. However, despite having the most liberal musical attitude of any of my

informants, he has developed a long-standing playing and performing relationship with a traditional musician from Grayson County, VA.

A third example, a traditional musician from Mt. Airy who seems to fall neatly into the *continuous traditionalist* category, not only blurs the lines between *continuous* and *non-continuous*, but is also impossible to classify in terms of musical purism. This musician began playing gospel music in a Baptist church as a young child, became interested in bluegrass, and then discovered old-time music through a review of a Benton Flippen (noted Surry County fiddler) album in *Our State* magazine when he was twelve. He was already playing traditional music when he discovered old-time, making this less of a jump into his native tradition and more of a shift. Also, his interest in music is not confined to old-time. He plays electric bass in a jazz/rock band, electric guitar in a rockabilly band, and is also interested in Shetland fiddling, yet when he performs with his traditional string band, he plays strictly within the parameters of the local style. Despite his uncommon characteristics and bi-musicality, this musician still feels that he belongs in the tradition: "I fall inside because of my heritage and my blood right I guess you'd call it, cause my great grandpa played banjo and it's been in the family for years – since before the Civil War. My interpretation of it, I guess, would fall probably closer to the people who played from the outside, I guess because I have a little bit more modern approach to it."

Another traditional musician from Wilkes County, now a resident of Boone, serves as an excellent example of a *non-continuous traditional* musician who is equally traditional and revival inspired. This musician first heard old-time music from western North Carolina on the radio as a child, his father played guitar and sang a little, and he used to attend square dances with his grandparents in Allegheny County. He expressed interest in learning the

fiddle, but never did. His exposure to traditional music waned during his adolescence, but after enrolling at Appalachian State University he learned how to play the banjo in an instructional course called "Appalachian Strings." Even though the tradition of this musician's ancestors was broken before it reached him, he was able to reclaim that heritage through different means:

I was playin' banjo at Thanksgiving a few years back, and the family was all together, and I played "Tom Dooley," and I played "Poor Ellen Smith" – and my great aunt was there, she was 80 something, and she told me that she remembered those songs when she was growing up, that her grandma used to sing those songs. I know that my family is from the places where those things happened and people in my family knew them, but they kinda got lost along the way in a couple of generations where they didn't come to me directly...I learned them a different way, but then I found out that they, you know, had been songs that my family had sung years ago. I just feel like, being that I'm from here and from the area where there is a lot of old-time music...I wasn't immersed in it growing up, but I was around it.

This musician's old-time repertoire and style are based on the traditional music associated with this part of North Carolina, yet he also has equal fondness for classic country music, such as that of Hank Williams.

One final example of classification difficulties is a revivalist musician from Connecticut who now lives just past the southeast corner of Surry County in neighboring Yadkin County. This musician is, without a doubt, a *transplanted revivalist* in terms of his attitude – yet he did visit traditional musicians and he played in a band with a traditional musician. Despite living in North Carolina for over thirty years and identifying himself as a

"North Carolinian," he has made little effort to seek out native music: "I feel like someone that was implanted and interpreted it his own way." When I asked him about seeking out the locals, since he was involved in the first wave of the old-time revival, he said: "I haven't a clue who they are. Not disrespecting them – I never really wanted to know who they were." This informant later told me about how despite living for 17 years near a club that features live bluegrass music, he has never been inside: "That's how little I care about – I don't think it's big-headed, but I'm content with the music I play and who I want to play it with, and I don't even want to go see what's going on down there." However, during a short stint in Mt. Airy in the 1970s this musician would sometimes visit Tommy Jarrell "as a neighbor," rather than as a source of traditional music. In terms of purism, he said, "For years and years all I listened to was old 78s – never cared what the local people were playing. I was trying to get the most exciting old-time music I could. If it's not a skirtlifting tune I don't want much about it. That's what I wanna hear – just the damn breakdowns." Although this particular musician was arguably the pioneer of a new form of playing his instrument – something that makes him a *non-purist* – he has concrete definitions (a *purist* characteristic) about what kind of old-time music he wants to play.

Regional Identity

Of the nine traditional musicians whom I interviewed, six were born and raised in or very close to Mt. Airy. One was from Ashe County, one was from Wilkes County, and one was from Rural Retreat, Virginia. However, when asked to identify themselves in terms of their geographical identity, responses varied. Some responded immediately with "a Southerner," but other responses included: "I guess I been down here long enough to be

called a 'Tarheel,' "definitely a North Carolinian," "a Southern Mountaineer," and "a person who grew up on a farm in Virginia and used music as an excuse to get out of real work." One respondent said what he was *not* (a mountain person). Another of my traditional informants, a young man from Mt. Airy who had the widest musical tastes of any traditional musician, said, "I would say myself. I mean I am *this* [a Mt. Airy native] because I'm born here, but my mind thinks that because I like Quebecois fiddling or whatever...cause to say you're one thing, especially with me, wouldn't be true because I like so much, I do so much, so I'm myself."

Revivalists, since they came to this area from all over the country, were more conflicted in their answers. Especially interesting are the revivalists who are from the South, just not the parts of the South that were home to an active old-time music tradition. These responses included: (from eastern North Carolina) "I consider myself an earthy old-time Appalachian music connoisseur," (from eastern South Carolina) "a Southerner for sure," and (from Winston-Salem) "I'm definitely a Southerner...but an interesting thing to me is most of my closest friends are from up north." This informant answered in the affirmative when I asked him if his political leanings or worldview was an exception for people of his generation who came from Winston-Salem. One revivalist not from the South identified as a Southerner as far as pace of life and desire to live on the land, but set a distinction when it came to stereotypically "Southern" political leanings. This musician, originally from Queens, NY, told me: "I'm a Southerner born in the wrong place, but not like a Rebel. I'm not like a Confederate, I'm just comfortable here."

Few of my revivalist informants recalled feeling hostility from traditional musicians due to native/non-native issues; rather, most feelings of being inauthentic or not accepted by

traditional musicians were self-imposed. However, some revivalist musicians did report hostility from traditional musicians, though the incidents were minor and uncommon. Jake,* a revivalist musician from the Midwest who now teaches banjo and guitar at the Jones House in Boone, had the following to say about authenticity:

That's an issue of being native to a certain area. Being from Illinois makes it hard to even say because there's an underlying resistance to it a lot of times. I've had experiences where it's been really biting and nasty but those are few and far between... To me, what makes something authentic is how it's learned. If you're learning from the place where you live and you try to emulate that, but as far as what makes it authentic, that's up for interpretation. Sometimes it's hard to describe, it's like "yep, that person's got it."

Interesting enough, when asked to name an example of someone who's "got it," Jake named a revivalist musician from South Carolina who has lived in Boone for over thirty years.

Despite not coming from an area with an indigenous old-time music tradition, this musician is viewed by many in Boone as the "real thing," not only because of his lengthy involvement in old-time music, but because he apprenticed and performed with a traditional fiddler from the area who has since passed away. Within the old-time music community in Boone, this revivalist musician is the most "authentic" of the group, which speaks to the lack of traditional musicians in the area. If this musician can be deemed authentic, does that mean that the requirement for an authentic old-time musician is simply time invested playing the music, effort made in seeking out and learning from old musicians? Can anyone, from anywhere, become authentic with enough time and effort? It would be disheartening to some to interpret the classification system in this thesis as an immutable barrier preventing those

born outside of Appalachia from ever being "authentic" or "traditional," while someone raised in Low Gap, NC who decides one day to pick up a banjo is automatically "traditional." An analogy could be made to someone in every way qualified to be president of the United States other than being born on U.S. soil. But "revivalist," for the purposes of this thesis, should not imply "inauthentic." More than just the geographic area where someone is from, this is a cultural dividing line that is likely impossible to apply to musicians with uniformity.

The testimony of these musicians highlights the variegated makeup of the old-time community in Boone and Surry County. It is interesting to note that if plotted along a graph with *transplanted, non-purist revivalists* at one end, and *continuous, purist traditionalists* at the other end, the musicians in my study would be represented as a bell curve: low numbers of extreme examples, high numbers of moderates. This is indicative of the natural dispersion of humankind, and also sheds light on the interactions between these groups discussed in the following chapters: it is often the exceptions that cause controversy and conflict, while those who represent the area in the middle of the graph have been able to develop more of a symbiotic relationship with one another.

The Young Revivalist Community in Boone

Boone is an Appalachian town that has undergone significant change in the last four decades, mainly as a result of the growth of the university and the influx of both academic professionals and retirees from outside of Appalachia. As such, there is a large population of musicians not from Boone (revivalists), which far outnumbers the population of musicians from the area (traditionalists). These musicians have formed a community around their love of old-time music, but are disconnected from any local traditional culture due to the lack of traditionalists in the area. Revivalists in Boone have brought their own musical aesthetics and cultural influences with them, yet they are now almost the only ones who play old-time music in Boone. Also, some of these musicians teach the music to local children, perform the music in public, and are therefore the public face of old-time music. It is my theory that the old-time music community in Boone represents the changing face of Appalachian old-time music, and is perhaps an indication of the waning of Appalachians who are willing or able to carry on their own musical traditions. This chapter describes the structure, function, and ethos of these revivalists.

Community Gatherings: Locations

During my initial research of the revivalist community in Boone, I discovered two main centers for old-time music: the Jones House and the "Old Store" in Sugar Grove. These buildings serve different functions and tend to attract different people. The Jones House,

owned by the town of Boone and run by the Watauga Arts Council, is a public meeting space complete with a coffee machine, refrigerator, and several rooms in which musicians can gather according to their tastes. The weekly jam, organized by the county folklorist, occurs on Thursday nights, beginning at around 7:30 p.m. and ending around 11:00. Someone usually brings store-bought food, but never anything more expensive than a package of cookies. At least one small group has a consistent room in which they play. Most musicians, however, freely float around between rooms, or, if there is no room, will observe for a while before pulling up a chair and joining the jam. There is a fairly even distribution of age, although males greatly outnumber females. Musicians usually socialize for the first half hour to forty-five minutes or until a good jam gets going. The talk usually consists of updates on family and friends, upcoming musical events, or other topics that casual friends would talk about. There have been evenings where, instead of playing music, the people in attendance just talked to one another, although this is not a common occurrence.

Several musicians in my study attend the Jones House jam every week, although if a different musical event were to take place on a Thursday, they might attend that instead. While there is a sort of core group who are usually at the Jones House, the attendance of other musicians is sporadic and unpredictable. While there were usually around fifteen people at the Jones House jams, on the first night of my official observation, there were close to forty people in attendance. Musicians who normally stay away from the Jones House, yet frequent the Old Store or other gatherings at musicians' houses, were present. Some musicians' families came to listen and dance, and musicians whom I had only seen at summer festivals were also there with instruments at the ready. By 9:00, every room contained a large jam circle, and a spontaneous square dance occurred in the middle room – a

first in the nine months that I had attended the Jones House jams as a participant. During a break from the music several people admired a fellow musician's brand new baby, and the atmosphere was festive and electric. The smiles on the attendees' faces paid testament to the rewards, both musical and social, of their participation in this musical community.

Community gatherings at the Old Store are similar musically, but much different socially. The setting accounts for some of these differences – the Jones House is in downtown Boone and is, technically, an art gallery and office during the day. The Old Store is in a remote location on the banks of the Watauga River and is in quite a state of disrepair. Food and drink are large components of any Old Store gathering, with potluck-style dinners on Saturdays being most common. While some, but not all, musicians are able to grow their own food, almost everything on the table is at least homemade. Alcohol is omnipresent at the Old Store jams, while it would never be found at the Jones House (not only due to legal issues, but also because most musicians there would find it inappropriate – they are there to play music, not to drink alcohol). Also, while the age range at the Jones House can range from teenagers to octogenarians, most Old Store attendees are in their mid-twenties to early thirties. The Old Store, in its glory days, was known as a boarding house of sorts for both native and non-native old-time musicians, and although many have moved out, the evidence of their presence is everywhere. Music posters and concert flyers adorn the walls and refrigerator; instruments, belonging to nobody in particular, are strewn about. Dogs, children, part-time residents, curious neighbors, and friends of musicians are usually present at these gatherings, as well. Any old-time musicians traveling through the area will most likely be staying there, although the actual number of rent-paying residents is often impossible to gauge.

Socializing among friends, like at the Jones House, usually occurs before anyone takes out an instrument. At the Old Store, however, the conversations are lubricated with copious amounts of alcohol. This factor, plus the twenty-minute drive from town and the dilapidated state of the structure, probably discourages the attendance of older musicians who, although they are very much a part of the Boone old-time community, would not lose sleep over missing an Old Store function. Not only are older players not present, but the attendance of female musicians at the Old Store is even less than at the Jones House. Males of this age and demographic could just as easily be drinking cheap beer with one another while watching Ultimate Fighting, so the lack of females is not surprising. The actual jams at the Old Store, probably due to the age, high testosterone levels, and level of intoxication of the musicians, are loud and furious. Most of these young men possess an encyclopedic knowledge of not only old-time music, but also "classic" country songs. Hank Williams songs, which would never be played at the Jones House, are fair game at the Old Store. Individual instruments are usually played by several people – if a musician becomes tired or needs to leave for whatever reason, someone else will take over mid-tune. The overall effect for these musicians, perhaps at a more visceral level than at the Jones House, is a joyous affirmation of the positive rewards of community interaction and music making.

Importance of Community

Community was mentioned more by some Boone interviewees than others, but was a major factor for all whom I interviewed. The two traditional musicians in this first Boone study were especially concerned with the impending loss of community, and looked to their hometowns and local musical cultures as safe havens – things to be treasured and protected.

Ironically, while some of the non-native musicians admitted to being insecure about their personal acceptance into the old-time world (coming to it from outside) and detailed their efforts to play with as many people as possible, it was the native musicians who commented that newcomers to the music are actually less likely to share. One of these native musicians felt that newcomers think old-time music is

this thing they do that sets them apart from everyone else because it's so unique and quaint and cultural, and it's their little thing. This is their social gathering – this is their club. And then they'll go 3000 miles to a festival and play with the same people that they do back home. It's sad that so many people make a social club out of it. Old-time music is about sharing – it's community music.

One of the great ironies of old-time revivalism is expressed in the above quote – while the newcomers to the music coalesce into musical communities, so many people native to the region have moved along with the times and no longer play old-time music. The few natives who still play old-time music, possibly because their style and repertoire are specific to a region and not as conducive to the more homogenous "jam" repertoire, feel ostracized and left out of the community built by the newcomers.

When asked to guess the percentage of their friends who were also old-time musicians, most Boone interviewees estimated higher than 80%. This is about the same percentage of time spent in music related social settings. One even went so far as to proclaim that he is "so into old-time music that I probably wouldn't hang out with someone who wasn't into it." All five non-native musicians confirmed that they moved to the Boone area to pursue their love of old-time music and are therefore very aware of their role in the local scene and that old-time music functions as a social network, as well as a way for people to

play music together. The traditional musicians experienced the same sort of social network, but more so in their parent communities than in Boone.

Authenticity / Identity

Several musicians had something akin to a religious conversion experience when they first encountered old-time music. One interviewee remembered the exact date that the music "sent chills up his spine" and made him "know what [he] wanted to do with his life." While most of the interviewees initially identified with the music itself, one expressed being attracted to the lifestyle surrounding the music: "I was going through a time when I was really upset with political stuff and modernization and cars and gasoline and that old living kind of appealed to me." This older way of living was a ubiquitous characteristic of all my interviewees, with several explaining that they live far away from downtown Boone in order to be closer to nature and their neighbors. One interviewee said that moving to a small community in Sugar Grove and playing with old-time musicians has been a "real positive and socially-rewarding, confidence-building thing – that you're really part of this community. And the way I think about myself and the community, I'm more connected through [old-time music] than by any other way." Two interviewees specifically mentioned feeling linked to the back-to-the-land movement, and others, in their choice to live outside of town for the bucolic setting and rural community, would probably have identified with back-to-the-landers if asked.

The possessions of my Boone interviewees are indicative of the importance they attach to old-time music. Estimates ranged from 50% to 85% when asked what percent of their material assets is music related. Every person interviewed had at least five instruments,

with some having close to twenty-five. Recordings are also an essential possession. One interviewee even admitted to having an old-time music related wardrobe and that people often tell him he "dresses like somebody from the 19th century." All the interviewees attributed feelings of contentment and joy to being a part of the local old-time community – although some were more forthcoming about this than others.

Preservationism

All of the interviewees felt that they were involved in carrying on something important and that it is essential that people continue the traditions of the past. One person expressed that old-time music:

is the real thing and it gives me some sort of link to the past, connection to tradition for sure. I mean, most folks want to have some sort of connection to something.

That's what we all seek is union in one way or another, whether it be through music or whatever, so sure, it gives me some sort of identity as wanting to preserve and help pass on that music and tunes and keep them alive.

I also discovered a more surprising aversion to modern popular music than I had expected, and although the musical tastes of the interviewees was quite varied, all of them had negative things to say about the quality of music being played on the radio and on TV. Common statements were along the lines of "it's overproduced" or "it's meaningless." Every musician interviewed felt it was important to pay homage to the older, parent tradition musicians when learning how to play old-time music. Although some came to it through revivalists, they told similar stories of going farther and farther back to add new tunes to their repertoire. Three of the interviewees are actively involved in teaching this music to younger generations in hopes

of continuing the tradition. One interviewee preserves old-time music for a living as Folklorist for the Watauga Arts Council.

Additional Community Interaction

In addition to the social gatherings and jams already covered, all seven Boone musicians whom I interviewed also maintain a MySpace page related to their identity as an old-time musician. MySpace serves as an electronic community and is an extension of the musicians' desire to foster community interaction with their fellow players. The website allows the users to maintain either a regular page or a MySpace Music page. The difference between the two is subtle, but the music page allows the user to post sound files for anyone to hear and also list their musical influences and give a description of what their own music sounds like. Both types of pages allow the users to post pictures and movies, and both allow for "friends" to leave comments for all others to see. There is also a blog section where the page authors can write small essays or bulletins for their friends to read. Not surprisingly, all of my interviewees' pages were based around their life as an old-time musician. Many have recordings of themselves playing old-time for others to hear and leave comments about, their pictures show them playing their instruments or interacting with other musicians, their influences are both older and revivalist old-time musicians, and the comments left by their friends (almost all old-time musicians themselves) typically have to do with past or upcoming gatherings and comments or praise for the music uploaded by the page author.

Conclusions

The revivalist musicians from Boone whom I interviewed for this study became members of the old-time community out of a love of the music first, and an attraction to the community and lifestyle second. This love of old-time music was extremely rare in all of the non-native's hometowns, and their choice to move to the mountains to join this community was certainly an aberration in the normal life journey of peers from their hometowns. It would be difficult and outside the range of this study to determine whether their shared personality characteristics (an attraction to the past and tradition, a love for community interaction, a tendency to support grass-roots politics and environmentally responsible living) led them to an affinity for old-time music, or whether those similarities can be attributed to other factors. Nevertheless, an old-time revivalist community made up of non-native, left-leaning, anti-globalist musicians intent on creating and maintaining a community for themselves due to the lack of community in their previous places of residence does indeed exist and thrive in Boone, NC. The interviewees all expressed an aversion to certain aspects of modernity that serve to alienate people from one another. All were at least somewhat interested in living in an earlier, pre-industrial time period, yet none disliked the present enough to want to leave it for good. Overall, my findings were consistent with the extant literature on revivalists. However, it was through my interviews with the two traditional musicians living in Boone that I became inspired to research the other side of old-time music.

While the two native musicians have a definite identity and role in their home music communities which gives them a natural connection with their ancestors' traditions and culture, the music community the newcomers have created allows them to interact in a way that gives them some sense of being part of a tradition and affirms their place and importance

in society. Although the newcomers came to Appalachia because this is the home of the music, the majority of young native musicians have moved along with the progression from old-time to bluegrass to country, to even rock and roll. The two native musicians are also on the outskirts of the scene in Boone, and do not participate often in the non-musical party atmosphere that surrounds non-natives' jams, dances, or potlucks. Although the native musicians whom I interviewed were grateful to the revivalists for rescuing old-time music from obscurity, they viewed new transplant revivalists with a sense of apprehension. Because revivalists tend to be cosmopolitan in their musical tastes and do not have their own native music community, they are more inclined to change the music from the way it is played locally. Both native musicians were upset about this, and also felt that because it could be difficult for a non-native to play with a native musician because native musicians' styles are so specific to their home territory, non-natives ironically tend to coalesce despite having moved to a region full of native musicians. The waning of these native music communities, and the link this has to the homogenization of the whole Appalachian region, are the subjects of the following chapters.

Mt. Airy: The Old-Time Battleground?

In contrast to Boone, Mt. Airy has a strong community of native traditional musicians who are at least as (if not more) active in disseminating old-time music to the public and sustaining the tradition as the transplanted revivalists. Because these two groups live so close to one another and often inhabit the same musical landscape, both conflicts and collaborations take place that would never happen in Boone. While there is no evidence to suggest that Boone would be any different were there a community of traditional musicians of the size and with the historical precedence that the Mt. Airy group has, the interactions between these groups in Mt. Airy has been taking place since the late 1960s, and is therefore invaluable in the study of how the long-term presence of outsiders interested in Appalachian culture affects the culture in which they become implanted.

I began my research in Mt. Airy during the time period surrounding New Year's Eve 2008 because during this time both revivalists and traditionalists hold musical and social events related to the Breaking up Christmas tradition. Historically, Breaking up Christmas was a roughly two-week long mountain tradition which served to alleviate the boredom and bad weather that would follow Christmas day, and was great fun for those who participated (Brown, 1997, p.1). Each night a different community member would host a gathering involving old-time music, dancing, and potluck-style food and drink. A popular Round Peak song, called "Breakin' Up Christmas," commemorates this event. I made plans to stay at a fellow musician's house just off I-74, approximately eight miles from downtown Mt. Airy,

from December 31st through January 3rd. On New Year's Eve, 2008, I attended both a traditional square dance and a revivalist Breakin' up Christmas house party. Although old-time music was the impetus for both events, I found substantial differences between the function, meaning, and execution of old-time music at these two events.

The New Year's Eve square dance at the Beulah Ruritan Club in Low Gap, NC has been an annual event for at least twenty-five years, and was founded by local fiddler Ernest East. Housed in a modest building with a kitchen, dining area, and a large dance floor, the New Year's dance was attended by those who may not attend the regular weekly square dances. According to dance caller James Lawson, these weekly square dances were held in people's homes for decades until the Ruritan club began to host them four or five years ago. My friend and I arrived at the dance at approximately 7:30 p.m., and I immediately noticed that we were the youngest people in attendance. Cigarette smoke hung heavy in the air, there was a large buffet with mostly homemade standard Southern potluck food, and I could tell immediately that I was wearing the wrong clothes. My outfit (jeans and a long sweater) was different from the other men in attendance, who all had tucked in button-down shirts, jeans, and leather boots or shoes. Dancers were mingling in the dining area, smoking cigarettes, or sitting in the dance hall waiting for the dance to begin. I also noticed that lots of people there seemed surprised to see me, maybe because I was a stranger, but probably because I was one of the only young people there. The community members who attend the Beulah dance are almost all fifty-five or older. On this night though, there was more of a mix of families with young children, and the occasional twenty or thirty something dance enthusiast. Three bands took turns with the music, and when they weren't playing, they were dancing. Calls seemed spontaneous and unrehearsed. Phil Jamison, a revivalist musician, dancer, and professor of

Appalachian music, was there, and I realized that I was not the only person there that night interested in this from a researcher's perspective. According to many whom I talked to, the Beulah dance is one of the last places around where the old style of square dancing occurs: "I've played a lot of square dances and most places don't square dance like they do at Beulah – it's gone to a lot of two stepping and flat footing, just freestyle or contra dancing like [in Boone]." Any initial trepidation that I felt soon melted away as I became more comfortable faking my way through the dance call and trying not to run into other couples. The local dancers were both patient about my lack of skill (although I've been to probably thirty square and contradances) and encouraging for me to keep trying to get it. With each trip to the kitchen, I was offered food and drink by the ladies behind the tables. As the bands cycled through, I was invited to play second guitar in one of the bands. Since I was on stage, my girlfriend was asked to dance by several elderly men (and she did).

All of the bands playing at Beulah that night were made up of traditional musicians, save for the one that I was in. I knew every tune the bands played, and I think the dancers did, as well. The tunes were all "Round Peak" standards, with the exception of some country songs and waltzes that are in the repertoire of one of the bands. The dancers are used to hearing these tunes, and often shouted out requests. One thing that I'd not seen before at a dance was the terminology used by the band in regards to these tunes. A "waltz" could be in either 3/4 or 4/4 time, so long as it was slow. Also, the dance pattern for a 3/4 tune was a syncopated four-step maneuver that repeated itself every six beats. Although I became accustomed to the fog-like cigarette smoke, the irregular dance steps, and the fast-paced dance calls, I could never quite get used to people my grandmother's age dancing with as much zeal as someone in their twenties at a nightclub. This was the most fun I've ever had on

New Year's Eve, and I left the dance with a new perspective on the importance of this tradition for the local dancers.

We arrived at the first Breakin' Up Christmas party at close to one a.m. to find musicians in various states of inebriation, which was not surprising given the holiday, yet was still a stark contrast to the event we had just left. The last tune that the band played at Beulah was "John Brown's Dream," and, amazingly enough, it was the first tune that I heard when I arrived at this party. After that, the similarities stopped. The dress, age, educational background, economic status, political leanings, choice of food and drink, accent, vocabulary, means of employment, aesthetic sense, choice of automobile, religious beliefs, place of origin, and almost any other descriptor were different between these two groups. This supports the findings of others who have researched Appalachia, and is largely attributable to class differences. Keefe (1994) argued that "Appalachians are predominantly working class, and non-Appalachians are predominantly middle and upper class" (p.30). In a survey of Appalachian high school students, Keefe, Reck, and Reck (1989) found that the "responses of Appalachian students ... were significantly different from non-Appalachian students on 93% of the items designed to measure structural, cultural, and symbolic ethnicity" (p.28). Through attending these events back-to-back, I was able to witness the amazing cultural differences between traditional musicians (Appalachians) and revivalist musicians (non-Appalachians). Granted, this was a party and not a dance, but the difference in the context of the music went well beyond that. Musicians were gathered in tight circles in almost every room, nodding their heads and tapping their feet in unison – seemingly oblivious to the people around them. Friends who live far apart were mingling and catching up, but many musicians were moving from room to room with instruments in hand, anxious

to get into one of the jams. Many jams were taking place behind closed doors, not necessarily to exclude newcomers, but to maintain the acoustic environment between one jam and the next. Nevertheless, this made it difficult and awkward for a newcomer to join one of these jams.

After talking to the people who were with me (my girlfriend and the three traditional musicians with whom I had played in the band), I decided to attempt to join a jam. I encouraged the musicians I had come with to join me, but after a short while they decided to head home. After finding a place to put my empty guitar case (there were cases littering every nook and cranny in the house) I spied an empty chair next to a grand piano and made my move. After some brief introductions, I realized that the fiddler was someone I had met at a festival the previous summer. He had been playing a tune made popular in the revivalist community by a recording released by a young, especially talented revivalist old-time band (whose members were all in attendance at this party). I suggested that we play that tune, not realizing that the fiddler and I were the only ones who knew it. As the other musicians struggled to learn the melody and chord progression, I realized that it might have been imprudent to suggest an obscure tune that the other musicians didn't know. To my surprise, after we finished the tune several musicians said how much they liked it and inquired as to its origin. This was the pattern for the rest of this jam: even as musicians cycled in and out it was the fiddler's prerogative to play any tune, no matter how obscure or complicated, and leave it up to the rest of us to follow along. Rather than being irritated at this, the musicians in this jam, myself included, thrived on the challenge of learning a tune well enough during our playing of it to transform it into a trance-like experience. Several hours went by, and it was soon time to head home.

The following day my local traditionalist friend's parents made us breakfast: eggs, bacon, sausage, biscuits, hash browns, and coffee, and we spent the morning playing tunes in the living room. After lunch we drove down the road to visit an older traditional musician and his son, who had led one of the bands at the Beulah dance. I was immediately told to "make myself at home," and was offered food and drink. This musician's wife, who knew that I was in town to research old-time music, had brought out her scrapbook of music-related clippings, papers, and pictures for me to see. In it were forty years of her husband's and son's lives as musicians, as well as anything ever published in the local newspaper about old-time music. Her immense pride in this tradition was evident in the diligence she used in constructing this album and in the way she talked about each item. Inevitably, we began to play music – two guitars, a banjo, and a fiddle. As we were playing, the musician's wife talked to my girlfriend about life in the mountains, music, cooking, and the people from up north who used to come to the house in the 1970s and 1980s. Near the end of our playing session I was asked if I would like to play with their band for the dance at Beulah the next night (Friday). I, of course, accepted the offer, and I soon realized that it was dark and that I had another revivalist party to attend.

The party this night was substantially southeast of Mt. Airy, just inside the Surry County line near Tobaccoville. My girlfriend and I were in one car (we were planning to spend the night), and my traditional musician friend was in hers. We arrived expecting a similar situation to the last night's party (semi-closed jams already happening in all the rooms of the house), and reality matched our expectations. However, we both had our instruments, and I was determined to get my traditional friend involved in one of these revivalist jams.

After making several tours around the house and finding no jam that invited us to play (or where there was room to sit down anyway), we decided to make our own.

We began as just fiddle and guitar, but soon a revivalist banjo player (a member of the band referenced in my description of the first night's party) asked if he could join in. Ever the vigilant researcher, I kept my eyes open while we played in order to observe how these two musicians acted while playing the music. My traditional friend kept her eyes open and moved very little while playing – the revivalist banjo player had his eyes closed and appeared to be in a deep meditative state. A large tattoo of a fiddle and a banjo was on his forearm—evidence of the intense meaning of this music in his life and his identity as an old-time musician.⁷ As we continued to play more musicians began to take notice of my fiddler player friend's distinctive Round Peak style, and soon the jam had grown to seven or eight musicians. As more time passed the room began to fill up with spectators asking questions of my fiddle player friend: "Where'd you learn to fiddle like that? Where are you from? You grew up in Mt. Airy?!" I was torn between the fun of playing music and my duty to record the situation from a researcher's perspective. At the peak of the jam there was me on guitar, a traditional musician (the only other one at this event and an early member of Old Crow Medicine Show) also on guitar, my fiddle-playing friend, a revivalist fiddler who is the member of a well-known string band, and one of my revivalist interviewees on bass. The tunes, which normally would range from Round Peak to any popular jam tune, stayed centered around the Round Peak repertoire – evidently out of deference to my fiddle-playing friend. While it is not certain that this jam attracted so much attention and seemed to be a tribute to Round Peak music because my fiddle-playing friend was leading it, through talking

⁷ This banjo player now lives in western North Carolina and also makes fretless banjos.

with others afterward it became apparent that an "authentic Round Peak musician" was a rarity at these parties, and was therefore given a special sort of reverence.

The following day my girlfriend and I struck out for breakfast on our own at Aunt Bee's (as per the advice of our host family). The menu at this restaurant is quintessential Southern breakfast food: meats, potatoes, biscuits, grits, etc. Someone looking for a tempeh bagel and a chai latte would be completely out of luck. This type of fare can also be found in Boone, but not in as many places as in Mt. Airy. Boone's downtown caters mostly to students and professors, whose culinary choices are often the opposite of most rural Southerners. We spent the afternoon at the Mt. Airy museum downtown, which has a special section on old-time music featuring Tommy Jarrell. After dinner we headed to the Beulah dance. The crowd was smaller than on New Year's, but I recognized many faces from the New Year's dance. In contrast to the New Year's dance, this crowd at this dance was exclusively middle-aged and up. At the beginning of the dance I was introduced to the crowd as a fill-in member; the lead guitarist was careful to tell them where I'm originally from, and I confess that it made me feel like less of a foreigner when he said I was from Virginia (and left out that I'm from *east* Virginia). During the intermission for this dance a prayer was led and an offering bucket was passed around to help a recently widowed dancer with funeral expenses. After the dance ended I was thanked profusely by various dancers for playing, and several of them invited me to "come back for the next one." After packing up and saying goodbyes, we were off to the final revivalist party in Westfield, North Carolina, east of Mt. Airy.

This last party was similar to the other two: jams in multiple rooms, a smorgasbord of food, and much socializing. My fiddle-playing friend was again in attendance, and we soon struck up a small jam in the center room. This party was different, however, in that an

octogenarian dancer from Sugar Grove, NC, was in attendance. He had been a guest at the Beulah dance earlier that night, and had been brought to this party by a revivalist dancer friend. This dancer inspired others around to actually dance to the music being played at this party, rather than just listen to it. Yet again, he somehow ended up asking my girlfriend to dance, and offered her moonshine out of a mason jar.

Despite the presence of my fiddle-playing friend, this dancer, and one or two other traditional musicians, these parties were attended by revivalists. The late night time period, presence of large amounts of alcohol, and remote locations likely discouraged the older traditional musicians from coming. Revivalists had come from as far away as Massachusetts to attend these parties, which, according to this year's advertisements, have been going on for twenty-five years. Aside from the Beulah dance and some other New Year's Eve house parties hosted by traditional musicians, the revivalists are now the ones who carry on the original intent of these Breakin up Christmas events: parties at different people's houses each night for several nights. However, rather than dancing being the focus of these revivalist Breakin up Christmas parties, the playing of the music itself is the focus. This difference and others will be discussed in later chapters.

Current Situation: Traditionalists & Revivalists

The current situation between traditionalists and revivalists in the old-time music world is complicated and constantly changing. Most young traditional musicians are also interested in other styles of music, and feel that once a music has been recorded, it is free to be mutated and experimented with. While most of the older traditional musicians are firmly entrenched in a regional style, they derive great pleasure from playing with other musicians

at festivals or jams. And while they might not be able to follow the tunes, especially those from other regions with irregular structures, they make no aspersions about people who can play that music well, be they from Connecticut or Alabama. However, some traditional musicians feel a sense of entitlement to old-time music due to genetics or geography, and begin to feel threatened by outsiders who also play that music. In the course of my thesis research, I discovered that those musicians who are suspicious of "hippies" or "Yankees" represent a minority in Surry County. Even the most die-hard regional conservatives, who are of the mind that there is only one correct way to play old-time music, will feature musicians from New York, Texas, or Pennsylvania on their recordings, provided those musicians can play "Round Peak" music.

In conducting my interviews I stumbled into an ongoing disagreement between two of my respondents, both of whom are Mt. Airy natives. While neither musician would name the other, it took little effort for me to connect the dots and realize that they were both referencing the other during my interviews with them. Therefore, it is important to realize that musicians, especially those who compete against one another, are likely to experience competition regardless of their origin. While one focus of this thesis is on the conflicts between natives and non-natives, there is likely as much, if not more, conflict among the natives themselves. But feuds among old-time musicians are not new. In fact, as one respondent learned, the idealistic vision of everybody happily making music together was not the case. It was an extremely contentious and jealous and – it was always a big rivalry between the fiddlers, the banjo players, and whatever, and it's still that way today. I mean you go to a fiddler's convention – the people from outside this area, they just go to play or whatever, and if they don't win they really don't care. But the

local people, it means a whole lot to them. And I've seen people win second place at Galax and take the second place ribbon, throw it on the ground, and stomp it on the mud. That's how important it is to them as far as their pecking order and self-esteem, and it's always been that way.

However, this respondent followed his observation with a critical point about the positive aspect of this competitiveness: "There were always these individual differences, and it wasn't violent – it was kind of like little cliques...and I think it's great because that's what motivates people to be better – 'those son-of-a-bitches aren't gonna beat us' kind of thing."

Acculturation and the Lingering Effects of the Old-Time Revival

"The pantheon of American fiddle tunes was written on piano...I joke about Northerners, but it's really ironic when you get into where old-time music comes from. It's got a Southern twang to it, and it was written with that in mind, but some of it was Yankee ingenuity..."

-Traditional musician from Virginia (now living in Boone)

The majority of traditional musicians were grateful to the revival for increasing the popularity of their music and giving it the respect it deserves. Many were also thankful that the revival happened because, although their inspiration for playing their area's music came from recordings of that local music – it was revivalists who made those recordings:

I think the revival preserved it and changed it at the same time. It's kinda reintroduced the music to a new generation of people, like myself, people who are from the area where the music is from but didn't really get born in time to get in on the heyday of it. And it's still like my music, our music, even though we didn't really learn it directly. But it's interesting that it took people from outside of the area to preserve it and continue it and keep it around until we got here...

It may also be the case that any accusations of musical theft or misrepresentation are tempered by the reminder that it was outsiders who resurrected this music in the first place.

As one young traditional musician said:

There's good and bad from [the revival]. It's good because it's promoted it. Hell, half of us wouldn't be sittin' here if it wasn't for folks like Mike Seeger and Alan Jabbour who come and recorded Tommy, and Alice Gerrard, all those folks. I mean seriously, I can say, you know, the bulk of us would not even be here. There wouldn't be a Tommy Jarrell festival, so they are truly responsible for what it is, as far as being popular and being pulled outside of Mt. Airy and brought all over the world. They've preserved it with the recordings, you know. It'll be around forever now because they were smart enough to think "Hey, this is golden and I need to record it." Bad-wise is that the world tends to see old-time music through their eyes before they see it as it naturally is, like, people might assume, you know, people associate Old Crow Medicine Show more akin to old-time music than they would Paul Sutphin or Verlin Clifton or Benton Flippen or any of those folks because that's mainstream and that's been brought out there and all that's because of outsiders, you know, firstly taking it and promoting it and preserving it but also twisting it and interpreting it and making it different...

This negative change in the music was echoed by another traditional informant who felt that injecting outside influence into the music is a bad thing in terms of sustaining traditional culture: "Sometimes you'll have some really excellent folks come in and learn the music and spread it but sometimes you've got other people who come in and learn it halfway or they bring with them ideas and values that don't really help the music."

However, this is not the attitude of all the traditional informants whom I interviewed.

In fact, one of my informants thoroughly enjoyed learning new tunes from Northern revivalists who came to visit his father in Mt. Airy: "A lot of daddy's friends would bring...we called 'em hippies from up North with long hair and you know, a beard, come down here to learn this old time music and some would know tunes that we'd never heard before – old Irish or Scottish or somethin', and – 'jigs' they called 'em. And we learned a lot of stuff from people like that." This particular informant remembers that his and his father's attitude toward revivalists was counter to that of some older musicians in their community:

We used to call those guys "Yankees," and they come down here and the old-timers would say they "come down here and steal our music and take it back up North and get rich on it." Well, I never believed that. Cause we been playin' all our lives and we ain't rich. How they gonna get rich? But I remember a lot of old people said "Them hippies gonna come down here and steal our music." I was like "Naw man, they ain't gonna steal nothin'." They probably brought more with 'em than they took back. I'm glad they came.

This same informant also told me that playing with people from different areas is his favorite part of going to fiddler's conventions.

In addition to new tunes, the first wave of revivalists also brought a different musical approach to old-time music than had never been applied to the music before. The particularities of this change to old-time music will be discussed in a later chapter, but the following quote by a revivalist Surry County musician, who has no classical music training, illustrates the beginning of a new form of old-time music that was made possible by a

combination of classical aesthetics and a disconnect from the culture that originally produced the music:

I've always been amazed by the number of classically trained kids on the violin [for whom that instrument] was just a pain in the ass, and heard old-time music and came in to play it. And, frankly, most of them don't have the drive, the soul, the balls, whatever you want to call it, the life experience to put into it, but they can take a particular tune and just tear that son-of-a-bitch up because they're brilliant musicians – classically trained...

Also, the revival, especially through the recordings that were made of Surry County musicians, tended to paint an inaccurate picture of the musical makeup of the region. Musicians who were especially friendly to revivalists tended to be recorded and visited more; therefore, their particular styles became codified as "Round Peak." One informant expressed his disbelief at seeing "nine out of ten banjo players playing over the neck and clunky and kinda rough sounding simply because that was the cool thing to do or that was, you know, what was promoted the most out of this area instead of the diverse styles ... the only people who played over the neck from here were Kyle Creed and Charlie Lowe."

Yankees, Hippies, and Locals: Cultural Intersections

Tim,* a revivalist musician now living near Mt. Airy, came to North Carolina from Florida in the 1970s. After work he would drive around the countryside looking for old farmhouses that might be for sale. One day he found one that looked particularly promising, and he went to a nearby home in hopes of finding the owner of the farmhouse. That nearby home was a trailer with a shirtless, muddy child playing out front, and Tim wasn't quite sure

what to expect when, six-foot-four and sporting long hair and a beard, he knocked on the door. Tim recalls feeling almost ashamed at his initial perceptions of the place and the people, and this encounter with the locals forever changed his opinion of poor mountain people: "I left there realizing that it was MY prejudice. When I walked in I was expecting 'Uh oh, look at these rednecks livin' in this funky old trailer, man,' you know, funky redneck thing here, and here I am this ain't-from-around-here hippie dude, but it was ME that brought my preconceptions there. They were just as open and 'Hey, can we help you out? What do you need?'"

Before I began my research in Mt. Airy I had heard about "hippies" and their strange ways from traditional musicians from Mt. Airy whom I had met through my involvement in the old-time music scene. Based on how the traditional musicians described this other group of musicians, I assumed that those groups rarely interacted with one another. I was mostly right in my assumption, but there have been (and continue to be) mutually beneficial interactions between Mt. Airy natives and transplant musicians. Several recordings featuring composite bands with members of both groups have been made since the 1970s. Also, some of the transplant musicians have given instrument instruction to young native musicians who wanted to learn the area's music. Transplant bands have provided music for square dances mostly attended by natives, and those bands have also played for live entertainment at the downtown cinema. Many of the transplant musicians now living in Mt. Airy befriended the older, now mostly deceased, generation of traditional musicians, and have incorporated those musicians' tunes and styles into how they play old-time today. Summer is when the most interaction happens between the two groups in Mt. Airy, especially during the Mt. Airy Fiddler's Convention and the after-party held at a revivalist's house in nearby Westfield. At

this party there are healthy numbers of both transplants and natives, and this is the one time of the year that so many members of these two groups play music with one another.

The rest of the year, however, is a different story. After the festival season, members of the groups tend to coalesce back into the native/transplant dichotomy. When I asked one native musician about the willingness of the transplants to interact with the natives, he said, "They're kinda their own group of people. They do their thing and that's it. They don't care; they're gonna do their thing. That's who they are. But I would say other than, like, public recordings and a few little shindigs, there's not a whole lot of mingling between that crowd [and the natives]." When asked why he thought this was the case, specifically whether he thought musical or cultural differences were to blame for this lack of interaction, he said "Sometimes those folks aren't exactly purposely trying to play it note for note like the old guys. That can turn off some natives, you know, and then also, their preferences to life, their politics and all that, whatever. All that, especially since it's somewhat alien to what a lot of folks who are native are born into and raised into..." Later in the interview this informant expressed his displeasure with the current situation and suggested that people make more efforts to accept one another due to their shared interest in the music: "I think things could be easier, there could be less gossip and rumors and bullshit like that if people were just like 'Okay - you're from New York. Well I'm from Mt. Airy. You like this music? That's cool.' That should be the common ground that makes people get along, not what the differences are between them." Pat Beaver (1992) discovered that in western North Carolina during periods of intense immigration in the 1970s and 1980s:

Counterculture folks were a convenient scapegoat for local tensions, as they were in truth representative of economic changes in the nation that were tearing at the local

social fabric. They represented the unsettling cultural changes as children were exposed to drug use in public schools, women moved into the public labor force, unemployment rose, and the economy placed greater strain on the family. (p.137)

Beaver also recounts several stories of "hippies" and back-to-the-landers who moved to the mountains and went to great lengths to become assimilated into the local community. They were accepted by the locals, and locals with land to sell would often sell to hippies before someone from Florida. That almost all of the revivalists whom I interviewed who moved to western North Carolina between the late 1960s and the 1980s self-identify as "hippies" or "Deadheads" perhaps colors the impression they have made on the natives. In the next chapter, Low Gap, NC native Carter Miller* mentions revivalists who have been able to "blend in." In contrast to Beaver's findings, the musicians that he mentions who have been able to do this are those who did *not* strongly identify with a counter-culture ideology. For Carter, "hippies" represent too large of a cultural gap; they have too far to go to become fully integrated into the community. Anglin (1983) found that in regards to native vs. non-native issues in Appalachia, "matters such as dress and personal style can be used as a means of discrediting people who are regarded as threatening to the community" (p.230). A revivalist with less of a hippie lifestyle would likely make an easier transition into the local culture, and would represent less of an aberration. However, both Carter and Beaver's informants shared an equal disdain for "Florida people" who move to gated communities and seem to want nothing to do with the locals. No matter how different revivalists and traditionalists are in terms of politics or cultural beliefs, all traditionalists understand that revivalists' reason for coming to the mountains is out of a love of old-time music. Even if they seem to keep to themselves, these revivalists pay a constant tribute to Appalachian culture, while the same

could not be said of gated community residents. This supports the findings of Anglin (1983), who discovered that in Appalachia, "in-migrants can be accepted on an individual basis, although they may be distrusted as a group" (p.228).

The following dialogue between two "hippie" transplant musicians (Sarah* –S, and Tim* – T) highlights what seems to be a cordial relationship between transplants and natives, but that cordiality has to be earned over time:

S: When you first move here it might be like "Oh, you're not from around here" but like with us, we play the music and we're just kind of accepted as one of the bands.

T: We're just viewed as musicians. I'm sure some of the people, when they talk among themselves at Beulah (affects Southern accent) "that long-haired guy and his wife."

S: No they don't do that anymore. We've been here long enough.

Through researching in-migrants in Appalachia, Anglin (1983) encountered an in-migrant who was threatened by his local neighbors and told to leave the area. Anglin characterizes the feelings of this in-migrant and others like him as being that "people [in Appalachia] don't like long-hairs" (p. 230). However, when Sarah and Tim were asked if they could think of anyone who would not want to play music with them, they responded:

S: I think anybody that we know probably would have [agreed to do it].

T: I think anyone around, if you were at a place or somebody said "hey come on over, let's have some tunes," the door would be open to any musicians, being from around here or not.

S: People are pretty free about sharing their music around here.

More than twenty years is a long time for a peaceful, well-meaning group to be stigmatized within any community, and I did not find enough evidence to convince me that there was significant hostility directed at these transplant musicians (hippie or not) by the natives.

Often, cultural differences between those two groups can lead to a *perceived* hostility that is, in actuality, a miscommunication. One Boone area revivalist told me that

there's definitely some old-time snobbery. It's so subjective that I think that because so much of it is about interpretation – that you can really rub somebody the wrong way if you don't do it like they've done it, especially the people who have been playing it their whole lives. I don't know if they get insulted if it's not that way, but you can definitely tell that some people don't appreciate your style as much as you do, I guess.

Musicians from both sides of the spectrum acknowledged the conflicts between traditionalists and revivalists, and most of them have been personally involved in these conflicts from time to time. The majority of traditionalists were both grateful for the revival and the efforts of outsiders to preserve the music, and aware of the change that revivalists brought to the music. However, most of the revivalists living in the area were content to play the music with other revivalists, so even those traditionalists who may love to jam with revivalists would have a hard time getting to do so at any time other than a festival. In summation, there exist two distinct groups of old-time musicians in Mt. Airy who view each other in both positive and negative lights (a sort of mutual acceptance), yet rarely interact with one another. While most revivalists and traditionalists are moderate to liberal in their views about the other group, I discovered some traditional musicians who viewed the influx

of transplant revivalists with more reservations. One of those musicians, Carter Miller,* is the subject of my next chapter.

Case Study: Carter Miller

As this is a study of a change in Appalachian tradition, it is important to understand what that tradition is and how it is being kept alive by Appalachian tradition-bearers. The following sections attempt to detail how one traditional Surry County musician has assumed the role of cultural emissary. Carter Miller is a *non-continuous, tradition-inspired, traditionalist purist* musician. As the most extreme example I could find of a traditional musician who feels hostility toward revivalist musicians, I hoped he would be a doorway into a hidden world of traditional musicians who feel that their culture is being commandeered by outsiders, who feel taken advantage of, who feel marginalized within a community based around the music of their ancestors. What I found, however, was that Carter is indeed an exception among traditional musicians in Surry County, yet his feelings about revivalists have less to do with their lifestyle or place of origin, and more to do with musical purism. That is to say, any hostility Carter feels is due less to demographic factors, and more to whether or not revivalists in the area have paid sufficient respect to the older generation of Round Peak musicians (which would be evident in the revivalists' playing style). In fact, Carter has formed strong friendships with several revivalists who have taken care to learn the nuances of Round Peak music as played by those in Tommy Jarrell's generation. This threw a wrench in my initial theory that lurking under the surface of the seemingly amicable relations between revivalists and traditionalists was a seething resentment directed toward revivalists. If my most extreme example turned out to be someone who was simply picky about how to

play the music, someone who has gone as far as to feature revivalists on his recordings, perhaps I had misunderstood the entire situation.

Carter Miller was born on September 7, 1974, in Galax, Virginia. He and his family moved to Low Gap, North Carolina (about twelve miles away) and he has lived there ever since. Carter drove a dirt track racecar for three years in Elkin, North Carolina, but was advised to quit by his doctor after suffering severe respiratory problems from the dust. After Carter learned that he was allergic to dust and would not be able to continue racing, he "just quit that and went and bought a banjo," a fretted Goldtone from Old Mill Music in Mount Airy. After a few months he moved to a fretless banjo after experimenting on Verlon Clifton's, which used to belong to Jake Norman (the "Jake" from the first line of "Breakin Up Christmas," "Hooray Jake, Hooray John"). But Carter also remembered not having any interest in music until he started going to a square dance at the Allegheny Jubilee in Sparta, where Benton Flippen played fiddle. Carter's uncle is Benton's nephew, making Carter related (albeit distantly) to Benton. At those dances, Carter discovered that he "really loved the sound of the banjo." Carter kept going to see Benton play, sometimes traveling there with another local musician. He didn't know that he and that musician were cousins (double cousins, but "kin" four or five different ways and probably double second or third cousins) until after they had spent some time together. After getting down the basics of the banjo, something "lit a fire" in Carter, and Paul Sutphin (his fourth cousin) told him "Boy, I tell you one darn thing, you gotta learn that banjer. You gotta play it like old Creed, like old Kyle, he knows how to play that thing." Then, Verlon Clifton, (his third cousin), told him "Carter, you come over to the house sometime and I'll teach you some on that banjer." Verlon would

fingerpick tunes for Carter and Carter would "try to follow along clawhammer-style – and [he'd] pick em right up."

Method of Learning

When he first started learning the banjo, Carter took a bluegrass lesson, but said "it ain't for me" because he wanted to get back into the "old stuff." Carter first learned how to frail (the right hand motion used in old-time banjo) by watching people like Kirk Sutphin, a traditional musician who mentored under Tommy Jarrell. During their practice sessions, Kirk would play the fiddle, and if Carter needed help, Kirk would show him the banjo part. Carter was insistent that he learn "how the old people had to learn. [He] didn't want to learn by tabs or nothing like that." Eighty percent of Carter's repertoire has come from listening to old recordings of Tommy Jarrell, Fred Cockerham, Kyle Creed, Charlie Lowe, Gilmer Woodruff, and others. Carter has made such an effort to replicate the particular nuances of each musician's style that he can now either combine their styles or play each one separately.

At one point during my visit, he played me three different versions of "Roustabout." Carter has the same sort of minimal hand movement as Kirk, Kyle, and Tommy, but says that he only learned that after he had seen videos of them playing. He apparently taught himself the importance of economy of motion, and he keeps his right hand up past where the head and the neck meet, which is the way Kyle Creed played as well. Despite having no musical training or experience playing instruments before he took up the banjo, Carter says that he could tell from the recordings how they were noting it: "I mean I would just sit there and just focus on it. I mean I might be going down the road and listen to the same tune thirty or forty miles just trying to figure that one note out." Kirk always told him to slide into the notes, a

chief characteristic of Round Peak banjo, and Carter noted that "there's a lot of people who play the fretless who don't slide."

Identity as a Banjo Player

When I asked Carter to show me some of the older playing styles that he learned from the recordings, he had to walk by three uncased banjos to get to the one he wanted. A tour around his home further solidified his primary identity as a banjo aficionado. His holiday card from last year shows him and his wife holding banjos, there were trinkets on the shelves of banjo players, and his wife even had on a banjo necklace. Perhaps the most interesting of the music-related items in his living room is a poster of 250 years of Galax-area musicians (1750 to 2000). His wife bought this at the annual Galax fiddler's convention, and it lists over 100 musicians' names, life spans, and what instruments they played. This fits with Carter's interest in old musicians, and he was recently given a list of graveyard sites where the local musicians are buried. He vows that he will soon be taking a "boneyard" trip to visit more of these gravesites. Pictures of deceased Round Peak musicians such as Fred "Chucklejaws" Cockerham and Tommy Jarrell hang on his wall. One particularly interesting picture shows Fred, Tommy, Oscar Jenkins, and Grandpa Jones. Another picture shows Zach Payne's old Civil War fiddle (played by Tommy in *Sprout Wings and Fly*) atop Paul Sutphin's grave.

Carter started competing after playing banjo for only eight months, and in his first competition, at Sparta in 2001, he was awarded fifth place in the banjo competition. Not content with fifth, Carter continued to compete, and now has an impressive stack of ribbons (most of them blue). He says that he is most proud of his first place win at Galax last year in

the old-time band category. In the summer, he and his wife try to attend festivals at Mount Airy, Galax, Elk Creek, Laurel Bloomery, Fries, Clifftop, and Sparta.

Tour around Round Peak

It was Carter's rather than my idea to take a car tour around the Round Peak area, but as soon as we left his driveway, I understood why he thought it would be important. As we drove down his driveway, he told me that part of what's now his land used to be the old Creed farm. Camp Creek (the inspiration for the Camp Creek Boys) runs between Carter's house and the road, and on the other side of the road is Skull Camp Mountain. According to Carter, this mountain got its name during Civil War, when slaves went inside the mountain's caves to hide and died from deprivation. Carter used to explore these caves when he was younger, but hasn't gone back since the land was sold to someone he doesn't know.

Maybe 200 feet down the road from Carter's place is Kyle Creed's homeplace, and the rest of the drive consisted of Carter pointing out who used to live where, and what buildings used to be on the now buildingless fields. Carter plays WPAQ, the local old-time and bluegrass station, on his radio. One decrepit wooden structure used to be an "old store with lots of music." We drive along Flippen road, named after his great-great grandfather Walter Flippen, and see Flippen's old barn and farm. Carter used to go there for family reunions, and told me that while there are different Flippens (some spelled "Flippin"), all of them originally came from Stokes County.

Once the tree line opened up I could see Round Peak Mountain and Fisher's Peak. Carter pointed out an old house at the top of a hill where a dancer named Carliss used to live. As we passed another farm, Carter told me that he had used wood from a walnut tree there in

one of his banjos, and he has also used wood from his great grandfather's homeplace on Round Peak Mountain. As we keep driving we pass Johnson's old dairy farm, Vernon Clifton's homeplace, Paul Sutphin's log cabin, and an old store belonging to Cosby Golding. Carter remembered hearing stories about that store having a lot of music before it burned down in a fire. When we pass a road named after Doc Golding, Carter's his great-grandfather, Carter told me that Doc was a "big moonshiner, used to own everything around there." However, Carter began to get upset when he told me about the fate of that land. Thirteen of his great aunts and uncles, who had inherited this land, had sold it to a developer who will subdivide it and sell it. Keefe (1994) asserted that "Appalachian people feel a strong bond with the land and the mountains. Land ownership is valued and preserved through inheritance," (p. 23) and that Appalachians are attached to a "specific area, a homeland where family and community converge" (p.24). This is certainly true for Carter Miller. We continue driving, and eventually pass his great-great-great grandfather Golding's old place, his great-great aunt and uncle's house, and the land that used to belong to his great-great-great-great grandfather, Davis Wade Holding. It was hard to me to fathom what a long family lineage Carter has in this one place of the world, but according to Carter, he can trace his family's presence in Low Gap to the mid eighteenth century.

As we pass a house that looks out of place with the rest of the houses and barns I had seen on the drive, Carter offered the following:

It's amazing how this area's really got populated in the last 15 years. That's what just breaks my heart. To grow up around here and come see all these new houses and people moved in from somewhere. I know they got rights, you know, to buy land and

everything, but it's...sad. I mean, I used to know *everybody* here, and now I just hardly don't know anybody. And all the old timers are dying out.

According to Carter, these people are coming from "up North, Florida." Anthropologist Patricia Beaver, in *Rural Community in the Appalachian South* (1992), also wrote about these transplants in a chapter titled "Foreigners":

The 1960's ... saw the increasing popularity of the mountains for second-home development. In increasing numbers, "summer people," or "Florida people," began to locate land for summer retreats off the beaten path, away from established resort areas where land prices had become prohibitive for all but the very wealthy...Sale to developers or summer people was considered to be less desirable because it often entailed a more dramatic alteration of the environment and affront to the local culture. Summer houses were put where houses had never been (on the ridgetops); muddy roads cut through fields and woods; signs for [new names] were erected in the middle of named places; fences limited traditional access of local people to community land; and pole lights shone 365 nights a year over houses rarely occupied (p.117-124).

Carter took me to two local cemeteries during my visit, one of which was Round Peak Cemetery, where Earnest East and his kin are buried. Carter's banjo playing great-great grandfather (William B. Golding, 1875 – 1949) is buried there, and the fiddles and banjos on many of the gravestones indicated that most of the people in the cemetery were musicians. Jake Norman (1874-1938), from the "Breakin' up Christmas" song is also buried there, as are Paul Sutphin's mother and father (1875 – 1960). The surname on the majority of the stones was "Jarrell," and at a different cemetery that afternoon I saw (Tommy's father) Ben Jarrell's grave. Any time I asked Carter about a dead person that he didn't know about, he told me that

his grandma could "tell me everything about 'em." Also, when asked whether he has Scottish, English, or Irish ancestry, he told me that his "grandma would know." Carter has promised to take me to the graves of both Emmett Lundy and DaCosta Woltz on my next trip there.

Importance of Tradition in Carter's Music

"Well I have these weird experiences when I'm playin. Sometimes I, like, people are runnin' through my head like Fred [Cockerham] or Charlie Lowe or Kyle [Creed], and right in the middle of the tune I might change my style from Charlie to Kyle."

-Carter Miller, 2008

Carter is absolutely dedicated to continuing the Round Peak style of playing. When we first played music together at fiddle conventions during the summer of 2008, I noticed that his repertoire seemed to be limited to strictly "Round Peak" tunes. And it was not just that he didn't want to *start* non-Round Peak tunes, he didn't know the melodies of many non-Round Peak tunes well enough to even follow along. If a Round Peak musician from the mid 1800s were to be magically transported to a jam at a fiddle festival, they would not be expected to know many tunes from other regions. For Carter, his disinterest in non-Round Peak music is a conscious choice. In *Old-Time Kentucky Fiddle Tunes* (2001), ethnomusicologist Jeff Todd Titon asserted that "music from all over the globe can be heard at the press of a button on a compact disc player or computer, but [old time musicians] still decide what styles and what tunes they want to play. Most younger old-time fiddlers today, of course, didn't grow up in rural semi-isolation, and they didn't absorb a single local tradition from family and neighbors" (p.5). Although Carter grew up in the Round Peak area, Low Gap can hardly be characterized as a "semi-isolated" rural area; Carter lives less than

ten miles from I-77. And although he has absorbed a local tradition from family and neighbors, he has made an active decision to do so.

Often, the music of Carter's "family and neighbors" is only accessible through recordings, since most of the musicians who recorded the canon of Round Peak tunes are deceased. While researching traditional West Virginia fiddlers, Gerry Milnes (1999) discovered that

those who were so much a part of traditional instrumental music in the state have been exposed to and impressed by a wider array of music than their predecessors could imagine. Young musicians, who not so long ago would have had the chance to learn old-time music from local, community, or family sources, endure a barrage of musical genres, and are often detoured by them. Musicians now travel across many county and/or state lines to their mentors and depend on recorded offerings to find desired material. Those who want to play the oldest styles of traditional music have made a conscious and intellectual decision to do so, rather than following a natural course of events (p. 154).

Carter is especially interesting because he is privy to both means of learning.

Community sources inspired his initial interest in the music and taught him the basics of the instrument, but when it came time to woodshed (practice), he preferred to listen to old recordings and figure out the tunes himself. Carter is so self-sufficient and determined that even if Kyle Creed was still alive and able to teach, Carter would likely spend most of his time practicing on his own.

Musical Conflicts

Prior to my arrival at Carter's, I had mentioned to him that I would be interviewing local revivalists for my thesis next semester. Because a particular banjo player, Randy,* lives nearby, is originally from New England, also plays banjo, and has also released albums featuring some of the musicians who played on Carter's album, Carter has formed strong opinions about him and his style of music. While Carter knows what my thesis is about, he offered the following comments about Randy unprompted by me. They occurred when I asked Carter if there was any particular thing he wanted to achieve through his album or through his banjo playing and making. The following comments are in reference to a recording that Randy made of Kyle Creed's version of "Lost Indian" that has, over the years, become his "own." Carter told me:

If I'm gonna put on something like he did, Kyle Creed's "Lost Indian," I'm a-play it right exactly like Kyle played it. He don't do that. You don't do that, it's kinda like insultin' the person. That's the way I look at it.... I've heard so many people say that Round Peak music is supposed to be done this way, it's supposed to be done that way, and this way, and most of it's comin' from these Yankees. And I just wanted to prove a point, you know? I'm from here and I can do it the right way, I mean the old way, the way these old folks did it. I just wanted to carry on the old folks' tradition. I mean there's some of the Northerners who comes down and, you know they blend in and they're real good musicians. But some of 'em come down and just -"you doin' it the wrong way, I do it the right way"...

Later, when he was about to play "Kyle's *real* Lost Indian," Carter said that Randy "must've been all smoked up when she played that" (a jab at the presumed revivalist lifestyle)

and that he would happily give me his copy of Randy's CD ("I ain't never had it out of the package"). Before he played me his Kyle Creed "Lost Indian," he looked at the camera and said "Randy, eat your heart out."

Carter's antagonism might be focused on one musician especially, but his attitude extends to many revivalist musicians. On a non-musical level, Carter has said that he's encountered people whom he considers to be rude: "Northerners who ain't got no Southern hospitality," but he had much more to say about the music itself. When asked how non-native musicians have affected the music of Round Peak, Carter said that "they come down here and they learned the tunes and most of 'em went back to their home area and said 'I learned this tune from Tommy Jarrell.' And it don't sound nothin' like Tommy Jarrell. You say you learned a tune from somebody, you need to at least sound like 'em, you know?" When asked if he had ever felt uncomfortable in a musical situation, he told me about his experience in a jam that happened during a wedding reception:

The first few tunes was pretty normal tunes, you know. And then they got into playin' this weird stuff that nobody else really knowed, maybe the other fiddler, and I tried to play along and I couldn't never get it. Then I just laid my banjo in my lap while they're still playin', and I was just gettin' madder and madder and madder and thinkin': "why can't they play something that everybody knows instead of playing something just trying to show the people what they can play that nobody else can play?" I said, "I can't play this shit," and I got up and left – and Mac Traynam standing over there – I said, "Mac get your fiddle, let's go play some real music."

For Carter, what makes a musician "blend in" to the local area is not so much where that musician is *from*, but *how* that musician plays Round Peak music. When asked to explain the differences between a traditionalist and a revivalist, Carter offered the following:

CM: Well, I guess them revivalist people...they take the tunes and butcher 'em up.

DW: But not all...?

CM: Oh no, there's a few people that I really respect – good friends with. And they took the tunes and learned 'em exactly how [older traditionalists from Round Peak] played 'em. And I respect them for that and encourage them in the music, but some of them just kinda slurred my music and the way I played.

However, according to Carter, being a native to the region gives those musicians more freedom about how they play the local music "as long as they didn't put too much crap in it." Someone not from the area who put less "crap" in the music would still be more of a revivalist than a traditionalist. In this aspect, Carter agrees with Kara Thomas's classification system in which the dividing line between "traditional" and "revivalist" is based on geography and culture rather than how that musician actually plays the tunes.

Based on conversations and our drive around the area, I can see that Carter is justifiably worried about the encroachment of outsiders on the traditional way of life in Low Gap. More and more land is being sold to outsiders, fewer people are farming, people have moved in who haven't integrated into the community, young people are leaving after high school, and mainstream and pop culture are eroding what used to be a thriving traditional culture of music, dance, and community events. Anglin (1983) found that for Appalachians, "the presence of outsiders, who unwittingly challenge the viability of [Appalachian] beliefs, is considered a threat," and that Appalachian natives "may also regard outsiders as

threatening because they have, or seem to have, financial and educational advantages over local people" (p.237). Carter did not specifically mention any jealousy over the expensive high-priced homes that are being built near his home, nor did he ascribe any of his disdain for outsiders as having to do with disparate belief systems. He did say that the loss of his family land was "sad," but continued to list musical, rather than other factors, as being the reason for his dislike of certain revivalist transplants. Nevertheless, Carter is extraordinarily proud of his region's traditional music, and by becoming a tradition bearer himself, he hopes to keep that tradition alive. He has a connection to the land, the music, and the people that revivalists could never have, and he therefore approaches the music differently than revivalists would.

The Context of Old-Time Music in Round Peak

Carter's grandma once told him that when she was growing up they didn't like for women to go out to dances because they associated the fiddle with the devil. Carter's family used to have a reunion at the Round Peak Lodge, and Carter and his cousins would provide old-time music. However, when they moved it to a nearby church, Carter decided that the church "wasn't a good place to have it because [they] were playing fiddle while people were coming out of the church." While still true in some areas, especially among the older population, there are far worse things in society nowadays than dancing to fiddle music. Carter also told me about a great uncle who was a preacher and a musician. One day his uncle let a church service out to find a group of musicians playing dance tunes outside the church door. Some of his parishioners didn't know what to do, but Carter's great uncle, a musician himself, said something along the lines of "C'mon ya'll, let's dance! That's some

damn good music!" Carter's wife provided the following about the traditional context for old-time music in the Round Peak area:

Music was this community's main form of entertainment. Keep in mind at this time they didn't have television, video games, computers and the Internet to busy themselves with. Life was hard, and music made people's lives easier by providing an escape from the hard days of work around the farm. Often in the evenings after the work was done, people would walk, ride horses, or later drive to their friends' homes to play music and dance. Also, at certain times of the year, people had bean-stringings, corn-shuckings, barn-raising, molasses-makings, and other kinds of work events in which the community came together to help one another get work done. Then, once the work was finished, the musicians would play and the dancers would dance.

Now, Carter and his wife have a television and a computer with internet access. They both own vehicles, so they don't do too much walking, and they rarely go to friends' houses to play. Carter's relatives still string beans, but most barns in the area are deteriorating from disuse, rather than being maintained by necessity. Carter may have changed with the times out of convenience, but his devotion for old-time Round Peak banjo remains unsullied by modernity.

Recordings

Carter recently released a self-produced album of his banjo playing, with accompaniment from a number of Round Peak musicians. A huge hit in the local community and among Round Peak banjo enthusiasts worldwide, Carter's album was played in its

entirety on WPAQ shortly after it was released. Carter and his bandmates had played live on the station before, but to Carter's knowledge, the playing of his album from start to finish was a first in WPAQ history. The front cover of Carter's CD shows a picture of Carter holding his banjo in front of Round Peak Mountain. The background image, which runs throughout the album's insert, is an old map of the Mount Airy area townships. Behind the CD is a picture of a road sign demarcating the intersection of Old Low Gap and Round Peak Church Roads. Finally, the back cover shows two of Carter's banjos leaning against a fence post. This design demonstrates Carter's desire to preserve and present the history of the area and its music, and shows that Carter is uniquely qualified to do so.

Carter did not just ask whoever was available at the time to play on this album. Each musician was included for a specific reason, primarily because they, like Carter, are both natives to the region and learned the music from either recordings or face-to-face sessions with the kinfolk who recorded these tunes in the 1960s and 1970s. The exception to this, of course, is David Holt. A native of Texas and later California, David moved to western North Carolina in 1968 after graduating from the University of California at Santa Barbara. Despite his non-Round Peak origins, Holt is a musician who, according to Carter, has been able to "blend in."

The sources for the tunes on Carter's CD include Tommy Jarrell, Fred Cockerham, Kyle Creed, Otis Burris, the Dix Freeman Toenail Gap String Band, and other local musicians. The tracks, therefore, are highly characteristic of the Round Peak repertoire. Tunes like "Sally Ann," "Rockingham Cindy," "John Brown's Dream," and "Old Jimmy Sutton" owe their popularity within current old-time jam circles to older Round Peak musicians who recorded these tunes on influential albums. That Carter learned sixteen of the

nineteen tunes from recordings (and recordings may have been his source for the other three, as well) is a testament to both Carter's affinity toward the old musicians and a significant gap (between 20 and 40 years) in the living banjo traditions of the Round Peak region. If enough Round Peak banjo players had learned the styles of Fred Cockerham, Kyle Creed, or Tommy Jarrell, Carter could have learned all nineteen tunes "knee-to-knee," as he did "Fiddler's Reel" from Benton Flippen. This is supported by Carter's wife's comment in the liner notes that "these [old] recordings influenced Carter's banjo playing in a profound way because he learned things from them that he could not learn from most current players, because many of the special techniques the older musicians employed are not found in most of the present-day banjo players' repertoire."

Conclusion

Carter Miller has fallen in love with a cultural aspect of his community's ancestors, and he prides himself on being a bearer of that tradition. He has a profound respect for the old Round Peak musicians, so much so that he has shaped his identity around being one himself. Carter's whole life, and the lives of at least five generations of his family, is contained within the area around Camp Creek, and he therefore feels threatened when he sees how the area has changed and is changing. A decorated competitor, Carter's competitive spirit will no doubt ensure his success as both a businessman and a musician. Galax 2018, which sounds like an oxymoron, is when Carter insists he will win first place fiddle (probably after patterning his playing on Tommy Jarrell, Fred Cockerham, or Benton Flippen), and I believe he has a good chance of doing so. Carter Miller is as much of a "real

musician could hope to find in the mountains, and I am honored to have worked with him on this project.

Two Old-Time Musics

"We play a lot for personal satisfaction over what people want to hear."

-Surry County revivalist musician

"You don't try to play something that the crowd can't play."

-Surry County traditional musician

Based on my findings from this research and my involvement in the old-time community, it is my assertion that there exist two different forms of old-time music in Boone and Mt. Airy: the music played by traditionalists and the music played by revivalists. While there are substantial differences in the musical approaches, the more obvious and important difference is in the function of these musics. If anything is indicative of the new context for Appalachian old-time music, it is the shift from community music to personal music and the shift of the audience from dancers to the musicians themselves. Traditional old-time music is chiefly played for dances. It is a music played *by a group for an audience* – functional performance music. While revivalists also play old-time music for dances, revivalist old-time music is chiefly played at jams and not for an audience. It is a music played *by a group for that same group*. A revivalist musician from Mt. Airy used a comparison between the two most popular summer fiddle conventions, Clifftop, West Virginia and Galax, Virginia, to illustrate the differences in these musics:

Galax is a real event that happens in a real culture and Clifftop is kind of bizarre. I

mean it happens in an area where there is that tradition, but Clifftop didn't grow out of

that. It almost seems artificial compared to the feeling that you get at Galax... You get there and it's very much reality... at Galax there's an audience of people that are absorbing the energy of the music, whereas at Clifftop it's like you can be in the hottest session and putting out this incredible energy to nobody. So in a way it's all just for yourself, but then the energy you get bouncing back off of people, like when you're sitting there having a really hot jam at Galax and all of a sudden you look up and there's this whole semi-circle of people and dancing and... High school kids and young families, old folks, you know, people will start dancin' and clogging and pull out and do some steps and it's folks in their thirties and who may not have danced for six months and they'll throw out some cool steps. There's that interaction and they'll clap and they'll buy your CDs. And at Clifftop it's like your friends buy your CD when you have a release party. It's really, I'd say Galax, after Clifftop, is such an antidote to some of the stuff that happens at Clifftop where you don't have an audience – you're just playin for yourself.

Musical and Non-musical Differences

The same lines that divide the political makeup of the country into red states and blue states divide most traditionalists from revivalists. One Boone revivalist told me: "I think there's a tendency for the politics to be towards the democratic side –grassroots – in [revivalists], which I find to be very ironic because a lot of the Southern old guys we come down here to study have a very different way of looking at things." This difference does not only apply to the voting booth – it is indicative of a very different way of life than most

revivalists had experienced. When asked about the differences between traditional and revival musicians, a revivalist musician from north of Boone told me that:

[music] was part of [a traditionalist's] life and not just a musical hobby. I mean it was a musical hobby but it was also – if the music was in the area it was part of their everyday life, as far back as you wanna go. And the revivalists were interested in music and they thought it was cool. There's no way that they can approach it the same way. Emotionally, psychologically, they're just approaching it from a totally different perspective, totally. [Revivalists] may not have anybody in their area who plays it and they're just getting it from recordings...but there's no way they can have the same perspective on it as someone who grew up there and heard uncle and granddaddy play it and then they started playing it and it was always part of their life. It was more of a community thing too – that's the other difference in perspective is coming only from the music aspect...It's the country, rural, agrarian lifestyle that most revivalists don't have, and music is part of that.

The way that these differences now manifest themselves are through issues of inclusiveness, instrumental technique, and tune repertoire.

Inclusiveness

The community versus individual audience discussed at the beginning of this chapter is key to understanding how these two groups approach this issue of inclusiveness. It would be neither fair nor accurate to make the generalization that traditional musicians always cater to the musicians jamming with them and that revivalists never make amends for musicians who don't know certain tunes, nor would it be accurate to say that all traditional musicians

are averse to learning new tunes on the spot. But for many revivalists, especially at jams and festivals, the quality of the music holds primacy over the human-to-human interaction. For many traditionalists, the interactions and sense of community hold primacy over the quality of the music. This sort of dynamic varies between festivals, and for a traditional musician who specializes in Round Peak area tunes, Clifftop can be a daunting place: "Clifftop – I don't enjoy it as much as the rest of 'em and it's because all of those Kentucky and West Virginia fiddlers are playin' them tunes that I don't know. They also play the tunes that I play, but if they slip one in there that I don't know I just kinda have to slip to the side or something." In fact, several traditional musicians had experienced uncomfortable musical situations involving revivalists – chiefly due to the particular tunes being played in the jam circle. One Ashe County traditional musician has encountered the situation where a fiddle player tries to out-do the other fiddle players in order to feel superior. This is viewed as highly selfish and incompatible with the ethos of the music; however, this musician's attitude towards music is perhaps equally selfish:

I like to play music in my style with people who play like I like to play, and there is this happening where people, especially fiddle players, they're trying to one up one another by playing a song that only they can play. And that leads to a horrible quality of music for a jam session because if only one person can play that song, all the rest of us are kinda fumbling around trying to follow the music, and you can't really have a good strong jam session like that. So a lot of times rather than saying anything or trying to turn the jam session in a different direction, it's easier to just not get into it or nicely excuse yourself. You pretty much have a sense of whether you're gonna fit in or not.

I have noticed this sort of behavior much more from revivalist fiddlers, probably because their base of tunes is wider. Also, many revivalist musicians enjoy the challenge of figuring out new tunes on the spot, and therefore welcome the playing of new and unfamiliar tunes in jam circles.

The basis for musical communities is also different between the two groups and rests on the aforementioned issue of the quality of music being the decisive factor for whether or not a musician will be accepted by other revivalists. If a revivalist musician joins an unfamiliar jam and is bad enough at their instrument that they detract from the groove, it is likely that they will either be completely ignored or even asked to leave the jam. The personality of that person is a secondary characteristic to their musical skill. The opposite is usually true for traditional musicians. One Boone area traditional musician said, "I'm not gonna judge somebody by how they came to the music or how they learned it as long as they're fun to play with. I don't even care how good of a musician you are. If I think you're a good person, I like hanging out with you, then I'll probably like playing with you." Making music together with friends and sharing that experience, regardless of the quality of that music, is what this traditional musician loves about playing old-time music. Some people attribute these differences to a North vs. South dynamic (i.e. the stereotype of cold Yankees and warm Southerners). One such informant, a traditional musician from Mt. Airy, spoke of both North/South differences and the tendency to form cliques rather than remaining open to others:

A lot of people who have implanted themselves in Surry County are not willing to share. If you go to a [revivalist] party it's very cliquish compared to the older traditions...I think where you grew up really matters – Southern people are just more

friendly...you can go spend an hour with [a local traditional musician] and you feel like you've known him forever and he's really willing to talk and tell stories and play with you. And maybe it's not that [local revivalists] are less willing, it's just you have to get in with them first... You have to work a lot harder before they're willing to show you anything. You have to become one of them. You have to meet their approval...

It is possible, of course, that there is some truth to the different emphases on personal connections and openness between Northerners and Southerners. While one traditional musician, as mentioned in the Boone Chapter, felt that Clifftop was ridiculous in that cliques of musicians drive so far yet tend to only play with one another, a Northern revivalist felt that it wasn't a matter of how many people she played with, but that just by virtue of driving that far and camping in the woods to play music with others, she was doing something against the grain of mainstream society:

I think everything's so convenient and everything's right at our disposal and yet here's this thing that we travel thousands of miles to do, and you go for a week and we pitch a tent in the middle of a field with 4000 people in order to be near them and experience each other's company, and I think that's special now when you have everything right here where we need it, you know, and it's also weird and bizarre and has its own little quirks to it too.

One reason that uncomfortable musical situations often occur between revivalists and traditionalists is that revivalists can pull tunes from any recording they have heard, while traditionalists are usually confined to a regional repertoire. Not only that, but those regional tunes often have similar structures – especially the tunes used for dancing. Especially popular

with revivalists are "crooked" tunes, or tunes with an uneven number of beats in each section. These tunes are not played as often for dances due to this irregularity. Also, revivalists tend to play more multi-part tunes, that is, tunes with three, four, or even five parts, as opposed to the two part tunes that are so commonly used for dances. Revivalist bands that play for these traditional dances have to cater to the audience, but the tunes that they pick reflect the value they place on musical adventurousness and variety. These revivalists play Round Peak tunes at dances "because it is what people want to hear... We do throw in a lot of other tunes, and we also like to dig around deeper and find some more obscure local tunes, but you can right off the bat tell, if you play a couple of tunes in a row and then throw in 'Mississippi Sawyer' or 'Sally Ann' [both standard Surry County tunes], I mean the whole audience is just like 'Ahhhhh!' Especially at Beulah."

When traditionalists and revivalists are around one another at festivals, one manifestation of these musical and cultural differences occurs in how these groups set up their campsites. To a newcomer to old-time music not versed in the nuances of the music itself, this might be the most glaring difference between traditionalists and revivalists. Whereas many traditional musicians set up in a central location and attempt to create an open design to their jam, many revivalists camp on the outskirts of the grounds – often near the tree line, or even past it. At nighttime many traditional campsites will be lit, and new musicians will be able to join the jam. However, many revivalists will use only low candlelight after dark, and will be arranged in a way that discourages newcomers (i.e. sitting so close to one another that a new musician would have to be behind them). In addition to the physical setup is the type of tunes revivalists will play at a festival. Traditionalists tend to think of a festival as more of a public jam, while revivalists might think of it as a series of

private jams occurring simultaneously in the same area. One traditional musician from near Mt. Airy describes his inclusive attitude towards festival jams: "Everybody's there playin' [at his campsite]. They come to where I'm at, you know, because they know that we like to jam. They know that anybody can play, and it ain't like that for some of the bands. Some bands want to be off in a corner somewhere playin' their tunes. It's not like that where I'm at; I don't want it to be anyway." When asked about being around tunes he didn't know, he replied, "I try not to get in them situations because you can't play somethin' you don't know, or I can't. I got to know a tune to play it... at a convention...everybody's just wantin' to play, and *you don't try to play something that the crowd can't play* [my emphasis]." Not only does this musician make his jam available to anyone who wants to join, he even caters the tunes he plays to the abilities of the visiting musicians.

In addition to the community aspects, traditionalists and revivalists often differ in how they will play old-time tunes. Because so few young revivalists today are able to learn directly from older traditional musicians within the cultural context of that music, there is less of an impetus for revivalists to keep the tunes "traditional." One traditional informant felt that revivalists:

are more inclined to change music because they didn't get to see the older people who were so enthusiastic about it. They want to change it to make it hip, to make it cool. You change it from the way the old people remember it. The main thing people do is standardize it, like: these are the set tunes for this type of music. And it doesn't work that way.

This was echoed by another traditional musician, who told me that "your newer people – I usually call them 'hippies,' their base of tunes is wider and they're willing to do things with

traditional tunes that older people won't do because it's going outside those traditional norms." Tunes that traditional musicians learn from other traditional musicians are usually colored with a regional accent. When those musicians hear revivalists playing the tune, it may not be at all like the way it was played traditionally. Some revivalists will recontextualize tunes into what is known as "progressive old-time," but more common is the tendency for tunes to become standardized. The standardization of old-time tunes into *easy to play fast* versions has, ironically, led to a muting of the regional nuances that first attracted so many revivalists to the music. This changing of the tunes to reflect more of a modern rock aesthetic can sometimes make traditional versions seem pale by comparison. A traditional Ashe County musician remembers one such instance:

Some revivalists were speaking disrespectfully of Joe Birchfield [traditional musician from east Tennessee], and they were making the comments that were just degrading to his style of music when he was a master! And they were trying to uplift their style of playing the song, whereas Joe Birchfield really had feeling and soul in his music, and the revivalists were just kinda like "eh, this is how I play it" and didn't pay him the respect that he was due.

The purism of some revivalists, however, extends to the source they use to learn new tunes. Two revivalists whom I talked to think this homogenization is a bad thing for old-time music. One of those revivalists, originally from New York, will try to find the earliest recorded version of a tune, rather than any more recent version recorded by a revivalist: "I prefer as a player, to learn from old recordings and try to find things that are kind of, maybe, less well-known and maybe undiscovered by the masses and try to find the more localized styles of doing things rather than going with jam versions of things that have been

homogenized.” The other revivalist opposed to this homogenization felt “the uniqueness of regions and styles is more muted than it was before, and some of the brilliance of the original folks from the 1800s and early 1900s was that it was so freaky, I mean just so totally different because of whatever particular mix. Well now, everybody hears everything. It becomes more and more of a blend.”

Hippie Banjo

Hippie banjo, or “that ol’ hippie-whack,” is something mentioned by several of my informants – all Appalachian natives. The “hippie-whack” can mean several things, ranging from a plucky playing of the same note on the high string and a lower string, to playing with “too much melody and not enough rhythm.” This shift, from an emphasis on rhythm to an emphasis on melody, is indicative of one of the most important differences between the native musicians and the non-natives that I heard, and that I’ve heard at festivals and other events: for native musicians, rhythm is paramount. Whether a tune is pretty enough or played with sufficient variation and technical mastery is nowhere near as important as whether it’s a good tune to dance to. That does not mean, though, that fast sloppy playing is ever encouraged:

I think that these people want to get out there and play so fast – they don’t take the time or the energy to sit down and do their homework by listening to the older recordings and learning from them. They’re so anxious to get out there and play with other people – they haven’t invested the time in learning the songs so they can get out and play ‘em, so they just go that “bucka bucka bucka...”

Carter Miller, a traditional musician from Mt. Airy, recalled hearing hippie banjo during his first summer at Clifftop:

CM: Yeah, [Clifftop is] a weird place.

DW: You went for the first time last year. What'd you think about what you encountered there?

CM: It was strange. I mean if I didn't have any friends there, I'd probably packed up and left 'cause the music was different, they had a different approach to it, and I don't know – it's just different.

DW: What do you think makes the approach different? Do you think it means something different there than it would here?

CM: I don't know, it's just, I mean just hearing the banjo players play and I mean goin' way down the neck and doin' stuff like that and all that old hippie stuff, I don't appreciate.

DW: What else makes the way someone plays a banjo sound "hippie"?

CM: They've got this whack... a "hippie-whack." Whacka-whacka- whacka ...

Feeling vs. Precision

Both traditional and revival musicians had strong feelings about authenticity as related to musical expression. Although old-time music is usually associated with grass-roots, do-it-yourself values, there are an overwhelming number of tools to help already talented musicians learn to play fiddle, banjo, and other old-time instruments. When already talented musicians come into old-time music, it is often difficult to leave their prior musical sensibilities behind. Because so few traditional musicians have any formal musical

instruction, this creates another divide between revivalists and traditionalists. According to one self-taught revivalist musician, the main difference between how traditional and revivalist musicians approach the music is that:

Most traditional people have no clue about music theory at all. I mean they couldn't read a newspaper, much less sheet music. I'm the same way - it was all done by ear. It was all a feeling, you know? It was all passed down ear to ear and each person could put their own little twist on it. But they didn't have a clue about any kind of music theory, where their fingers were supposed to go on the banjo or guitar except what sounded right to them. Well now, you know, everybody is talking about "play the five chord" or whatever. They've totally infused music theory into old-time music, where it doesn't have any fuckin' business being. I mean it's "play it like this" - you hear it. Not write it down, visualize it, any of that stuff. I think if anything will kill old-time music that's what'll do it - is overanalyzation of the music because that's not what it's all about - it's about the feeling.

But where is feeling supposed to come from for a revivalist musician who has little connection to the culture that produced old-time music? How can a revivalist musician inject "authentic" feeling into a song about making instruments out of a freshly killed groundhog if that revivalist has never done that? One traditional musician felt that true feeling in old-time music is not possible without a change in lifestyle:

I feel like to put feeling into music you have got to kinda have had certain experiences in your life where, let's just take, for instance...workin' on the land. Cuttin' wood to heat your house. Growin' things in the garden. There's all kinds of things in music that relate to life in the mountains, and so the more you've done that

type of thing, the more feeling you're going to have. Where you grow up and how you live determines the feeling that you're gonna have that you can put in the music. And revivalists can be from this area and can choose not to research the music in their area and just play it any old way, but I also have a great respect for people who come in and really research the music of an area, maybe if they've moved there, and then they take it up and learn from people in the area then they can have that type of feeling.

Another traditional informant echoed this sentiment. For him, music and life are inextricably linked, and the meaning of songs and tunes that originated hundreds of years ago still hold true today: "When I'm down in the garden hoeing taters I think of that tune "Tater Patch." When I go out there and shoot a groundhog the first thing that comes in my head is the tune "Groundhog." According to L.C. Burman-Hall (1974), "the fiddler has been closely associated with the agricultural occupations" (p.24), and a "close association of traditional music with the work habits of daily life strengthened the bond between the folk and the folk tradition" (p.23). Logic would then dictate that as those work habits change and become modernized, the bond between the music and the folk will be weakened.

Dance Music or Trance Music?

An indication of what old-time music means to traditionalists and revivalists is how those musicians act while playing the music. Since I have been in old-time music I have played more with revivalists than traditionalists. This has changed since moving to North Carolina, but since I am a revivalist and I have tended to play with people around my age, I have developed certain habits while playing this music with others. Many revivalists with whom I have played, myself included, will close their eyes and appear to meditate while

playing old-time music. Certain tunes lend themselves to this interpretation more than others, especially modal tunes, tunes that contain minor chords, atmospheric non-dance tunes, and tunes written by revivalists. This varies from person to person, and I know many revivalists who never show any indication that they are "trancing" on the music. Once I came to North Carolina and began attending festivals and playing with more traditional musicians, I noticed that *none* of them exhibit the trance/meditation display when playing old-time. Their eyes remain open, they are aware of the audience around them, and they don't seem as invested in the tunes. Does this mean that old-time music *means* more to the revivalists who experience such a high from playing it?

When I asked people on both sides of the situation what they experience when they play old-time, the responses indicated that old-time might not be more valued by one group or the other, but that traditionalists and revivalists seek their enjoyment of the music in different areas. Several of my revivalist informants are/were self-proclaimed "Deadheads," fans of the jam-rock band the Grateful Dead. The same musical qualities that attracted them to that music also attract them to old-time, or a certain style of old-time:

Because of being a Deadhead, certain types of music really appealed to me, you know? I guess the hippie old-time stuff where you could really trance out and go for a while, and you get stoned and just kinda trance, and that really appealed to me, and I could see the connection between that and where the Dead would go off on their jams...

This informant later likened himself to a "crackhead" in that he can't seem to stop chasing the high he gets from old-time jamming. When asked if his friend and playing partner, a traditional musician from Virginia, ever seems to experience the same trance/meditative

state, this informant told me that "he does but his thing is a different thing than my thing. He's not a Deadhead, he doesn't know from smoking pot and puttin' on a buzz and – he just has whatever it is that gives him pleasure... There's something that drives him to get to festivals and play with people... It's the same, but different." Another revivalist musician, also a "Deadhead," suggested that "when you take it to that trance level... that's playing music right there... I think it's a different state of music that you get into when you get into those trance tunes."

If revivalists are experiencing catharsis-like trace states while playing music, what is it that traditionalists are getting out of it? According to a Surry County revivalist with decades of experience observing and playing with traditional musicians:

It's a different thing to them, and most of them started so young that it's like eating breakfast, going to school, mowing the grass. It's another thing and it's not an emotional thing that drew them into it, it's just - they were there and that's what you do for entertainment... And you see most of them playing and they're totally still in their chair – deadpan. That doesn't mean they don't enjoy it as much or like it as much, it's just to them it's a part of life - regular part of life. To the rest of us it's a special joy and an emotional experience, and the whole reason I moved here was because of this music.

But if it is a "special joy" to revivalists, whereas it's like "mowing the grass" for traditional musicians, does that not mean that revivalists enjoy it more? I asked traditional musicians if they had noticed a difference in what revivalists do while playing old-time, and then I asked them what they experienced when playing. One traditional musician told me that "Everybody enjoys the music as they want to... I don't really act like that, but that's their thing - if that's

how they release it then that's their thing. I guess you could say that the inner feeling is the same, they just show it in a different way. If I want to tap my foot along to it or nod my head, I'm portaying my same enjoyment of it as they are by being naked and covered in mud."

One traditional musician, whose playing of old-time music is almost always for a dance, told me that having a personal experience with the music seemed counterintuitive to the function of the music. When I asked him about "trancing" on the music, he said,

I don't know what that is. None of us do it. We don't do it, the people that I grewed up around don't do it. And I don't understand why they would do it. If there's somebody dancin', I'm not gonna have my eyes closed. I wanna - I enjoy watchin' people's feet because they [are] like musicians - everybody dances different, and I love to watch people dance...and they [revivalists] want to keep it in that little circle - keep it to theyself.

Another traditional musician, who also plays mostly for dances, told me that he had experienced euphoric feelings while playing old-time music, but it was not because of any certain groove that he reached with his band – rather, it was the reaction of the *crowd* that transcended normal playing experiences: "Oh yeah, I can feel it. Most times I feel it on stage... And the crowd's yellin' for you and whistlin', oh it just makes it." The closest response from a traditional musician to something approximating the trance state experienced by revivalists came from an unlikely source. This musician is a *continuous traditional purist*, yet has had something close to an out of body experience. Notice also that in this testimony this musician references both a link to tradition and the thrill of playing for others:

I've closed my eyes when I'm playin'. For me it's just a real feeling of happiness. I'm doing something I love...and I feel like I'm just following in the footsteps of

musicians who've gone before me. And when other people start comin' around and start dancin', that inspires me to do even better. And then I've also had this weird feelin' where I'm almost out of myself and I'm kinda consumed by just the experience.

While both traditionalists and revivalists play the music because they love to, the approach, context, and function of the music are different between the two groups. These differences have been present since revivalists began playing the music over fifty years ago, and have remained steady since then. The specific factors that cause these differences are difficult to determine. For example, perhaps there is a psychological component to the trace issue that, coupled with someone's cultural upbringing, makes one interpret music in a different way. Southerners tend to like certain music (e.g., country), while Southern Californians tend to like punk and rock music. While psychologists have found differences in brain chemistry to be responsible for things like political ideology, there is not enough research about music perception to link musical aesthetics to the physical characteristics of the brain. Therefore, the different interpretations of the music are likely due chiefly to cultural differences between Appalachians and non-Appalachians. Based on history, it is unlikely that revivalists will ever treat the music like traditionalists, or vice versa. Therefore, the future of old-time music, the subject of my next chapter, becomes a numbers game.

The Trajectory of Old-Time Music

"My daughter, she's twenty-two, and she plays guitar but she plays Green Day and Creed and stuff like that. She don't care anything about the old type music."

-Traditional Surry County musician

"All this is related – old-time music, or the death of it, everything is intertwined there – the music, the culture, when one starts to fade you know everything else is going too."

-Traditional musician from southwest Virginia (now living in Boone)

For old-time music to continue to have cultural relevance *for* Appalachians, it will have to continue to be played *by* Appalachians. However, young Appalachian natives are increasingly shirking their regional culture and are becoming interested in the same things that young people from all over the country are interested in. For example, the elderly dancers at the Beulah dance have been square dancing all their lives, but not one of the people I interviewed predicted that there was a new generation to take their place. According to one young Mt. Airy native, old-time music has become

so much more of a listening event than – it's still, you know, a lot of dancers, but from what I've noticed there's more people playing it to hear it or playing it for themselves than they're playing it to dance, whereas, you know, this older generation that's still hangin' around and still going to these square dances – they grew up to where the sole purpose of the music wasn't to sit and listen but to actually dance to it. Square dance, flatfoot, whatever. And my generation, they're not as connected with that aspect of it.

It remains to be seen if the natural tendency for youthful rebellion will give way to a return to the regional tradition of the area – provided that tradition is still around. Adding to this dilemma is the constant force of cultural change affecting the Appalachian region. These changes are not just caused by gentrification and the influx of corporations into small-town Appalachia – it is the explicit goal of the Appalachian Regional Commission ("a federal-state partnership that works for sustainable community and economic development in Appalachia") to:

- 1) Increase job opportunities and per capita income in Appalachia to reach parity with the nation, 2) Strengthen the capacity of the people of Appalachia to compete in the global economy, 3) Develop and improve Appalachia's infrastructure to make the region economically competitive, and 4) Build the Appalachian Development Highway System to reduce Appalachia's isolation. ("About ARC," n.d.)

In layman's terms, they want to make the region more like the rest of the country in order to save it from crippling poverty. In researching in-migrants in Appalachia, Anglin (1983) found that "between massive highway-building, state and federal programs, and intensified private investment, [Appalachia] has been opened up to the outside, to a greater degree than ever before" (p. 227). Obviously, these changes will change the folklore from the region whose existence is due to it *not* being the same as the rest of the country. This leads into the classic dilemma of keeping the folk poor so they keep making folklore, which is universally agreed upon to be an abhorrent concept. It is inevitable that Appalachia will become more and more assimilated into mainstream America, and the culture of the region will change as well. In fact, old-time music has been constantly affected by outside influences since its beginnings, which is what helped groom it into what we consider "old-time" music today.

One of the youngest native musicians whom I interviewed was the only person in her Mt. Airy high school to play the fiddle. Her sister, one year younger, has completely eschewed any semblance of being Appalachian. Amazingly, despite growing up in the same house and going to the same schools, her sister has no discernable Southern or mountain accent. This gives credence to Jeff Titon's idea, discussed earlier, that those natives who now play old-time music do it because they have *chosen* to do so in the face of an overwhelming amount of choices – not because they were exposed to only the music of their area. It is unknown exactly what specific factors lead Appalachians to choose to play old-time music, and it is also unknown what the cultural changes of the 21st century will do to the context of old-time music in Appalachia. One thing that is certain, however, is that the combination of technology and the influx of musicians from other musical backgrounds are causing dramatic changes to the national old-time music scene.

Influx of New Musicians

"I see a lot of college students comin in and they're good musicians already. I don't know where they learned to play clawhammer banjo or fiddle, but they're good at it."

-Traditional Surry County musician

I, along with several of my informants, have noticed a huge surge in the number of young people, both Appalachian and not, coming into old-time music from rock backgrounds. In the 1970s, young people influenced by the counterculture's rejection of mass consumer culture embraced the do-it-yourself ethos of old-time music. In the 1990s, a large group of alternative rock and punk musicians, who were already looking for alternatives to the mainstream, entered the old-time world. According to one revivalist musician, since the

early 2000s there has been another influx of highly talented and technologically enabled young people looking for alternatives to what society has presented them:

In the last five years I've seen a huge influx of twenty-something people that are so trying to get out of what society is giving them as music: hip-hop and rap and techno-crap, and they just can't handle it.... and they are already way better than we were. I mean we sucked. We just had the spirit, you know? They've got all these recordings and methodologies way past what we do. And so they're getting a depth and good at the music way faster than we did. It's taken them a matter of months where it took us years to do the same thing.

But it is not just a matter of an increased ability to play these tunes that characterizes these new revivalists – it is also the musical approach. Based on my observations, new young revivalists are adept at integrating the old traditional recordings, the first wave of revivalist influence, and a more modern rock sensibility into what could possibly be called a new music. Not all older musicians are impressed by this, and those with purist sensibilities are especially critical of what some call "new-time" music:

So now you've got people who are playing old-time but with a different way of interpreting it. They have all this rock and roll stuff in their brain that the old guys didn't have.... and a lot of them are really good and are keeping it really traditional, but some of them are not – some of them are super hippyfyng it – they really try to play it too fast and sloppy without really having the music in there. It's not the same as the old, good, what I call "countryfied grit."

Recordings and the Future of Old-Time Music

There are two main reasons why modern old-time musicians use recordings or notation to learn music instead of face-to-face personal transmission. First, the majority of parent tradition musicians are dead. Second, the logistical problems involved with visiting a living parent tradition fiddle player frequently enough to learn tunes in their entirety are staggering. From a musician's point of view, it is simply more efficient to acquire tunes through recordings that can be turned on with the click of a button – the recordings are at your mercy. However, if one were to visit a parent tradition fiddler, the situation would be flipped. Some young revivalists did make these pilgrimages in the 1970s. Many went to visit Tommy Jarrell, but others sought out more untapped areas. Bruce Greene, whose name is now so linked with Kentucky fiddling that many people think he is a traditional fiddler *from* Kentucky, was actually a college kid from New Jersey who was interested in fiddle music. He spent years visiting old fiddlers and learning their style and repertoire. Now Bruce, although he is not a native of the region, has become a tradition bearer: "Anyone who wants to learn these tunes now, as they were once played, will have to learn them from younger people like me. At some point the people who have invested all the time and energy into learning a tradition will be the only ones who are a direct line to the old tradition..." (Dirlam, 1987, p.22). Bruce represents a rare element within the old-time revival, and many musicians do not have the time or the determination to seek out older musicians. This, coupled with the death of those elders, will mean that recordings (or instruction from musicians who also learned from those recordings) will likely become the only means of learning for new students.

One definite musical advantage to learning from recordings is the ability that it gives the listener to slow down music to a level where minute details can be more easily heard. For old-time purists, this technology allows them to almost exactly replicate the sound of their favorite recordings. However, this also has a chilling effect on the level of creativity and personal expression within the old-time music world. Because recordings, or tablature of those recordings, make it possible to replicate *a* version of a tune, that version of the tune often becomes the *right way to play it*. Recordings define old-time music for many people who were not raised in the tradition – they have canonized tunes as they were played at a certain time, from a certain region. Those tunes then re-enter the national old-time music scene, often divorced from any of the non-musical information surrounding the tune. Tommy Jarrell would (possibly at the prompting of folklorists) often say everything he knew about a tune before playing it, especially where he learned it or the different names it was called. If there was a story surrounding the tune, he might tell that as well. If a record producer decides not to include this information, what was a rich piece of local tradition gets stripped down to just music (rich in its own right, but not as much as if we understood the process of transmission or variation). One traditional musician bemoaned this lack of face-to-face transmission and told me that revivalists who learned exclusively from recordings:

probably didn't meet none of those fellers that they learned to play some of the tunes from. I'm sure that it takes away from the tune. If you learn it off of that person, that person's feeling is in them tunes. If you learn it off of the recordings, you don't never meet that person. I'm sure it probably has something to do with the music. The only thing they're doing is they're learning to play that tune but they're putting their personality on it, not the personality of the person they learned it from. And I'm sure

it makes a difference because the music, I hate to use the word "not as good" but it's not as good to me as it was when all of those folks was livin' and playin' it.

While face-to-face transmission still takes place in Surry County and throughout Appalachia, it is far less common than in the pre-industrial era. L.C. Burman-Hall (1974) argued that this "traditional means of transmission ... survived and functioned well until at least World War II" (p.37), implying that since the war it has *not* functioned well, and may indeed be almost extinct. By the time the old-time revival was in full swing in the mid 1970s, Burman-Hall had determined that "the gradual undermining of the oral folk tradition ... leaves little hope for the continued existence of this folk process" (p. 38). Thirty-five years after this statement was published, one can argue that Burman-Hall was half-right: it is unlikely that face-to-face learning from traditional musicians is the sole method anyone today uses for learning tunes, but the face-to-face learning process still happens, and for some revivalists and traditionalists, provides the main source of new tunes. Burman-Hall is also correct in that the number of older traditional musicians has dwindled, and many of those who remain are not actively teaching the music.

Finally, the methods of teaching tunes today are so effective for some that newcomers to the music are getting better faster than ever before. Every summer there are dozens of camps across the country that offer detailed instruction from master musicians at all skill levels. Imagine a violinist who decides to play the fiddle. He can acquire old-time recordings, purchase a few videos on old-time fiddle, read about bowing patterns and other hints in the *Old Time Herald*, and then attend workshops all summer. He already knows where the notes are and how to play the instrument, and with modern recording technology, he could learn to play in an old-time style in a very short amount of time. Once he does so, depending on his

previous skill as a violin player, he may become a "technician," that is, someone for whom the dominant feature of their playing is their technical ability on the instrument. Not having lived in the rural mountainous South or met anyone with this music in their family, our new fiddler does not know what this music *means*, but he sure can play it. Fiddle contest judge Kelley Kirksey (1987) characterized the problem that occurs when technicians compete against non-classically trained fiddlers as "An injustice...that a fine fiddler, who could make a whole audience get up and dance, will lose to a violinist with his perfect 'tone' and 'clarity'...The Federation of Old-Time Fiddling Judges is now working on perfecting a scoring system to reward true feeling along with good performance" (p.26).

Sustaining Tradition

Much like a wildlife videographer, my intent was to document the change in old-time music, rather than try to thwart or encourage that change. However, being an active participant in a music culture while researching that culture has made me especially self-conscious about how I affect traditional old-time music. The following insight from one of my informants helped assuage the reservations I have about being complicit in the metamorphosis of an Appalachian tradition:

I think if it's a strong enough tradition it maintains itself... now there are as many transplants here in northwest North Carolina that were not born and raised here that are doing old-time music as there are those that were [born here], but there is really no distinction. And I think a big thing is there was a big wave in the late seventies, early eighties, where a whole lot of us came in, you know. We moved here, we got houses here, we raised our kids here, and all that stuff – but ever since then there are

people continually coming and moving in and blending into the local music and society and so forth. I think if a musical form and tradition is strong enough and valid it can't be stolen – it can be joined but it can't be stolen.

So the question now is whether or not the tradition in and around Mt. Airy is strong enough to maintain itself. According to one native musician, an aging dance population, as well as a drop in young musicians, paints a grim picture for the future:

It's gettin' less and less spectators. A lot of the older people are dyin' or aren't able to drive overnight and they just aren't comin'. I can tell the difference in our dances where we normally would have a hundred people on a Friday night we're gettin' eighty. Sometimes in the summer months we'll play a Sunday afternoon show and then we'll get that crowd back 'cause they're able to come during the day when they can drive and see how to get around they will still come. These people is in their 80s and 90s. This guy that was here last night was 91. Danced every tune, and he's been a-dancin' to my music ever since I've been playing. They ain't hardly no kids comin' along learnin' how to play music – very few of 'em. There's not very many younger kids comin' along, and the ones that are are mostly learning bluegrass and it's because the guy that's doing the teaching in this area is a bluegrass musician...It'll be like a giant Clifftop I believe because there's too much access to other people's music before the local stuff. And all of those people that's gettin' older, there aren't enough newer people comin' along to take their place to dance. And it's not gonna give us nowhere to actually play – the Beulah Ruritan Club or the Ararat Volunteer Fire Department or any of those little clubs that's doin' that just to make a little money for the community events. People is gettin' older and not comin', and the younger people aren't taking

their place to dance. You gotta have as many dancers as you do musicians to make it work like it does.

When asked about the local dancers at the Beulah club and whether or not that tradition will likely continue, one traditional informant told me that

they're the last, I think. [The music is] gonna get more modernized like that Bruce Molsky, the flashy fiddle playin', like Adam Hurt. What he does is good, but it's not traditional. It ain't got no traditional feelin' to it. That's the way it's a-goin' I think. Them days [of local dancers] is about gone. It's like last night when I went to that Primitive Baptist church...I was the youngest one except for the preacher, which is rare.

It would do someone concerned about the plight of old-time music well to remember that statements such as those above were likely said by many musicians all throughout the history of old-time music. Imagine the reaction of some to the use of the banjo along with the fiddle, the addition of the guitar to those instruments, the advent of recording technology, and professional old-time music like that on the Grand Ole Opry. The old-time string band, which is usually defined by at least one fiddle, a banjo, at least one guitar, and sometimes a bass or a mandolin, is a relatively modern invention. Certainly the music before this was different, and was liked by some more than the string band sound. Ironically, had the people who today are purists in regards to old-time music been around at the turn of the twentieth century, they would have likely thought the string band to be a bastardization of "real" old-time music.

The Inevitability of Change

"You've got your folk nazis who say 'we've got to freeze this music with these people at this point in time.' Well that's bullshit! That's not humanity - that's not humanity. The music has always changed - that's where the music came from to frikkin start with."

-Surry County Revivalist Musician

The musician in the above quote is absolutely right in that "old-time music" would never have come into existence were it not for a blend of styles and a change in what people had been familiar with. What was solo fiddle music became fiddle and banjo music, and that music became fiddle, banjo, guitar, and (later) string bass music. Music, like language or any other means of human expression, is constantly evolving. There is no way to stop this evolution, yet some people are so enamored with a certain snapshot of old-time music that they fail to recognize that they are essentially committing the fallacy of special pleading: society and everything else is bound to change, but this music is not? According to one especially non-purist revivalist:

Change is what music's all about – taking this form of music and this form of music and putting it together and coming out with a new kind of music...But I can see where people could claim this body of work and sound as to be theirs, and that sound IS theirs, but if someone goes and builds on that sound, I mean, I'd have to think the person would want to take it as a complement rather than being ripped off.

Old Crow Medicine Show: The Richard Chase of Old-Time Music?

One group that has now become the favorite scapegoat of those who want old-time to remain relatively stagnant is Old Crow Medicine Show. Founded in Ithaca, New York and composed of young musicians, none of whom were raised in an old-time music tradition,

"Old Crow" has become arguably the most popular face of old-time music. Not confined to just old-time music, the band also plays blues, alt-country, jug-band songs, and write their own music. They have a polished image and have had several music videos featured on CMT. An aversion to Old Crow was almost universal among my interviewees on both sides of the spectrum. One traditional musician said, "I don't consider that old-time music. Yes it is a string band, but it's a garage band with old-time instruments – that's all it is...they're just a pop band with folk instruments as far as I'm concerned. It's nice to see [old-time] get popular, but I think they should keep what it was and learn to do it right from the old people." Actually, members of Old Crow once lived in a dilapidated house with no modern accoutrements (e.g., indoor plumbing, electricity) just west of Boone in Johnson County, Tennessee. Some members visited traditional musicians in the area, and an early incarnation of their band included Matt Kinman, a traditional musician from Tennessee. My next interviewee knew these details, but was still upset about the band's approach to the music:

People like Old Crow Medicine Show, who aren't at all traditional, totally revivalist, they've changed it a whole lot. What they play now, like their last album isn't even old-time as far as I'm concerned. Doesn't mean it's not good music in its own way, but it's definitely not old-time...They learned music from traditional musicians and it's really frustrating to a lot of people how people like that come in and learn the music and go out and get rich off of it. It's all about making the money and commercializing it and being....marketable I guess.

Much like Jack Tale collector Richard Chase has been demonized for profiteering from the folk, Old Crow is accused by some of becoming successful off of someone else's creation.

Old Crow detractors argue that old-time music is not commercial music (yet it certainly was from the mid 1920s to the mid 1930s), but then seemingly quell their own frustrations by deciding that what Old Crow plays is not old-time music. Perhaps they are also frustrated by what they consider to be a misrepresentation of old-time music: Old Crow may not play traditional old-time, but they are marketed as an "old-time string band," and as such, have an obligation to present an "authentic" version of it to the masses. It was not my intention to delve into the national old-time music scene for this thesis, but Old Crow are possibly the supreme example of the shifting ambassadorship of old-time music.

J.A.M. Programs

The Junior Appalachian Musicians program might be the most important means of exposure that young Appalachians have to their musical heritage. Founded in Allegheny County in 2000, the program has now spread to over 12 counties in Virginia and both the Carolinas. According to one traditional musician who has been involved in the J.A.M. programs:

[the purpose of the program is to] expose young people to the musical traditions of the area. Some children don't have the privilege of gettin' to know their grandparents who might have had an interest in music, and so there's music maybe in the family, maybe their parents don't play, but they'd be inclined to play music if they were just exposed to it. A lot of times now we've got so many competing technologies and competing interests in our lives: TV, video games, the internet, that if it wasn't for this exposure in the schools they might not ever run across the music, become aware of it.

This is echoed by the program's website, maintained by the Regional Junior Appalachian Musicians Program, Inc., which lists the following program description:

JAM introduces children to the music of their heritage through small group instruction in instruments common to the Appalachian region. Instrument, dance and vocal instruction are augmented by stringband classes providing children opportunities to play and perform in small and large groups. JAM strives to make the program accessible to all students by providing free or low cost instrument loans and free or highly subsidized tuition. Field trips, visiting artists and an introduction to the rich history of music unique to local communities round out program offerings.

("About Us," n.d.)

Despite the rapid growth of the program and an increase in sponsorship, it is difficult for JAM students to transition between the learning/beginner stages and being able to play in jams with established musicians. Often, these students need years of practice before they are able to play the tunes with enough speed and accuracy to be accepted in local jam sessions, but there is a lack of support for them during this transitional period. It might be the case that these students are the next generation of *non-continuous traditional* musicians, but without strong community support, it is unlikely that many of the students will become autonomous with the music.

Boone J.A.M. The instructors at the J.A.M. program in Boone are a mix of local and non-local musicians who came to the music from various backgrounds and approach it with different goals and attitudes. According to the program's website, there are weekly programs in fiddle, banjo, guitar, mandolin, dulcimer, and dance taught by "local musicians"; however, there is no distinction made between whether those instructors are natives of Boone or the

surrounding area, or are here temporarily from somewhere as far away as Illinois. The current instructional staff members hail from New York, central Illinois, Ohio, and southwest Virginia. Therefore, the music being taught and the particular playing style are representative of the amalgam that is the national old-time music scene. Some special attention is given to local tunes and technique, but this is not true for all of the instructors. There are rich banjo, dulcimer, and ballad traditions from nearby Beech Mountain, and Doc Watson still lives in nearby Deep Gap, yet Boone itself claims no special place in traditional old-time music. Also, the students who take lessons through this program are almost an even mix of natives and first-generation mountain families. This results in non-local old-time music being taught to non-local children.

Surry J.A.M. The Surry Arts Council hosts multiple means of instruction especially geared toward children. According to their website (2009), the youth JAM is: "designed to help 4th through 12th grade students in Surry County reclaim their musical heritage and traditions" ("Music Classes..."). The program was the second one started in North Carolina and is now in its seventh year. Despite it being Surry County and having a large number of interested children, Jim Vipperman is the only JAM instructor. Jim is mostly known for his bluegrass fiddling, but he also plays Celtic music, old-time, jazz, and country-rock. His grandfather was an old-time fiddle and banjo player, and Jim also sells and repairs violins. He is involved in both the county-sponsored Thursday night programs, which provides instruction to approximately twelve fiddlers and thirty guitarists, and he also teaches 3rd through 5th graders in the local schools.

Rather than sticking strictly to old-time music, Jim uses a mix of styles to engage his students, including bluegrass, Celtic, and even holiday tunes. He will also teach guitar

players blues or rock and roll tunes "as long as the amps aren't too loud." For the large groups Jim makes use of tablature (a notation system where notes are written as finger positions on the instrument), but in his private lessons he encourages learning by ear through the use of recording technology. While Jim's teaching philosophy is not dogmatic in its approach to local tradition, he will often invite a local traditional fiddler, Benton Flippen, to help teach the kids. When Benton teaches he does not use tablature, and instead requires the students to learn by listening to him and watching how he plays the instrument. Jim understands the rare opportunity that Benton's visits provide for his students; he often encourages his students to seek out older musicians like Benton before they pass away.

Surry County's J.A.M. program is perhaps more indicative of the natural evolution of musical tastes in Surry County: the mix of styles that Vipperman teaches reflects the diverse interests of the local students rather than what could be viewed as an artificial imposition of a music tradition (old-time) that no longer captures the interest of young local musicians. Despite a lack of quantifiable data, all the musicians whom I talked to about bluegrass and old-time believed that there are more bluegrass musicians in Surry County today than there are old-time musicians. Kids interested in rock and country likely outnumber those interested in bluegrass and old-time combined. Teaching the students only old-time music would not only ignore the eclectic musical interests of the students, but it would also result in fewer students becoming involved in the program. Because Jim is the sole conduit through which many young Surry County musicians are exposed to the traditional music from their area, the effect this program is having on the number of people who will carry on the old-time tradition is difficult to predict. Many traditional musicians from Mt. Airy expressed an aversion to teaching, but also indicated that they had never been approached by the Surry

County Arts Council. One traditional musician from Surry County now teaches in the Allegheny County J.A.M., rather than in her own home community.

"Heritage" is mentioned often on the J.A.M. program website, as are "local traditions." These things are more possible in some counties than in others due to the makeup of the instructional staff. The Allegheny County program, for example, features many traditional local musicians who might be privy to more localized playing styles and tunes. The Allegheny program, however, also features transplant revivalists as instructors. It appears that while the goal of the program is to expose children to their regional music, the board is not dogmatic in its selection of musicians. At the beginning of the Boone program, an effort was made to feature local musicians, but this included long-time transplants and a traditional musician originally from Wilkes County. Many of the revivalists who teach for J.A.M. are highly qualified music teachers with years of experience in other styles of music, and it is unlikely that they would be denied a teaching position simply due to their hometown.

Of course, this study is not a means of predicting the future. Musical tastes experience surges and lulls, and at some point in the future there could be a renaissance of old Appalachian traditions within Appalachia – by Appalachians. Were I to speculate, however, I would wager that the course for the foreseeable future is a continued influx of revivalists and a young generation of native musicians who are increasingly drawn towards bluegrass, not old-time. Two things are certain: 1) Appalachian culture is changing due to modernity and homogenization, and 2) the number of traditional musicians has declined to the point that learning directly from these musicians is becoming a rarity. The J.A.M. programs are making

this process more feasible; but in places like Boone, often both the instructors and the students are, for the purposes of this research, revivalists.

Conclusion

The future of old-time music in Boone and Mt. Airy is unpredictable. Old-time music played by revivalists in Boone and in Surry County is similar, but altogether different from the old-time music played by traditional musicians in Surry County. However, by virtue of evaluating these two particular areas, it is possible that this research presents a somewhat skewed picture of old-time music in Appalachia. A more comprehensive study would have to be done to get anything approximating a sample representative of all of Appalachia. But by looking at these two areas together, it could be argued that traditionalists are outnumbered 2:1 (Boone is dominated by revivalists—Surry County contains both groups). My research also leads me to conclude that for every *non-continuous traditionalist* who becomes interested in his area's music, there are two or three young revivalists, with, ironically, more access to old-time music, who will become equally interested.

Although some traditional musicians do not fully accept the transplanted revivalists, the overall situation is amicable, save for a separate-but-equal sort of cultural dynamic that is based on mutual acceptance, yet a predilection for those of the same social group. Therefore, revivalists are not being discouraged from playing the music, moving to the mountains, nor from competing, performing, and recording with enough force to decrease their numbers or enervate their zeal for old-time music. Also, the lifestyle that produced old-time music and sustained it for so many years is virtually extinct. After all, who today could write another "Big-Eyed Rabbit" (a song about killing and eating said rabbit) or another "Groundhog" (the

animal meets a similar fate) and have it be taken as an earnest expression? That is a matter of contention – Rick Ward, a middle-aged traditional musician from Beech Mountain, inserted a verse in his version of "Groundhog" that references the hide used to make his banjo head, and Carter Miller still shoots groundhogs and rabbits. But these men are uncommon in their interest in local history, folklore, and music, and are not representative of the lifestyle lived by most of their contemporaries. More than twenty years ago Anglin (1983) acknowledged the presence of an older generation in Appalachia who "still live the self-sufficient life thought typical in the mountains. Some hunt for ginseng and other herbs. Some bootleg whiskey. Some farm. These people still exist, although their number is dwindling steadily" (p.237). Nothing has occurred to reinvigorate these traditions since Anglin made this observation, and it is therefore likely that even fewer members of this older generation practice these Appalachian activities. This is not to say that the values of Appalachians have become indistinguishable from those of outsiders. Keefe (1994) found evidence of a common Appalachian culture among her college students who "frequently commuted to their parents' homes by choice on weekends, ... who (growing up in the 'Bible Belt') had gone to church regularly and to Wednesday-night 'covered dish' suppers at church each week" (p.21). Divorced from the music's original culture, older Appalachian practices, and current Appalachian values, revivalists have approached the music from a different perspective than traditionalists. Therefore it is possible that it is easier for a suburban ex-rocker to become enamored with the old-time music of a far away region, and reappropriate that music to fit his own musical and cultural aesthetic, than it is for someone *from* that region to still find the music relevant or accessible.

Appalachian history can be read as a story of loss, beginning with the loss of the Native Americans' homeland, then the loss of the region's timber, coal, local land ownership, and mountaintops, and extends now to the loss of its traditional communities and culture. But while timber, coal, and large tracts of land were taken from the region by outsiders who left little in return, old-time Appalachian music flows in both directions: outsiders who fell in love with the music were the first to record it, and their work and enthusiasm inspired a renewed interest in the music by natives who had become disconnected from their own community traditions. But revivalists today mostly function autonomously; they have forged their own culture and their own community not only in western North Carolina, but all over the country. Indeed, there are old-time music communities all over the world. Japan's old-time music scene is particularly strong, but is in no way dependent on the existence of living traditional American old-time musicians. Recordings sustain these foreign old-time communities in the same way they do those in Portland, Oregon or Ithaca, New York. The attendance of Clifftop would not drop were Galax to spontaneously combust and it has perhaps been this way since the first revivalist old-time musicians formed communities based around the music in the 1970s. Therefore, if old-time music is going to continue to be played by native Appalachians, it will take an internal effort. The revival of the 1970s, with its concentrated efforts to record and reinvigorate older traditional musicians, has passed. Left in its wake is a community of revivalists who have discovered that they can make the music happen on their own. The struggles between revivalists and traditionalists are likely the result of traditionalists projecting their dismay at the waning of old-time music in their own communities onto revivalists, who may also inhabit that same musical and physical space, but who are not to blame for the lack of Appalachians now carrying on their own music.

Whether or not programs such as J.A.M. will inspire a renewed interest in old-time music remains to be seen, but for now, dancers will continue to dance, trance-seekers will continue to trance, and on occasion, the two will come together in what is truly one of the most unlikely and beautiful unions in American society.

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APPENDIX A
First Interview Guide (Boone Revivalists)

1. How do you feel about the issue of authenticity in the old-time music scene? What have you experienced personally? Is there such thing as an "authentic" old-time musician?
2. Do you feel the scene or the music itself has changed since you have been aware of it? How do you feel about these changes?
3. How do you feel about the increasing popularity of old-time music (e.g. Uncle Earl, Old Crow Medicine Show, O Brother Where Art Thou?, Cold Mountain)?
4. How common was an interest in this music in the town where you grew up/were first exposed to it?
5. Where do you most frequently play old-time/string-band music?
6. What percentage of your friends/associates here or back "home" are also musicians? Do they play the same style of music you do?
7. What percent of your social life is spent in a music-related setting? Does this change throughout the year (i.e. festivals in the summer?)
8. Do you ever interact in a social setting with other musicians without actually playing/listening to music? How?
follow up - Other than a shared interest in this music, are there any other commonalities/shared interests you notice among your musical acquaintances?
9. Do you have old-time musician friends in other towns, states, countries? Where? How did you meet them and how often do you see them?
10. Do you feel there are distinct groups of old-time musicians here in Boone?
follow up - Are certain groups of players known to have certain characteristics? What?
11. What has been your experience with native vs. non-native musicians? With whom do you most often play? Are there differences between the two?
12. What is the primary type of music that you play/perform?
13. What instrument(s) do you play (including voice), for how long have you played them, and for how long have you played them in this style?
14. What is your current musical situation (i.e. member of a band, go to jams, play with a few friends, instructor, judge)?
15. How often do you play old-time music? How often do you listen to it?
16. From your experience, are the old-time and bluegrass communities different?
follow up - If you play both, where do you feel you fit on the spectrum?
17. How much of the recorded music that you possess falls somewhere within the old-time/traditional country music category?
follow up - Of your material assets, what percentage is music related (e.g. instruments, recordings, audio gear)?
follow up 2 - Other than old-time music, what sorts of music do you listen to/play?
18. Do you feel more compelled to emulate the musical aesthetics of parent tradition (native), revivalists (70's, 90's), or do you feel some other interpretation applies?
follow up - Do you have any musical heroes from this genre? Do you have any favorite albums, tracks?
19. How do you feel old-time music affects your identity (for yourself and others)?
20. What are some of your hobbies outside of music? How common do you think these are for people your age/sex nationally?
21. How do you obtain new music? Do you listen to the radio, watch music videos, attend concerts? What are your thoughts on the state of popular music in the U.S.?

22. Do you enjoy living in the current time period or, if given the chance, would you wish to live in a different era?
23. Do you identify as an old-time musician? How do you define that term?
24. Do you consider yourself to be anti-modern in any way? Are there certain traditions/customs/ways of life that you strive to maintain? Do you feel society as a whole is moving in a certain direction/path?
25. Where/when were you born (county)? What about your parents? Where did you grow up (before moving to the Boone area)?
26. What is/are your current profession(s)?
follow up - Have you had other means of employment since living in the Boone area?
follow up 2 - What drew you to your current line of work?
follow up 3 - What would be your ideal job?
27. Describe your living situation. What do you like/dislike about it?
28. How difficult would it be financially for you to live in a more expensive place?
29. Do you live with/nearby other old-time musicians?
30. What was your primary reason for coming to the Boone area?
follow up - When did you move here?
follow up 2 - Have you moved around since arriving?
follow up 3 - How important is living in this region to your quality of life? Could you be equally happy elsewhere? If so, would that place be in Appalachia?
31. How many years of education do you have?

APPENDIX B
Second Interview Guide (Mt. Airy and Boone)

1. How did you get into old-time music?
2. Where do you fall on the spectrum of old-time music?
3. How much of your repertoire is from recordings? How much from face to face? Any from tab?
4. Have you been involved in teaching? In what context?
5. Do you play any different styles of music on any other instruments?
6. Do you have any formal musical training?
7. How do you identify yourself in terms of geographic affiliation?
8. How do you think the old-time revival has affected traditional music in the mountains (Mt. Airy)?
9. Do you think that it's right for a group to claim ownership over a style of music? If so, who owns old-time music?
10. Are there differences, both musical and non-musical, between traditionalists and revivalists? Are there generalizations you can make about one or the other?
11. In the past three months, have you played more with native traditionalists or revivalists?
12. How much interaction do you see in this area between people raised in the music and transplants?
13. Have you ever heard or witnessed actions where you felt that revivalists were being disrespectful, mean, or rude to native musicians or their music?
14. Have you ever felt uncomfortable in a musical situation w/ non-native musicians?
15. What changes have you seen happening to the old-time music community? What about at festivals? Have you seen more or less of certain groups, ages, outsiders, etc?
16. Have you noticed cultural change taking place in Mt. Airy/Boone? Do you think these changes have affected old-time music and dance in any way? Does it make people want to hang on to traditions more? Or does it make those traditions seem less interesting?
17. Where do you see the future of old-time music going? Do you think there are enough native people carrying on regional styles for that to survive, or do you think that eventually it will be in the hands of revivalists not from the mountains?

Vita

Dave Wood was born in Falls Church, Virginia in 1982. He moved to Williamsburg, Virginia in 1985 and graduated from Jamestown High School in 2000. In January, 2001 he began studies at the College of William and Mary, and in 2005 he was awarded the Bachelor of Arts degree in Music. After two years working various teaching and music-related jobs in Tempe, AZ, he entered the Appalachian Studies master's program in August, 2007. The M.A. was awarded in May, 2009. In September, 2009, Dave will begin the Ph.D. program in Ethnomusicology at Brown University, with a focus on Appalachian music and acculturation. He plans to become a professor of music and teach somewhere above 1500 ft (in the mountains).