

EXPLORING "NOSTALGIA FOR THE FUTURE":  
A HISTORY OF THE AUGUSTA HERITAGE CENTER IN ELKINS, WEST VIRGINIA

A Thesis  
by  
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## **Abstract**

### **EXPLORING “NOSTALGIA FOR THE FUTURE”: A HISTORY OF THE AUGUSTA HERITAGE CENTER IN ELKINS, WEST VIRGINIA**

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Since 1973, the Augusta Heritage Center (commonly known as Augusta) of Davis & Elkins College has coordinated traditional arts workshops; organized festivals, concerts, dances, and lectures; produced documentary films, audio recordings, and books; sponsored community projects; and accumulated an extensive archive of folk culture. This research establishes a narrative of Augusta’s history, beginning with the founding of its first craft workshops in the 1970s through the development of the diverse music programs that Augusta is known for today. Tracing Augusta’s connections to social movements—including traditional music and craft revivals and the 1970s back-to-the-land movement—situates the Center in a historical context.

Another focus of this research is to investigate the reasons for the Augusta Heritage Center’s longevity over the past forty years and its impact on participants. Through archival research and interviews, this study investigates the importance of experiential learning and the role of tradition in modern life. This research evaluates Augusta’s past and present to make recommendations for the future.

## **Dedication**

This project is dedicated to the past, present, and future participants and staff of the Augusta Heritage Center, and to my parents, my Grandma Spitfire, and the many teachers who gave me courage.

## **Acknowledgments**

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## **Chapter 1: Time, Tradition, and Experience, A Literature Review**

From a lonesome fiddle tune to a resounding late-night blues jam; from an intricate piece of woven fabric to a rustic hand-built cabin; from a curious first-time student to a legendary master artist; from the backwoods to cyberspace, there is nothing quite like Augusta! (Lilly, “Augusta” 2)

Celebrating its fortieth anniversary in 2012, the Augusta Heritage Center (commonly known as “Augusta”) of Davis & Elkins College in Elkins, West Virginia, links diverse folk cultures, transcends generational divides and skill levels, and connects past to present. Augusta’s week-long summer workshops, emphasizing traditional crafts, music, dance, and other folklore, began in the summer of 1973, organized by the Randolph County Creative Arts Council.

In the summer of 1973, something magical happened at Davis & Elkins College. It began the previous year when college faculty, the Randolph County Creative Arts Council, and the Elkins Senior Center organized a series of traditional craft workshops (Lilly, “Augusta” 3). Participants from West Virginia and a few surrounding states enrolled in two- and four-week-long workshops in weaving, pottery, basketry, and other subjects. The Augusta Heritage Arts Workshop (or Augusta) aimed to preserve local folk traditions, which community members feared to lose with the aging of local artisans. The Augusta Workshop was an immediate success. Augusta’s first organizers



did not anticipate the extent of its impact, which cultivated a community of folk art enthusiasts through powerful, hands-on experiences that summer and every summer for more than forty years that followed.

Dale Wilson, chair of the committee that planned Augusta's first summer session, wrote to his fellow board members, urging them to come to campus. Wilson insisted that "an after-the-fact report on the workshop ... will be completely useless in conveying to you the excitement of this project that we are sponsoring." He encouraged them to "meet the students, because their experiences and their story are the beauty of this project" (Wilson, Letter to Randolph n. pag.). Subsequent generations of participants echo his assumptions that the "Augusta experience" is more readily understood through participation than description.

Originally focused on traditional West Virginia crafts, Augusta now offers a range of workshops in crafts and musical genres from old-time and bluegrass to Cajun and blues. Augusta has also produced audio recordings, documentaries, concerts, dances, and festivals. Over the years, Augusta has documented West Virginia folklore as well as its own programs, amassing a large, unique archive. It grew into a world-renowned center for folk arts education, most recently recognized by the Folk Alliance International with the Elaine Weissman Lifetime Achievement Award ("Lifetime").

As the organizers noted after the first summer session, "We are more than sure that these cold pieces of paper can only be hollow echoes of the life that was Augusta" (Randolph, *Report* 1973 n. pag.). Nonetheless, this research seeks to describe that "life" of which those early coordinators wrote and to understand why it continues today. The primary research questions address how the Augusta Heritage Center began and

evolved, its impact on participants, and what will sustain it in the future. This study situates Augusta in a historical context of folk revivals, traces the origins and development of the Center's programs and mission, and evaluates the current program. These "cold pieces of paper" make a poor substitute for first-hand experience, but they provide a contextual framework to evaluate Augusta's present and future, identify opportunities and challenges, and reflect on Augusta's larger importance to American folk arts programming. This is a humble attempt to document, describe, and explore an admittedly "indescribable" phenomenon.

### **Folk Revivals: An American Tradition**

The Augusta Heritage Center's programs are part of a larger tradition of folk revivals in the United States. The term "folk revival" is often associated with a musical movement during the mid-twentieth century when, according to folklorist Robert Cantwell, "folksongs, and original songs conceived and performed as such, enjoyed an unprecedented commercial popularity" between 1958 and 1964 (2). This research broadens the term "folk revival" to include craft revivals and any period during which a significant number of people seek to learn traditional cultural elements from practitioners. These periods feature broader interest in music, crafts, and skills that are passed from generation to generation. Traditional life skills, particularly those centered on the household, have also played an important part in folk revivals. Crafts such as basketry and quilting furnish the home and appeal to people who might also be interested in log cabin construction and stonemasonry. These homesteading skills easily connect to gardening, canning, wild crafting, hunting, and fishing.

Folklore includes all of these skills and art forms, as well as other rituals, beliefs, and practices. Typically, the term “traditional” indicates something that has been transmitted by face-to-face interactions over many generations. These terms have become more complex today as people learn traditional arts from a variety of sources, including the Internet. To further complicate matters, collectors and practitioners often use the terms “traditional” and “folk” interchangeably.

Traditional genres of music and craft styles can include newer forms that represent (and are often mistaken for) older styles. For instance, despite the fact that most bluegrass musicians trace the genesis of bluegrass music to Bill Monroe, many others confuse bluegrass with the older styles that inspired it, including what is known as “old-time” string band music (Rosenberg 212). Robert Cantwell also noted this perception and traced the correlation between bluegrass and folk music to the inclusion of bluegrass performers in folk festivals in the 1950s and '60s (273). To Augusta participants, bluegrass, old-time, and folk are clearly distinct genres, but non-practitioners often conflate the terms. At Augusta, bluegrass is considered a traditional style of music because it traces its musical roots back to older styles of singing and string band music and is often passed down the “traditional” way.

Fascination with folklore stems in part from a struggle to formulate identity. Although a subgroup of individuals maintain interest in folklore throughout their lives, folk revivals periodically propel traditional art forms into mainstream discourse. Different folk traditions have cycled in and out of fashion, but what remains consistent is the contrast between revivalists’ emphases on tradition and history and the mainstream popular culture as portrayed in contemporary media. Folk revivals attempt

to reconcile a historically rooted understanding of identity with the future-oriented culture of modern times. People particularly seek to understand who they are, to find their roots—real or imagined—during times of turmoil. Because fast-paced change creates a sense of urgency, the term “revival” itself suggests an idea that folk traditions have or will become extinct. Although folklorists debate the appropriateness of the “folk revival” moniker, it represents an overwhelming sentiment among revivalists: in a future-focused, tradition-rejecting world, folklore will disappear without deliberate preservation. Because revivalists connect folklore with identity, its loss is perceived as catastrophic. Revivalists ask, “Who are we? Where have we come from? And who will we become if we lose touch with our past?” Carrying a tradition forward is also empowering and can be a political act. David W. Blight argues that “those who can create the dominant historical narrative, those who can own the public memory, will achieve political and cultural power” (Blight 349). In times of change and uncertainty, people seek control.

Despite the importance of folk revivals in American history, their prevalence in Appalachia, West Virginia’s unique position as the only entirely Appalachian state, and the vibrant array of folklife festivals, organizations, and publications in West Virginia, very little scholarship can be found on folk revivals in the state. Newspaper articles, institutional websites, *The West Virginia Encyclopedia*, and brief references in local and state histories provide most of the available information.<sup>1</sup> Although this research focuses on Appalachia, particularly north central West Virginia, it must be said that “folk revival” initiatives are not unique to this region or even to the United States.

Similar movements, for instance, developed earlier in Great Britain, whose Industrial Revolution came earlier.

The founders of the John C. Campbell Folk School (established in 1925 in North Carolina) and the Highlander Folk School (established in 1932 in Tennessee) were inspired by folk schools in Denmark and urban American settlement houses, respectively, adapting other models of education to suit the communities they served (Whisnant, *All* 130; Farley 758).

Mark Twain described the years prior to the 1860s as “before History was born—before Tradition had being” (qtd. in J. Smith 266). Here, Tradition is spelled with a capital “T” because it was perceived as monolithic, static, and even sacred as people reacted to modernization. As a direct response to the forces of modernity represented by the tumultuous era of the U.S. Industrial Revolution, the first folk revivals began just after the Civil War with many others to follow. Although revivals of interest in different styles of music and crafts have ebbed and flowed, intersecting in complex ways, three notable Appalachian folk revival periods will be discussed in this research:

1. Turn of the Century (1890s to 1910s)
2. Great Depression (1930s)
3. Appalachian Renaissance (1960s to 1970s)

The Civil War left the country traumatized and insecure while industrialists took advantage of economic opportunities in the Reconstruction South. Industry tycoons touted a new era of “progress” and introduced a national identity as a major industrial power. The nation underwent rapid industrial development powered by wood, coal, and iron ore from Appalachian raw materials. Cities were erected and equipped with

new technology. Railroads, telegraphs, and telephones spread across the country. As Northern industrialists pushed the new order southward, some Southerners pushed back.

The idea of an “Old South” emerged in the 1880s, according to historian Jason Scott Smith, as the “New South” defined itself, marking the beginning of nostalgia for an agrarian past in the southern United States (266). Smith also describes a shift in Americans’ perception of time from the 1890s to the 1920s. He argues that, as industrialization expanded, people began to sense time was moving faster. “The development of generational thinking, a widely shared sense that time itself was speeding up, and a growing preoccupation with the ‘new’ in American culture,” according to Smith, characterized the modern age (265). With the establishment of time zones, factory schedules, and daylight savings time, Americans became more aware of time than ever before. Time became standardized and measured rigidly by factories and railroads, rather than locally defined by cycles of daylight and dark.

Soon, the decade emerged as a unit to measure time. Born into technologically and culturally different worlds than their ancestors or descendants, generations continually reinvented their identities. As a result, a cultural disconnect emerged. Combined with the stress of rapid technological change and an increasingly “fast-paced” modern lifestyle, some Americans began feeling unsettled. By disregarding their roots, many felt disconnected, especially in times of turmoil. To many, political, economic, environmental, and other crises represented a failure of modern society, leading them to question their faith in “progress.” Many people sought alternatives through countercultural and subcultural movements. Perhaps the most famous time of social

upheaval in the country was the 1960s, but other examples include the country life movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the back-to-the-land movement of the 1970s, and the DIY (Do-It-Yourself) movement today. These three movements value rural life and homesteading skills, as well as the traditional music and other art forms associated with these lifestyles and emphasize a connection with the past, a connection that mainstream society largely ignores.

To the rest of the nation, the Southern Appalachian Mountains represented a particularly traditional way of life. In an intellectual history of the region, Henry D. Shapiro traced the development of the idea of Appalachia from the 1870s to the 1910s as a reflection of Americans' anxieties about their own changing times:

In a nation confused about the relationship of past and present, uncertain about its future, and desperately in search of a sense of self-identity, Appalachia seemed to provide a benchmark against which to measure how far the nation had come from its essential self. (261)

Those who supported the ideology of progress saw Appalachia as a problem and advocated "modernization" (i.e., industrial development) of the region as quickly as possible.<sup>2</sup> Others who were uneasy about the rapidity of change or the country's new direction saw Appalachia as a noble symbol of a more innocent, simpler time, and a reminder of the nation's earlier agrarian culture. For some, Appalachia seemed to be the "answer" to a national identity crisis; it was a living reminder of America's roots.

In the 1970s, old-time music communities developed in cities and on college campuses from California to New York (Bealle 22-24). The widespread hippie

movement, especially the explosion of festivals after Woodstock in 1969, contributed a great deal to a 1970s folk revival.

Several circumstances seem to create an environment conducive to a widespread explosion of interest in folk art. In his 2009 thesis on old-time music, David Wood describes three conditions that lead to folk revivals. Although he focuses on music, Wood's description can be broadened to apply to other forms of folk culture:

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. (Wood 18)

Wood's second condition includes major social and environmental changes that brought about paradigm shifts which defined and separated generations: the Civil War, the Industrial Revolution, the Great Depression, electricity and World War II, the Vietnam War and turbulence of the 1960s, globalization, and the personal computer and Internet. These events caused children to be raised with very different lifestyles and worldviews than their grandparents.

A fourth condition can be added to Wood's points above regarding the mechanisms that spread folk revivals to larger audiences: media, technology, and poverty relief programs (from missionaries to the federal government) have transformed esoteric interests into widespread movements. Because revivalists value the wisdom of an earlier time, they typically seek out members of their grandparents'



and great-grandparents' generations. Unlike the parents' generation, these elders often represent the oldest living memories of an earlier era, a time before the major paradigm shifts that define the current generation. This way of thinking began with the last generation to remember life before the Industrial Revolution.

As train whistles first echoed in once quiet valleys, control of the land shifted from small farmers to absentee capitalists. Farmers moved to industrial jobs, and the landscape was transformed alongside their livelihoods. By the 1890s, the railroads had established new towns and destroyed old ones as centers of power shifted in the region (Eller, *Miners* 121-23). The first major folk revival developed in Appalachia during this period and emphasized traditional crafts such as weaving and basketry. Settlement schools taught music and crafts, and cottage craft industries fed the demand for handmade goods, aesthetically desirable during the "Arts and Crafts" era of design. At the same time, in popular magazines and novels, local color writers propagated images of Appalachia as an alien region suspended in time, and the home missionary movement promoted the region's poverty to motivate donors to support their efforts.

In West Virginia, which seceded from Virginia in 1863, the post-Civil-War identity crisis was particularly keen. After the war, industrial tycoons vied with local elites for political power, factionalizing politics to further their business interests (Williams 4-5). As railroads opened up timber and coal lands for development, conditions for a folk revival coalesced. The Industrial Revolution provided a crisis. A sense of urgency to preserve the past was particularly potent in light of the environmental and cultural changes of the day. The last generation of people who came

of age before the Civil War was aging, and revivalists sought to preserve their cultural traditions and memories of older ways of life.

Two of the wealthiest and most influential industrialists who came to power in West Virginia were a father- and son-in-law pair of robber barons and U.S. Senators, Henry G. Davis and Stephen B. Elkins. The town of Elkins, West Virginia, was established in the 1880s as the terminus of the West Virginia Central Railroad (owned by Davis and Elkins). “Intended to become the hub and showcase of their empire,” the new town was built between the Tygarts Valley River, the Beverly to Fairmont Turnpike, and railroad (W. Rice iii). In addition to establishing a bank, a city park, and other amenities for the town, the senators built two sprawling hilltop mansions that overlooked Elkins (Ibid.). In 1904, the senators established Davis & Elkins College (D&E) on a hill overlooking the river across town from their homes (Ross 11).

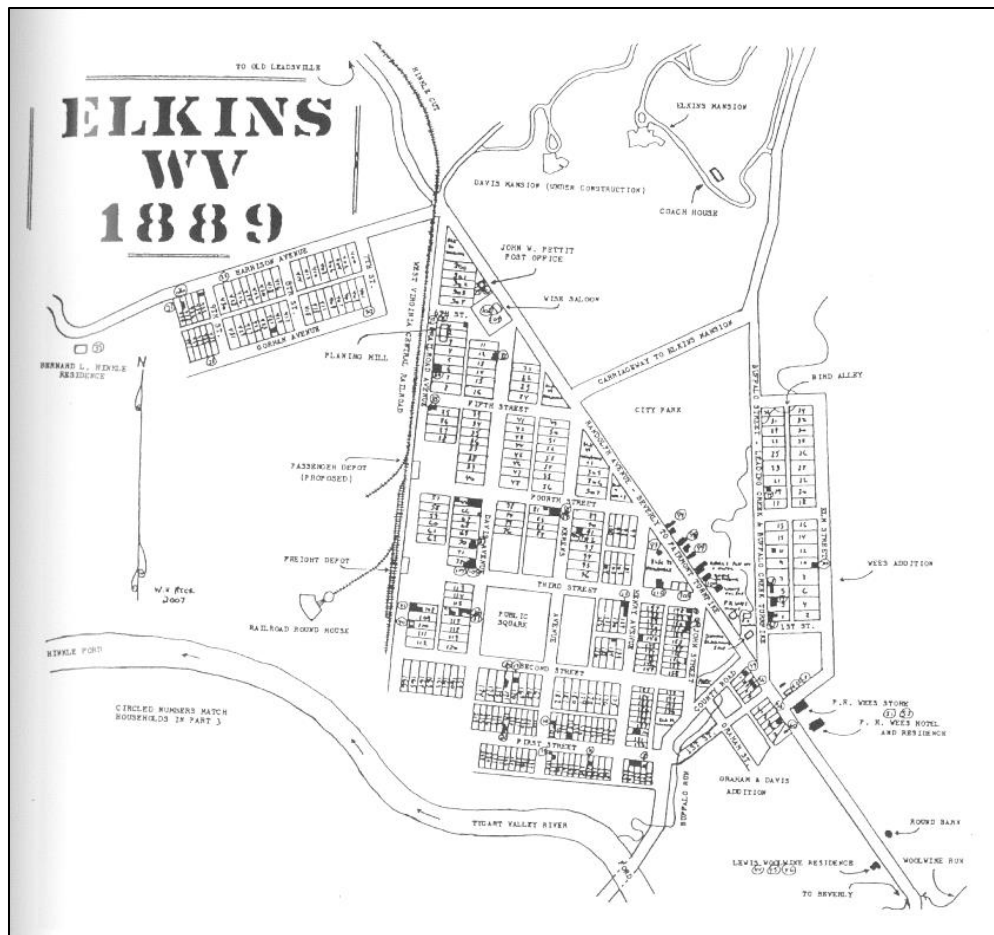


Figure 1: Map of Elkins, 1889. Located in the upper right corner of the map, the “Davis Mansion,” “Elkins Mansion,” and surrounding farmland now form the D&E College campus. Image from W. H. Rice’s *Elkins, WV 1889* (95).

Many of the folk revivalists who began their work in the 1890s continued into the 1910s. In 1916, with the assistance of Olive Dame Campbell, English folklorist Cecil Sharp “discovered” old English ballads still extant in the Southern Appalachians, and his work soon brought about the first music revival associated with the region, spurring increased interest in mountain folklore (Whisnant, *All* 116). In the Mountain State, the West Virginia Folklore Society was established in Morgantown in 1917 and published a folklore journal and several books. The society eventually evolved into the West Virginia Folklife Center, now located in Fairmont (Byers 763).

The turn-of-the-twentieth-century folk revival was only the first of many such periods in the United States. The 1930s brought a widespread music and craft revival as the Great Depression took hold. The Depression undermined the confidence of Americans in the industrial system, and this generation of revivalists looked to their grandparents' generation, who came of age before the new century and who held the last memories of pre-industrial America. The poverty and environmental devastation that came in the wake of industrialization burdened American life, and during this period another distinct folk revival emerged in the United States.

Folk festivals and cottage craft industries continued to develop throughout Appalachia. The proliferation of radios by the 1930s (particularly the popularity of "hillbilly" music), and the anti-poverty programs of the New Deal brought national attention to the mountains and extended the folk revival to a larger audience.<sup>3</sup> During this time, folk schools, settlement schools, and cottage craft industries developed in Appalachia, promoting folk culture both inside and outside the region.

David Whisnant's important book *All that is Native and Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region* examines three institutions from this period—the Hindman Settlement School, John C. Campbell Folk School, and White Top Folk Festival—under a critical lens. All three were important to the 1930s folk revival in Appalachia (although none of them are in West Virginia), and Whisnant accuses them of institutionalizing stereotypes and attempting to control and assimilate mountain residents. Since "outsiders"—missionaries, teachers, and journalists—have predominantly led folk revivals, the role of outsiders in perpetuating traditional arts and crafts is an important issue. An on-going debate in folklore and traditional music

circles asks, "What constitutes tradition?" and "Who has the authority to determine what (or whom) is traditional or nontraditional?"

The attention of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt during the 1930s focused the nation's eye on West Virginia as the quintessential model of Appalachian poverty. Mrs. Roosevelt visited Randolph County (of which Elkins is the county seat) several times during the Depression. She supported the establishment of three resettlement communities in West Virginia through the Federal Subsistence Homestead Corporation, including the Tygart Valley Homesteads, approximately fifteen miles from Elkins. Model communities like this one were designed to "provide a new start for unemployed farmers, miners, and timber workers" (D. Rice 720). Cottage craft industries developed throughout Appalachia at the time, and it is no surprise that one of the Tygart Valley Homesteads' several industries was a weaving center. Years later, a few of the weavers trained at the Homestead, including Olive Goodwin, taught some of the first weaving classes at the Augusta Heritage Arts Workshop in Elkins (Lilly, "Augusta" 3; Van Gundy).

Music and the arts were important to the Resettlement Administration, with a music program under the direction of Charles Seeger charged to seek out grass-roots culture within the homestead populations. Resettlement Administration employees were instructed to be "barefoot musicians" who worked to integrate music, participation in the arts, and political education into a coherent program to empower resettled farmers, unemployed miners, impoverished lumbermen, and their families to take control of their lives (Warren-Findley 106).

For some, the mountains served as a safe haven during the Depression. In Aurora, West Virginia, for example, geologist Frank Reeves established the

Youghiogheny Forest Colony. In an old-growth hemlock forest, artists from Washington, D.C., escaped the high costs of city living and subsisted on the land. The colony mostly disbanded when the Depression ended (Mouré 818). Established in 1920 from former timber company lands, the Monongahela National Forest now surrounds Elkins, covering almost a million acres in ten counties (“About the Forest”). During the Depression, the Civilian Conservation Corps built a Forest Service Headquarters across the street from Davis & Elkins College and worked to rehabilitate much of the land denuded during industrialization.

### **An “Appalachian Renaissance”:1970s West Virginia**

Following the Great Depression, the next folk revival period had its roots in the social turmoil of the 1960s and the economic crisis of the 1970s. In the uncertain times just after the turbulent 1960s, with the United States still at war in Vietnam, the nation’s confidence was shaken, and its hopes and fears again played out in Appalachia. Television and print images of Appalachian poverty in the 1960s, particularly the attention brought to West Virginia by John F. Kennedy’s presidential campaign and the subsequent War on Poverty, imprinted West Virginia on the national consciousness. Poverty relief programs brought volunteers to the mountains, many of whom moved permanently to the region and established a craft and music revival in the 1970s. Young people, many of them former VISTAs (Volunteers in Service to America) and AVs (Appalachian Volunteers), purchased land in the mountains, seeking subsistence living.<sup>4</sup> Communes and “hippie” farms sprang up around the Mountain State. As the nation plunged into economic recession, more people moved to the mountains where land was

cheap, while many mountain residents simultaneously migrated out of the region in search of work.

This new generation of folk revivalists planted themselves in the tradition of 1930s musicians and activists such as Woody Guthrie. They learned the music and craft traditions of their elders, the last generation to come of age before the Great Depression. The living elders available to this generation still remembered times before electricity, the Great Depression, both World Wars, television, the atomic bomb, Vietnam, Woodstock, and the Cold War. These “tradition-bearers” represented a cultural identity older and seemingly more authentic, innocent, and ritualistic than the unpredictable, often harsh reality of the present. The back-to-the-landers, activists, and artists that flocked to the mountains joined local scholars and activists to create an “Appalachian renaissance.” Music and craft festivals flourished across the region. “There began to surface a new determination to stay in the mountains and an Appalachian pride in the cultural expression, values, and lifestyle of mountain people” (Carawan and Carawan 256). Natives and newcomers struggled with economics, politics, and environmental issues: music became an activist tool, and crafts represented an alternative way of life. State and local governments promoted ecotourism and the arts. Out of the combined work of scholars and activists, Appalachian Studies originated as an academic discipline, supported by colleges and universities in the region. A regional identity began to grow (Ibid.).

At the same time, outmigration by Appalachian natives, which began after World War II, continued at a dizzying pace in the economic climate of the 1970s. Young people left the rural areas of the region to seek employment in larger cities while many of their

urban and suburban counterparts moved into the region in search of a “simpler” way of life. In many cases, older residents helped their new neighbors, teaching them farming skills, and sharing food and tools. Many back-to-the-landers found themselves dependent on the kindness of these neighbors for their ultimate survival.<sup>5</sup>

Throughout Appalachia, folk festivals, workshop programs, and educational centers formed, including in West Virginia. In 1965, Don West, a co-founder of the Highlander Folk School, established the Appalachian South Folk Life Center in Pipestem, West Virginia. The Center today continues to emphasize respect for Appalachian culture and history, volunteerism, and grassroots activism (Farley 758). In Pendleton County, West Virginia, the Woodlands Mountain Institute (now The Mountain Institute or TMI) was established in 1972. TMI extended its work to the Himalayas and the Andes, and its “Appalachia Program” continues to emphasize outdoor, experiential education. “In a world facing unparalleled economic and environmental upheaval, The Mountain Institute is committed to protecting our mountains ... by conserving mountain ecosystems and empowering the people in mountain communities” (“Who We Are”). TMI also has a relationship with Davis & Elkins College.

Also in the 1970s, the Vandalia Gathering (established in 1979 in Charleston) joined the West Virginia State Folk Festival (established in 1950 at Glenville State College) as another statewide celebration of traditional music and craft. The West Virginia Department of Commerce and the state Arts and Humanities Council began publication of *Goldenseal* magazine, “the magazine of West Virginia traditional life,” in 1975. *Goldenseal* is still in print, now under the auspices of the West Virginia Division of



Culture and History. John Lilly, a Davis & Elkins College alumnus and former Augusta Heritage Center staff member, is the current editor (“History of Goldenseal”).

The “renaissance” continued throughout the decade and into the 1980s. All around the state, from Pipestem to Charleston to Fairmont, festivals, workshops, museums, and parks promoted West Virginia heritage.

After Appalachian Studies emerged as an academic discipline in the 1970s, several programs were established at West Virginia colleges, including Davis & Elkins. Appalachian Studies includes a blend of scholarship, activism, and the arts, which attracted those who were concerned about the region, both natives and “neonatives.” The original Appalachian Studies major at D&E was introduced as part of an experimental “integrated studies” program during the 1970s. According to David Turner’s centennial history of the college, then President Gordon Hermanson was troubled by an accrediting agency’s report that the college failed to “directly [respond] to the needs of the Appalachian environment” (16). President Hermanson strengthened the college’s commitment to its region by supporting the Appalachian Studies program and later the Augusta Heritage Arts Workshop. (During his administration, Augusta officially became part of D&E.) Little evidence is available to document what became of Appalachian Studies at Davis & Elkins in the 1970s.

An article in *Appalachian Journal* by former D&E Appalachian Studies professor, Frank Einstein, bemoans the end of Appalachian Studies and “the celebration of a superficial culture severed from its political and economic roots, in fact a fabricated culture” (200). Regarding Augusta, he argues that “the songs, stories, dances, and crafts

of this strange land and its peculiar people will continue to be celebrated in a new local color movement, now under the auspices of regional colleges and universities” (Ibid.).

At the time of Einstein’s writing in 1982, Appalachian Studies was a relatively new academic discipline. Less than six years had passed since the Cratis Williams Symposium and the subsequent organization of the Appalachian Studies Conference (Eller, *Uneven* 174). Davis & Elkins College, where Einstein taught Appalachian literature, disbanded its Appalachian Studies program at a time when financial constraints and changing priorities in higher education threatened many such programs in the region. The 1982 Winter/Spring issue of *Appalachian Journal* in which Einstein’s article was published was a special double issue entitled *Assessing Appalachian Studies*. Many of the concerns articulated by Einstein and others in this issue continue today. Questions about the challenges of mediating between academics, activists, and artists within a multidisciplinary field and the appropriate role of institutions of higher learning remain important in contemporary Appalachian Studies conversations. This debate is the subject of Jim Wayne Miller’s article in the same special issue of *Appalachian Journal*: “Appalachian Studies Hard and Soft: The Action Folk and the Creative People.”

“Action folk are political. Creative people are literary and artistic,” argues Miller (105). The “action folk” can be categorized under the “hard” sciences, economics, and other disciplines where research is mostly conducted with quantifiable data and can be used to affect change. “Creative people,” on the other hand, are interested in culture, philosophy, the arts, and literature; they are concerned with “values, attitudes, symbols,

and ideologies” (106). Einstein embodies an “action folk” perspective while “creative people” organize and attend Augusta.

Einstein’s concern for the future of Appalachian Studies was well-founded considering the challenges of his day, but he overlooked the potential usefulness of the arts workshop model. Ideally, a variety of participatory, hands-on educational models can complement traditional classroom study and activism, as we learn from the past to build Appalachia’s future. According to Jim Wayne Miller, “Nostalgia is not always—or often—about the past. It is about the present and the future” (109-10). He expresses a wise observation that folk revivals present alternatives to mainstream culture; folk revivals are countercultural. Those who are dissatisfied with modernity can frame an alternative, nostalgic present and a different vision for the future.

### **Experiential Learning**

While opportunities to participate in folk revivals vary from festivals to private instruction and apprenticeships, something particular happens at Augusta. It is critical to understand what has brought people to Augusta over the years and what compels so many to return annually. Nostalgia and the ideals of folk revivalists are only part of Augusta’s attraction. Fully understanding the program’s lasting influence requires understanding its experiential components.

Today at Augusta, most students attend one week of workshops, supplemented by concerts, dances, informal jam sessions, and other activities. A complex set of circumstances makes up the “Augusta experience,” which can be organized into three major stages: challenge, achievement, and reinforcement.<sup>6</sup> Challenge comes in many forms at Augusta. For first-time attendees, the anticipation leading up to the program

and during the first two days can be exciting and intimidating. There is no easy travel to Augusta from any long distance; the nearest major airport is in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, a three-hour drive. During the program, participants share a certain amount of hardship: they sleep in dormitories, eat in a college cafeteria, and carry their instruments up and down the hill on campus. New attendees especially have to learn new rules about class structures, schedules, wearing their nametags, and even social rules like jam session etiquette. The number of events and workshops can be overwhelming; it is a fully immersive experience. Students often feel nervous as they challenge themselves to learn new skills and make mistakes in front of strangers, friends, and some of their musical “heroes.” These factors create an emotionally intense situation.

The second phase, achievement, is a settling-in period (although no one ever gets *too* comfortable; there are always new challenges to meet). This phase, which overlaps with the challenge phase, can begin almost immediately. Students often quickly sense that they are among like-minded people. Identity can play an important role; participants have a chance to “reinvent” themselves. Many have described an immediate sense of belonging, as if they were “coming home.” The dining hall also plays a role in this; during meals, students and instructors eat together and talk. Students become more comfortable as hierarchical distinctions between instructors and students fade (although they never quite disappear). Throughout the week, students receive encouragement and constructive criticism from instructors and students as they struggle to meet personal challenges. They become accepted into the “Augusta family.”

The learning process itself is fulfilling; it is hands-on and concentrated. As the week goes on, participants experience what some call “Augusta moments,” which are incredibly powerful and memorable. In experiential education and recreation (Augusta can be classified as both), the concept of the “flow experience” (or, simply, “flow”) is key to understanding why and how people immerse themselves in particular activities. First, the concept of intrinsic motivation identifies activities that individuals choose to *do for their own sake*. The experience of participation (or perhaps the learning process) is the primary reason for participation. To travel, for instance, is often said to be about the joy of the journey, rather than the destination. Antithetical to this idea is extrinsic motivation, when participating in an activity is motivated by either a desire for reward (e.g., getting paid to do something) or fear of negative consequences (e.g., the risk of receiving bad grades for not doing homework) (Waterman, et al. 1448). Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi introduced the concept of “flow,” a subjective state achieved on rare occasions when participating in “intrinsically-motivated, fully-involved activities” (Waterman, et al. 1449). According to Waterman, et al., certain activities (including music) lend themselves to this experience. He explains these reasons:

They have rules that require the learning of skills, they set up goals, they provide feedback, and they make control possible. They facilitate concentration and involvement by making the activity as distinct as possible from the so-called “paramount reality” of everyday existence.

(72)

Waterman, et al. classify Csikszentmihalyi’s characteristics of flow as follows:

(a) the presence of clear goals; (b) an awareness of clear, immediate, and unambiguous feedback about the outcomes of the actions taken; (c) a merging of action and awareness; (d) the centering of attention on a limited stimulus field with the exclusion of distractions from consciousness; (e) a feeling of being in control of one's actions and of the immediate environment; (f) the absence of concern about failure; (g) the loss of ego or self-consciousness; and (h) a distortion in the sense of time. (1449)

Flow is often experienced by musicians, and much has been written about flow in music education, primarily among school-age children. Flow is another way to describe an "Augusta moment." An important factor is the sense that the experience will be short-lived, that these moments are once-in-a-lifetime events. The intensity of this experience and the positive emotional effects of full immersion in art and music allow students to disconnect from "real life," and for some, it is cathartic.

The final phase, reinforcement, begins during the program and continues afterward. Students learn the rituals associated with Augusta: initiation rituals such as orientation, the first evening dances and theme week parties, evening jam sessions with their particular structures and rules, and parting rituals. Throughout the week, returning students and instructors tell stories about their Augusta experiences and about other artists and musicians they have known. This storytelling recreates the past in meaningful ways, establishing Augusta as a tradition itself. These shared memories are often characterized by reverence for instructors and long-term students and staff, the rituals established, places (the dance pavilion or the campus pub, for instance), and

objects (musical instruments, craft items made or purchased at Augusta). The places where powerful “Augusta moments,” and even seemingly mundane experiences, occur become familiar and eventually sacred. Returning a year later, many students feel excitement and anticipation driving through campus the first time, remembering what transpired there in previous years. Because Augusta’s location and rituals become sacred to returning students, especially those who attend for many years, students often become resistant to change. Many of the complaints Augusta receives are about changes in the dining hall, dorm assignments, programming, and staffing decisions.

Other reinforcing factors continue after students have gone home. Many of them take home Augusta memorabilia and recordings as souvenirs. Some collect their name badges or catalogs. They also take their new skills home to their local jam sessions, dances, and craft fairs. Some have organized such events after returning to their home communities. Follow-up mailings from Augusta and Davis & Elkins College remind students of their experiences throughout the year. Many anticipate the arrival of a new Augusta catalog with excitement. The program is most successful when those students return the following year.

Perhaps the most interesting part is that these factors began developing with the very first Augusta Workshop in 1973. There is no evidence to suggest that program organizers initially anticipated the intensity of the experiential components of the program, the establishment of ritual, or that Augusta itself would become the subject of nostalgia.

Whether Augusta represents a “new local color movement” or “nostalgia for the future,” it is part of a long tradition of Appalachian folk revivals. Interviews with

Augusta staff and students reveal a permeating concern for young people and the future, suggesting that Jim Wayne Miller may have been correct about “nostalgia for the future” (110). In 1926, after Senators Davis and Elkins both passed away, Davis & Elkins College moved its campus to the Halliehurst estate (Ross 68). The sprawling porches of Halliehurst, Elkins’s mansion (named for his wife Hallie Davis Elkins) today come to life with music and dancing during Augusta’s summer sessions. Ironically, Halliehurst, which once symbolized the power of industrial capitalism, has become the familiar domain of revivalist musicians and artists, a fitting testament to Americans’ diverse perceptions of modernity and progress.



## **Chapter 2: A Qualitative Model, Research Methods**

This research represents the culmination of a two-year study that incorporates primary and secondary sources to construct a history of the Augusta Heritage Center and understand how it has endured for forty years. Building on more than ten years of first-hand experience as an Augusta staff member, the researcher reviewed relevant scholarly literature, investigated primary source materials from Augusta's archives, interviewed eight current and former Augusta staff members, and conducted focus groups with twenty-seven Augusta students.

The literature review process began in the fall of 2012 when the researcher compiled a bibliography and pathfinder entitled "Heritage Arts Workshops in Central Appalachia" in AS 5000 (Bibliography and Research Methods) under the supervision of Dr. Fred Hay. The first seven individual interviews were conducted during the spring of 2013 in Dr. Susan Keefe's ANT 5410 (Qualitative Research Methods) course, and the final interviews were completed in the spring of 2014. Five focus groups were conducted during the Augusta Heritage Center 2013 summer session, including one focus group per program week.

Throughout the process, the staff and faculty of Davis & Elkins College, especially the Augusta Heritage Center, provided invaluable support and access. Conducting this research in Elkins, West Virginia, required driving more than five hours for each one-way trip during university breaks and long weekends, and the Augusta staff were

particularly helpful by coordinating with the researcher on these tightly scheduled visits, providing weekend access to archives, and loaning some archival materials for research.

### **Literature Review and Archival Research**

Very little scholarly literature about the Augusta Heritage Center exists, so most of the scholarly context derives from sources more broadly related to folk revivals, experiential education, West Virginia history, and other arts workshop programs in Appalachia. Augusta's archives provided the most valuable printed materials about the Center. Promotional materials, including a catalog of program offerings from every year of Augusta's existence, provided a timeline of program development and a cast of characters of instructors and support staff. In addition to these publicly distributed materials, the archives included files from the program's organizers over its entire history, including letters and memos, minutes from planning meetings, grant reports, reports on enrollment and student demographics, program evaluations from students and instructors, and miscellaneous notes and files. These materials provided a fuller behind-the-scenes understanding of the planning process, the goals and concerns of organizers, and the praise and critiques of participants over time.

The Booth Library of Davis & Elkins College also houses the Augusta Archive of Folk Culture, an extensive collection of regional field recordings as well as multimedia materials related to Augusta's programming. Video recordings, audio recordings, and photographs from this collection supplemented the printed materials used in this project.

## **Individual Interviews**

The interviews conducted for this project addressed the perceptions of long-time Augusta students and staff members. Eight individual interviewees were selected through a purposive sampling method, which allowed the researcher to select informants most likely to address key research questions.<sup>7</sup> All of these informants have participated in Augusta as either volunteer or paid staff. The following criteria were used to identify potential informants likely to have long-term connections with many aspects of the Center.

1. Informants must have a long-term (5 or more years) relationship with the Augusta Heritage Center in some capacity.
2. Informants must currently hold or have held a position as year-round paid or volunteer staff of the Augusta Heritage Center. (This excludes individuals who have only held seasonal positions and focuses on those who are likely to have invested the most time in the program.)
3. Informants currently live in the town or in the vicinity of Elkins, West Virginia. (These individuals are likely to have sustained contact with Augusta, even when they were not employed by the Center. Also, the time and travel constraints of this research required a centrally located sample.)

Informants who met these criteria were likely to place significant value on their participation in Augusta, and thus provide insights regarding the primary research questions (see p. 2 to review the research questions). Most of these informants have participated in the program on many levels as students, staff members, and volunteers.

The above criteria assisted in identifying eight informants and five alternates. Due to a variety of factors related to informant availability, the original sample was adjusted slightly. Informants were further categorized based on the period of time in which they were employed by the Augusta Heritage Center. This selection process allowed for coverage of most of the program's forty-year span. Alternates were identified in the same way. The initial categories of classification were:

1. Early Years Staff: Staff and board members from the program in the 1970s.
2. Multiple Decade Staff: Staff members from the 1980s until the 2000s.
3. Third Decade Staff: Staff members during the program's peak enrollment years (and period of largest permanent staff) in the 1990s.
4. Youngest Staff: Current staff members who were students in the program as children or teenagers in the 1990s or 2000s.

After beginning the research, it became clear that there were still some gaps. For instance, there was only one available informant from the "Multiple Decade Staff" group. Secondly, during an interview, an informant originally classified as part of the "Third Decade Staff" informed the researcher that she became involved in Augusta much earlier. This resulted in the following spread:

1. Early Years Staff: Three informants (Ken McCoy, Gerry Milnes, and Judy Van Gundy) were present during the 1970s, two of whom are still involved today (Milnes and Van Gundy), making them also classifiable under the "Multiple Decade Staff" category.
2. Multiple Decade Staff: Margo Blevin was the only staff member interviewed who began working at Augusta in the 1980s, although the members of the previous

- category also overlap with this time period. Her long stint as director (1981-2006) means she worked with members of all three other categories.
3. Third Decade Staff: Scott Prouty began participation in the late 1980s as a child with the bulk of his involvement in the 1990s (he was an alternate on the original list for the “Multiple Decade Staff” category). Joyce Rossbach began participation in the 1990s and continued as a staff member at the time of her interview in 2013.
  4. Youngest Staff: This is the only category in which both originally selected informants were interviewed from the same category; both Becky Hill and Matthew Kupstas began participation as adolescents and currently serve on staff.

After reviewing these categories, it is clear that expanding the sample to include more informants from the 1980s would be helpful. Also, all of the informants were between their mid-twenties to thirties or over sixty years old at the time of their interviews, so inclusion of additional informants between ages forty and sixty would also diversify the sample. However, this age gap may be indicative of a larger trend at Augusta whose clientele includes mostly retirement-age or school-age (through college) individuals, with a gap in between.

The interviews were conducted in Elkins and Parsons, West Virginia, in the homes of informants and on the campus of Davis & Elkins College. The interview locations were chosen for the convenience and comfort of informants. Interviews were arranged by telephone five to ten days in advance and confirmed by phone or in person one or two days in advance. The interviews were semi-structured, using a list of

questions that focus on informants' personal experiences with Augusta, the relationship between Augusta and Davis & Elkins College, the motivating factors of informants and their friends that influenced their participation in Augusta, and informants' identification with alternative social movements (see Appendix A for list of questions). With one exception, all interviews were audio recorded and video recorded. Margo Blevin-Denton was interviewed twice, but her first interview was not video or audio recorded. All interviews were annotated by the researcher, and some were transcribed in full.

### **Focus Groups**

This project used focus groups (i.e. group interviews) to collect a representative sample of the views of long-term students.<sup>8</sup> Focus groups were expected to be more effective than individual interviews in forming an overall picture of student motivations for participating in Augusta. The number of potential student informants was too large, and a representative sample through individual interviews would have been impossible to collect under the given time constraints. Focus groups, however, made it possible to interview a larger sample. Also, group interviews allowed informants to identify widely held opinions and made the interview process more informant-driven. Using focus groups enabled the researcher to identify trends and nuances in thinking as participants compared and contrasted their experiences and perspectives. Focus group research (a qualitative method) is also preferable to a survey approach (a quantitative method) in gaining an understanding of complex ideas and describing values and events in the participants' own terms. Conducting one focus group during each week of programming for a total of five weeks allowed the researcher to identify trends and

differences between weeks, bringing a level of understanding of the topic that would reach saturation by the fifth group.<sup>9</sup>

One focus group of currently enrolled Augusta students was conducted each week of the summer workshop series in July and August, 2013. The sample was chosen using a snowball method; the researcher consulted with staff members and known long-term students to select focus group participants.<sup>10</sup> Criteria for participation included full-time enrollment as a student or chaperone for the current week of workshops (students only enrolled in evening mini-courses did not qualify) and attendance in at least five years of Augusta programs. An effort was made to recruit students from all concurrent theme weeks and from craft and folklore classes. Participants were approached in person by the researcher, who explained the project and the interview process. Each informant who agreed to participate received a handout with a summary of the project, a reminder of the time and location of the focus group, and contact information for the researcher.

The focus groups were held mid-week at a time least likely to conflict with other scheduled activities, between afternoon classes and dinner, or just after dinner before evening events began. The manager of the Icehouse pub generously offered the space for the focus groups, providing tables, seating, and lighting. The pub was otherwise unused at this time of the day, and as a familiar location for jam sessions and evening revelry, it was a comfortable, familiar place for the informants.

Upon arrival at the scheduled time, each of the focus group participants completed a brief survey about their personal background and their history with Augusta (see Appendix C for compiled questionnaire data). The interviews lasted

approximately forty-five minutes to one hour, and all were video and audio recorded.

The focus groups were asked these five questions:

1. Please introduce yourself and tell us when and how you first got involved with Augusta.
2. Think back on your first time at Augusta. What was it like? Do any memorable moments come to mind from your early time here?
3. Why do you participate in Augusta? What is the significance of Augusta to you, or what role does Augusta play in your life?
4. We live in a technologically driven, fast-paced, modern world. What is Augusta's role within that context?
5. What should be Augusta's role be in the future? Will Augusta be relevant in the future? Why or why not?

The informants were asked to answer the first question orally, in the order in which they were seated, one at a time. For the following questions, the interviewer encouraged a more organic, conversational format, urging participants to respond to each other and add their opinions as they thought of them. Throughout the process, most of the groups needed little prompting between questions, and it was sometimes difficult to address all five questions in the time allotted.

Combined with the individual interviews of Augusta staff members, these student focus groups provided a fuller picture of Augusta's importance to long-term participants. The next two chapters will combine data from archival sources and interviews to outline the history of Augusta.



### Chapter 3: Presenting the Past, The Early Years

Little academic writing about Augusta's history or its broader significance exists, despite its reputation as "an internationally respected and multifaceted arts learning center," (Lilly, "Augusta" 6). Augusta's own documentation has focused on regional folk traditions, promoted its programs, and provided only brief historical narratives of the organization itself. The few detailed descriptions include an article published in the 1997 Augusta catalog, an annual publication listing course offerings and registration information (Lilly, "Augusta"). Amy Noël Davis's senior thesis about her experiences at Augusta is the largest piece of scholarly writing about the program, but written in 1983, it predates three quarters of Augusta's history. Other articles in state and regional encyclopedias contain brief summaries (Lilly, "West;" Milnes, "Augusta"). Other than information contained in these publications, scholarly evaluation of Augusta's history appears nonexistent. A handful of short films briefly describe Augusta's history: the Augusta Heritage Center produced an eleven-minute promotional film in 2008 entitled *Augusta: An American Folk Arts Program in the West Virginia Hills*, and the Folk Alliance debuted a seven-minute film on Augusta's history when it presented the Lifetime Achievement Award (*Augusta, 2013 Lifetime*).

To fill the gap, this research utilizes Augusta's program archives to document its early years when Augusta was known as the Augusta Heritage Arts Workshop. At that time, it operated under the auspices of the Randolph County Creative Arts Council. The

history of Augusta contains three central themes which appear and reappear as interwoven threads to be described and analyzed in this chapter:

1. The sequence of events that unfolded between 1972 and 1980, as shown in primary sources from Augusta's archives, shaped Augusta's early years and its trajectory for the coming decades.
2. The early organizers' goals and visions for the program, also described in primary sources, suggest their underlying motives and values.
3. "Origin narratives" of Augusta offer stories which differ in subtle but significant ways from the historical record.

As Gerry Milnes, Augusta's former Folk Arts Coordinator, said, "folklore is a representation of values" (Interview), and the stories surrounding Augusta's early days have become folklore. The popular accounts of Augusta's history represent the values of participants, both staff and students. Understanding participants' values about tradition, identity, and nostalgia connects Augusta to larger social movements and broader questions still relevant to modern society.

Augusta began on the heels of a national folk music revival and in the midst of the back-to-the land movement and an accompanying craft revival in Appalachia. Participants in these movements concerned themselves with authenticity, tradition, community, and face-to-face, hands-on learning; they embraced a combination do-it-yourself and learn-from-your-neighbor ethic. Particularly for back-to-the-landers who sought subsistence lifestyles in the mountains, Augusta workshops offered instruction in the homesteading skills they needed, such as log cabin construction, basketry, and food preservation. Augusta's summer program nurtured a community of artists, sharing

their talents, insights, and values in a cooperative, supportive environment. Although the program format evolved over many years, the sense of belonging to a creative community; the inspiration from total immersion in music, dance, and crafts; and the feeling of connecting to ancient roots still define an Augusta summer. Augusta students take intensive workshops, attend concerts, and dance together daily for one to five weeks, regularly working on craft projects or playing music late into the night. Out-of-town students sleep (when they sleep) mostly in campus dormitories, and many students (locals and visitors) eat meals together in the College's dining hall. In a quickly changing world, Americans continually seek personal identity, community, connections to the past, and outlets for creativity. Students and staff act out these desires at Augusta, many returning for ten, twenty, or more consecutive years, demonstrating the underlying values that inspire folk revivals and remain prevalent in American society today.

Like the inhabitants of the Youghiogheny Forest Colony in the 1930s, many people came to the mountains during the 1970s to live closer to the land. In West Virginia, a "small tide of people seeking a more meaningful existence through the back-to-the-land movement" moved to the Elkins area (Milnes, *Play of a Fiddle 2*). Those who came to West Virginia as part of this movement helped to establish festivals and workshop programs in traditional music and crafts. Many of Augusta's early participants were part of this movement, and some still live in the Elkins area (Milnes, Interview; Van Gundy).

Although it may appear that folk revivalists, particularly "back-to-the-landers," reject modern life outright, most attempt to reconcile a historically rooted

understanding of identity with the fast-paced, future oriented modern world in which they live. Historian Ronald Eller described this phenomenon among the influx of young people in the burgeoning Appalachian Studies movement in the 1970s:

Not only did these college students and former poverty warriors discard cultural stereotypes in favor of structural explanations of mountain poverty, but many also rejected the idea of progress implicit in American models of development in the post-World War II period. Like the counterculture movement that swept the rest of the country, the new Appalachian regionalism evolved from both the cultural and the political radicalism of the Vietnam War era and reflected as much a desire to change the course of the nation as it did a determination to escape assimilation. (Eller, *Uneven* 171)

Although nostalgia and the ideals of folk revivalists remain critical to Augusta's appeal, the experiential components of the program are equally important. Augusta students and organizers have, perhaps inadvertently at first, created a microcosm of society, organized by their own rules and values. This made Augusta more than just a place to learn a skill, but a place to belong, living briefly in a like-minded community. Interviews with current and former long-term staff suggest a complex set of factors have contributed to the "Augusta experience," such as bonding through shared challenges, confidence-building by pushing personal boundaries, group cohesion through common interests (creating a sense of belonging), powerful moments of total immersion in hands-on activities, and the establishment of ritual.<sup>11</sup> Back-to-the-landers, folk revivalists, and Appalachian scholars grappled with issues of community, identity,

and tradition in the 1970s when the idea for Augusta originated, making the community experience as critical as the program content.

### **The Augusta Story**

In realization of the high concentration of recognized craftsmen in our area, and the broad interest expressed by the community in the crafts and in this project, and in the anticipation that the completion of the new interstate highway system and the development of the Canaan Valley complex, the Seneca Rocks National Recreation Area, and the new Walker Corporation 400 Unit year round resort within 25 miles of Elkins, it seems to the Randolph County Creative Arts Council that we are in a unique location to devote our efforts toward the preserving, enhancing, and learning of the Appalachian arts and crafts. (Randolph, *Application Attachment A4*)

When the Randolph County (West Virginia) Creative Arts Council submitted the above grant request to the West Virginia Arts and Humanities Council, the region was teeming with activity. With a national forest and several state parks in close proximity, the town of Elkins in North Central West Virginia (Randolph County) became a hub for outdoor enthusiasts. The county also attracted newcomers to its thriving local music and craft scene and affordable land. Many of the early participants in the Augusta Heritage Arts Workshop moved to the area as part of the back-to-the-land movement or for other reasons during the early- to mid-1970s; some still live in Randolph County (Milnes, Interview; Van Gundy).

Although this research began as an attempt to document Augusta's little-known history and the ways organizers adapted their vision for the program over time, it quickly became apparent that primary source evidence differs in small but important ways from the commonly told narrative of the program's origins. Examining the historical narrative described in the Center's promotional materials and retold by current staff and students reveals deeply held values common in folk revival movements.

When Augusta participants and staff have told the story, they describe humble, grass-roots beginnings, unexpected success, and a vibrant, busy atmosphere during the period of peak enrollment in the 1990s. Augusta participants have emphasized the breakdown of barriers and leveling of social roles that cross generational and cultural divides and connect masters with novices. The Folk Alliance International, in a brief film about Augusta, described it as "a place where past meets present and forges our future" (2013 *Lifetime*). Augusta's own retelling of its history in the twenty-fifth anniversary catalog (1997) harkened back to an era before West Virginia statehood and even before the American Revolution, situating Augusta's roots firmly in the region's pioneer heritage. In fact, the organizers named the new program the Augusta Heritage Arts Workshop after colonial-era Augusta County Virginia, which covered much of what later became West Virginia. The story continued with the establishment of Davis & Elkins College by the two industrialist Senators and Elkins's transformation into a hub of "cultural and intellectual life in Randolph County" (Lilly, "Augusta" 3).

Planning for the first Augusta Workshop began in the winter of 1972, scheduling summer programs that supported the desires of locals and newcomers to preserve

traditional art forms. "Several members of the [D&E] college community ..., members of the Randolph County Creative Arts Council, representatives of the Randolph County Senior Center, and local artists" organized the first Augusta Heritage Arts Workshop in 1972 (Lilly, "Augusta" 3). The Council proposed a workshop series in Appalachian crafts slated for the summer of 1973. In Lilly's article, Davis & Elkins College played a prominent role in establishing Augusta, although popular versions of the story downplay the college's importance. Because Augusta operated under the auspices of the Creative Arts Council until its official transfer to Davis & Elkins College in late 1980, inconsistencies abound regarding the college's early role.

Stories about the first Augusta summer session have emphasized its humble beginnings and surprising popularity. The comparatively narrow focus on Appalachian crafts, tuition at the low cost of twenty-five dollars per week, and a small number of mostly local participants seemed quaint to readers of the 1997 catalog. By the time Lilly's history was published, Augusta was known for its music program, with crafts playing a minor role. "Theme weeks" featuring a variety of roots music expanded far beyond primarily Appalachian-associated traditions to include Cajun, Irish, blues, and many other genres. According to Lilly, "In 1996, Augusta attracted over 2,600 participants from 48 states and eight foreign countries" (8). He also listed 7,600 concert and 5,000 Augusta Festival attendees in addition to students, numbers which greatly overshadowed the ninety participants from 1973 (Ibid.).

Most popular accounts attributed Augusta's transition from the Creative Arts Council to Davis & Elkins College and the subsequent hiring of the Center's longest running director as critical milestones contributing to the Center's success. While the

popular narrative attributes Augusta's growth during the 1970s as largely the result of a series of "happy accidents," the stability and vision brought by Margo Blevin's directorship propelled Augusta into the active years of the 1990s (*2013 Lifetime*). As important as the transition to the College was, it remains largely misunderstood. The story told by most participants, and in Lilly's article, describes Augusta's growth in the 1970s as so rapid that the Creative Arts Center lacked the stability and financial resources to administer it. To an extent, this was true. In the early model of the program's administration, coordinators (and often co-coordinators) rotated each year. From 1972 to 1980, at least ten individuals stood at the helm of the Augusta Workshop.<sup>12</sup>

In 1980, the Creative Arts Council officially transferred control of Augusta to Davis & Elkins College. Today, few understand what ultimately prompted the transfer. Lilly's article vaguely describes "growing pains" because "it was run by volunteers and temporary staff, funded by grants, and lacked administrative and financial stability" (6). According to the Folk Alliance's film,

By 1980 it all seemed to be fizzling out when the college made two fateful decisions. Instead of giving up, they incorporated Augusta into the college.... The college also asked Margo Blevins [sic], who'd never attended Augusta, to be its first director.... From then, it was one happy accident after another. (*2013 Lifetime*)

The next section of Lilly's article, "Stability," notes that the College hired Margo Blevin (director) and Sheila Amorese (secretary) as Augusta's first "permanent staff" (Lilly "Augusta" 6). Blevin, the longest-running director of Augusta, led the Center to



international prominence, and is deservedly celebrated and beloved by Augusta staff and participants. Under her leadership, Augusta grew from a small workshop with local aspirations to an internationally renowned center for folk art education, featuring an eclectic assortment of programs.

In all accounts of its history, the master artists who taught and performed at Augusta played a prominent role. The opportunity to work with older, talented, and often famous (within their respective genres) “tradition bearers” allowed Augusta participants to feel as if they had touched the past. According to the Folk Alliance’s film, Augusta allowed students to “[learn] up close, rubbing elbows with lifelong masters like Doc Watson, Bessie Jones, D.L. Menard, Norman Blake, Patsy Montana, Sand Man Sims, Ola Belle Reed, John Cephas, Josh Graves, Howard Armstrong, and Seamus Connelly” (2013 *Lifetime*). Lilly’s article listed nearly thirty National Heritage Fellows who had participated in Augusta by 1997, individuals who had “been recognized as ‘national treasures’ by the National Endowment for the Arts” (5).

Margo says, “Everything was accidental and it all worked out.” But the seeds of it were there from the get-go. The original idea was to have all these things going on at the same time so everybody could learn from everybody else. Everybody learning from everybody else.... That is tradition, isn’t it? It is also a place called Augusta. (2013 *Lifetime*)

The story of Augusta emphasizes tradition, equality, community, hands-on learning, raw talent, and perseverance, rejecting to varying degrees modern materialism, hierarchy, selfishness, book learning, and privilege. Augusta participants joke that musicians who read music, rather than playing by ear (the latter being

preferred by participants), are “paper trained.” The popular version of the story emphasizes these values.

While Lilly’s article and the Folk Alliance’s film documented Augusta’s development with more depth than other sources, time has obscured some important details now found only in primary sources from Augusta’s program archives, including grant reports, meeting minutes, memos, letters, student and staff evaluations, newsletters, and promotional materials. Exploring these mostly unpublished documents reveals a more complete picture of Augusta’s institutional history than any previously constructed.

#### **“The Right Need at the Right Time” (and Place): The First Workshop**

In the 1970s, West Virginia’s state and local governments emphasized tourism, including outdoor recreation and the arts, as an economic development strategy. In 1971, Randolph County and the City of Elkins established five committees in a joint planning commission, including Solid Waste Disposal, Housing, Tourism, Recreation, and Creative Arts (Randolph, *Application* Attachment E n. pag.). The following year, the Randolph County Creative Arts Council, working closely with key faculty members of Davis & Elkins College, planned the first Augusta Heritage Arts Workshop. The Workshop promoted local traditional crafts, emphasizing education and providing a more in-depth experience than the weekend festivals already common in the state.

The oldest known primary source about Augusta is one page of handwritten notes from a Davis & Elkins College Division I meeting about a “proposal for a summer crafts workshop.”<sup>13</sup> According to these notes, the proposed workshop “fills [the] gap between arts & craft folks and purely academic programs for teacher preparation”

("Division" n. pag.). Two major goals of the workshop included promoting heritage arts to inspire community pride in Appalachian traditions, and providing intensive training for emerging artists who could preserve heritage crafts for the next generation (Randolph, *Application* n. pag.). In a subsequent memo, Division chairperson and future Augusta coordinator Dr. Margaret Purdum Goddin announced the proposal's success, writing, "During our last meeting we agreed to sponsor the Heritage Arts and Crafts Workshop for this summer" (Goddin, "Division" n. pag.). The organizers of the Workshop perceived a demand for the Workshop, which its early success confirmed. The 1973 Workshop gained state recognition when the West Virginia Arts and Humanities Council awarded a \$7,744 grant to support program costs (Randolph, *Report 1973 A* n. pag.).

The first Augusta Heritage Arts Workshop ran July 9 – August 3, 1973, designed as a four-week intensive program. (Some courses, however, were offered in a shorter, two-week format.) The Workshop featured classes in Appalachian music, basketry and caning, folkdance, folkdrama, folklore, general crafts, pottery, weaving, and instrument construction (Randolph, *Randolph County* n. pag.). Students (ages 14+) enrolled in multiple classes that spanned the four weeks; some classes met during the day and others in the evenings to accommodate student schedules. Tuition of \$25 per week per class or \$100 for a four-week class included basic materials for craft students; if material use exceeded a certain amount, the Workshop assessed a small materials fee, however. Through donations and grant funds, Augusta provided equipment (pottery wheels, looms, etc.) and supplies (clay, reeds for basketry, etc.).

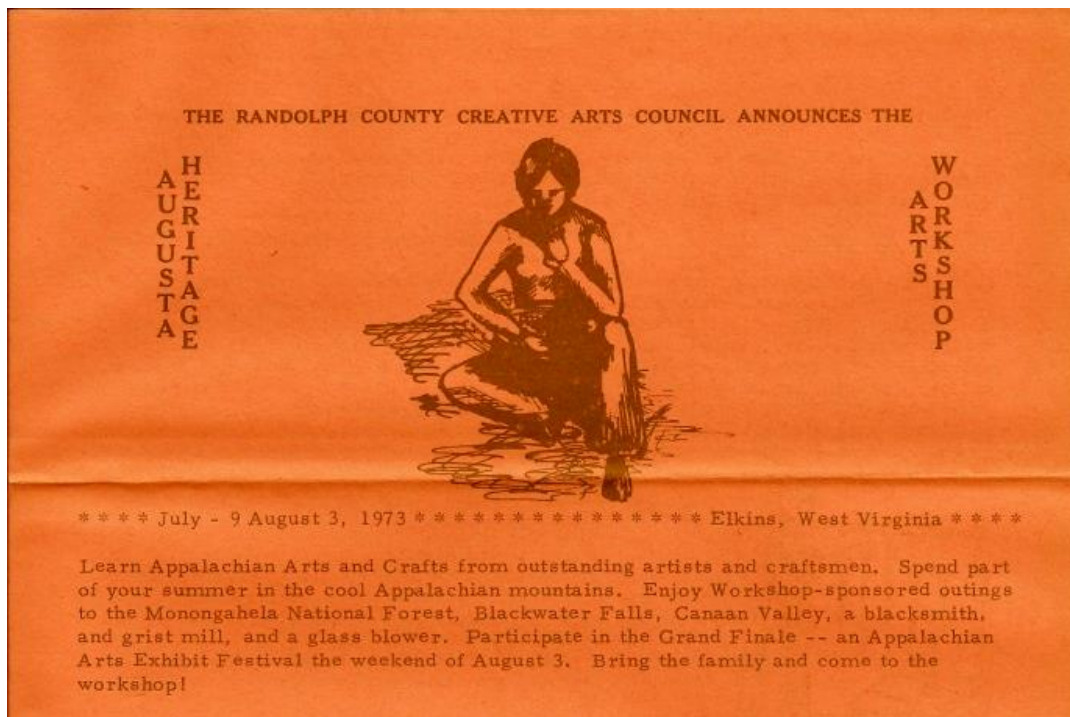


Figure 2: 1973 Augusta Heritage Arts Workshop Flyer. Cropped Image. This flyer served as the first Augusta “catalog” and included course information and a registration form. Courtesy Augusta Archive of Folk Culture, Augusta Heritage Center of Davis & Elkins College.

Augusta participants and staff commonly understand the Augusta Workshop’s origins as an independent community project sponsored by the Creative Arts Council with the College playing a minor, supporting role. However, the extant records of Augusta’s early years indicate that the College’s contribution to the fledgling program was critical to its early success. Since the beginning, the Augusta Workshops took place on the campus of Davis & Elkins College. The College contributed directly or in kind \$5,956 of Augusta’s \$22,000 budget in 1973. This included partial support of salaries and publicity expenses and total support of employee benefits, student assistants, facilities, and office equipment (including telephone use). Augusta used the D&E Registrar’s Office, Accounting Office, and Business Office, an estimated in-kind value of

\$1,000 (Randolph, *Application C* n. pag.). College dormitories and the dining hall offered room and board at a combined discounted rate of \$25 per week for a seven-night stay. One of two co-coordinators for the first Augusta Workshop, D&E professor Dr. Margaret Goddin, also held the distinction as the first female Dean of Faculty at Davis & Elkins (Ross 294). Dr. Goddin worked closely with Dr. Gordon Hermanson, president of the College.

From the beginning, the Augusta Workshop courted students and teachers, especially locals. A scholarship fund drive conducted in the community supported tuition expenses for deserving Randolph County students. This scholarship eventually developed into a large Youth Scholarship program. The Appalachian Crafts class, designed for school teachers, covered a variety of beginner-level crafts to introduce in their classrooms. Beginning in the first summer, Augusta offered both continuing education for teachers as well as undergraduate college credit. The first Augusta Workshop flyer targeted “all Randolph County organizations;... all public school teachers and administration in the county; all students, and staff of D&E College;... and all public schools (elementary and secondary), colleges, and universities in W. Va.” (Randolph, *Application F* n. pag.).

Augusta’s first summer program boasted around 100 participants including nine instructors, two co-coordinators, and two student assistants from Davis & Elkins College.<sup>14</sup> In an appeal for equipment donations addressed to “Interested Persons” at Davis & Elkins College, Dr. Goddin announced, “The workshop is really rolling!... Unless we open another section or someone drops out, the pottery class is closed.... Would you believe we need two tons of clay for the workshop?” (Goddin, “Re: Summer” n. pag.). In

addition to workshops, Augusta featured field trips to a local blacksmith and a glass blower. The summer concluded with “an open house, exhibit festival during which accomplishments [were] presented from all facets” (Randolph, *Report 1973 A-2*, 6). This “finale” preceded two later Augusta traditions: the Augusta Festival now held at the end of each summer, and the student showcase held at the end of each program week.

Despite some logistical problems, including a classroom setup mishap, the first summer session received positive evaluations from both students and instructors. In a letter to Dr. Goddin, President Hermanson described the Workshop as “one of the most exciting things I have seen on our campus for a long time” and went on to say, “It is my sincere hope that somehow we may be able to continue it in the summers and to have at least some of the crafts throughout the academic year.” Hermanson apparently paid close attention to the workshop’s activities, reading “each issue” of the Workshop’s daily newsletter, *The Augusta Bugle* (Hermanson n. pag.). Hermanson, Wilson, and Goddin all credited the cooperation between the College and Arts Council organizers as critical to the program’s success. In a letter to President Hermanson, R. Dale Wilson described Augusta as a “joint project” between the College and the Arts Council. He said, “From the very beginnings of this idea that has grown into Augusta, the involvement of the college has been whole-hearted and committed, and that ‘spirit’ of giving everything possible for the idea’s goal has continued into the closing days and even into future plans.” Wilson further emphasized this “spirit” as the “key toward making the dream of Augusta a living reality” (Wilson, Letter to Hermanson n. pag.).

The Creative Arts Council, thoroughly pleased with the first summer session, concluded a glowing summary of the program in the final grant report to the WV Arts and Humanities Council by saying, "We feel we have hit the right need here at the right moment and that the effect has been tremendous" (Randolph, *Report* 1973 n. pag.).

The Creative Arts Council envisioned Augusta's growth over the course of several years, using the first summer as a pilot. Early organizers wrote that the Workshop was only part of an eventually larger, perhaps somewhat different program, intended to identify promising artisans as suitable apprentices to older master artists. Although the Creative Arts Council had not developed an apprenticeship program when the first Workshop began, they clearly intended to build one in the coming years.

Whether this project would alter to an exclusive apprenticeship program, would continue as a workshop general experience, or would become a combination of the two can only be gained through experience and sober evaluation. (Randolph, *Report* 1973 A 3-4)

Dale Wilson, the other co-coordinator of the 1973 Workshop reflected in his evaluation,

I would call the workshop an unqualified success. It is, however, important to remember that this four-week project was legitimately designed as a pilot for a complete school operation, and its effect while tremendous will be worthless if the workshop is not allowed to continue to grow and progress. (Randolph, *Report* 1973 n. pag.)

Wilson's vision of a "complete school operation" seems ambiguous (no other extant documents use this phrase), but the optimism of the Randolph County Creative Arts

Council remains clear. The “Augusta Heritage Arts Workshop appears to have a bright future. It[s] first experience points toward the sky” (Ibid.).

### **The Creative Arts Council Years: 1972-1980**

In the second year of the Augusta Heritage Arts Workshop, enrollment nearly doubled to almost two hundred participants (Randolph, *Report 1974 1*). Perhaps because of this steep rise in participation, 1974 organizers cautioned against rapid growth in the future, fearing the loss of “intimacy” and citing the limitations of the College facilities (Randolph, *Report 1974 2*). Enrollment climbed more gradually throughout the 1970s, reaching just over 300 by 1979 (Bard n. pag.).

To accommodate rising interest, additional courses included Musical Instrument Construction, Tole Painting, Woodcrafting, Herbs, Oral History, Appalachian Literature, Appalachian Dialect, Papermaking, Woodworking and Woodcarving.<sup>15</sup> Additional sections of popular workshops like pottery complemented several types of basketry and a wide variety of textiles (Randolph, *Augusta 1980 n. pag.*). Initially, courses were offered for two or four weeks at a time, the entire summer session lasting four weeks (Randolph, *Randolph County n. pag.*). In 1975, a fifth week joined the lineup and by 1980, workshops were also offered in three-week and one-week increments (Randolph, *Augusta 1975 n. pag.*; Randolph, *Augusta 1980 n. pag.*). Also, new weekend courses included crafts such as Coiled Basketry, Twined Basketry, Corn Husk Dolls, Applehead Dolls, Checkering, and Shingle Splitting as well as outdoor activities like Fly Tying, Turkey Calling, Caving, and Wild Edibles (Randolph, *Augusta 1980 n. pag.*).

Program offerings later evolved to include more music from a variety of genres arranged in a single-week format, and enrollment eventually ballooned to over 1,000.



Despite these important changes, the early years of Augusta set precedents for many important program hallmarks that survive today. Augusta now maintains a five-week summer schedule, with nearly all courses offered in one-week increments. Scholarships, first offered in 1973, became an important feature of the program through the generosity of participants. Subject-specific scholarships, such as the Cajun Week Youth Scholarship and the Candace Laird Scholarship for Weaving complement general scholarships for youth. In 2010, Augusta awarded over \$17,000 in scholarships, more than a thirteen-fold increase from the \$1,295 raised in 1973 (Augusta Heritage Center, "Giving" n. pag.; Randolph, *Report 1973 A 2*).

Because of Augusta's educational focus, college credit remains an important offering. Currently, undergraduate credit is available through Davis & Elkins College (one credit hour per week of instruction), a practice that has continued since the first Workshop in 1973. However, graduate continuing education credit is currently unavailable (Augusta Heritage Center, *Augusta 2013 26*; Randolph, *Report 1973 n. pag.*). Class sizes also remain small, with approximately fifteen students as the maximum for most instrumental and craft classes; vocal and dance classes may be larger (Augusta Heritage Center, "Section" 7 Aug.).

The early coordinators' intention to use Augusta's workshops to identify potential apprentices for long-term, one-on-one study with local craftspeople was finally realized in 1989 when the West Virginia Folk Arts Apprenticeship program began, supported by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). The program compensated West Virginia artists for one-on-one instruction with an apprentice. Most apprenticeships took place in the homes and studios of the artists (Milnes, *Passing 18*).

The program supported over 150 apprenticeships over twenty years, but was discontinued after 2008 (Augusta Heritage Center, *Augusta 2008* 4).

Although the 1973 Workshop concluded with a “finale” that showcased student work, the first record of an event called the “Augusta Festival” appeared in the 1977 brochure. It briefly states, “The final week of the Workshop will be Festival Week when crafts made during the Workshop will be exhibited and special concerts and other celebrations will take place” (Randolph, *Augusta 1977* n. pag.). The “Festival Week” eventually evolved into a three-day weekend festival, featuring evening dances and concerts, a juried craft fair, workshops and performance stages, and a gospel sing (Augusta Heritage Center, “1987” n. pag.).

Despite incremental growth, Augusta’s budget remained dependent on grant funding and tuition to sustain a small margin of profit.<sup>16</sup> Over the course of the 1970s, coordinators rotated every nine months. Lilly’s article credited this lack of continuity as a key reason for the transfer of the Augusta Heritage Arts Workshop to Davis & Elkins College in 1980 (Lilly, “Augusta” 6). Evidence from Creative Arts Council meeting notes and memos between the Council and College administrators indicates more specific events that led to the transfer. Several factors negatively affected Augusta in 1980. Most of the annual publicity brochures were lost by the post office, requiring additional funds to supplement publicity and resulting in lower-than-projected enrollment (“Regular” n. pag.). Explaining the budget deficit in a report to the West Virginia Arts and Humanities Council, 1980 director Marion Harless wrote, “The major discrepancy is in the deficit on tuition and registration fees: the income was \$15,000 less than budgeted” (Randolph, *Final AH 80113* n. pag.). Additionally, the grant funds that previously supported the

Augusta director position were unavailable for 1981. After the summer session, the Creative Arts Council owed Davis & Elkins College almost \$5,000 (“Special” n. pag.).

Options discussed at an Arts Council meeting on November 12, 1980, included the Arts Council’s providing \$10,000 to pay Augusta’s debt and fund the directorship or offering Augusta to the College. The rationale for the latter was, “1. D+E has benefited and can continue to benefit from Augusta, 2. D+E has stored Augusta equipment yearly for free, 3. Augusta courses could be added to the D+E curriculum and 4. Augusta owes D+E \$4755.38 for rental fees from the 1980 session” (“Monthly” n. pag.). The Council voted to send a committee of representatives to begin talks with the College administration. According to the minutes, “The committee’s decision was based on the hope that the community could still benefit from the Augusta-owned equipment if the classes are incorporated into the curriculum of the college” (Ibid.).

A week later, the Council held a special meeting to discuss the future of Augusta, reporting in the minutes that a committee met with President Hermanson of Davis & Elkins College on November 14th. Hermanson agreed that “the college would gladly assume responsibility of Augusta and keep it as a workshop rather than absorbing it into their curriculum,” forgiving the “outstanding bill of \$4755.38 ... in exchange for some of the equipment owned by the CAC [Creative Arts Council]” (“Special” n. pag.). The decision proved beneficial for both Augusta and the College. Summer enrollment, just under one hundred in 1973, reached nearly one thousand in 1982 and continued to grow rapidly over the next two decades (Randolph, *Report* 1973 n. pag.; A. Davis 68). The Augusta Heritage Arts Workshop was later renamed the Augusta Heritage Center

during the mid-1980s to reflect the growing scope of its programs (Blevin-Denton, Personal).

### **“Belonging Equally to Everyone”: Traditions Evolve**

But this is how actual traditions grow. No ancient committee ever sat down to evaluate if it would be appropriate for accordions to play Hispanic music. New neighbors showed up and they and their music were made welcome. The Irish cowboy plays an old air at the campfire; its lilt changes when the Mexican cook pulls out an accordion and their black *compadres* sing along; and cowboy music becomes its own tradition, belonging equally to old and new, but most of all belonging equally to everyone 'round the campfire (2013 *Lifetime*).

The film about Augusta produced by the Folk Alliance used the comparison above to summarize what it called a series of “happy accidents” that guided Augusta’s development. Although Augusta *was* organized by a committee, and its growth and development over the years came only through hours of dedicated hard work from hundreds of staff and instructors, the story that participants still tell reflects the sentiment above. Participants envision Augusta’s development as an organic, democratic process more in line with the folk process undergone by the traditional art forms of the past. Augusta represents an extension of an old model for transmitting traditions: face-to-face, knee-to-knee, by observation, imitation, and experimentation. Augusta’s workshops have incorporated deliberate programming strategies, admittedly artificial compared to the organic processes of ancestral generations. However, to participants born in an age when knowledge typically comes from written sources

which removes the critical component of human interaction, Augusta extends old modes of learning into the modern world.

Augusta's success originated not only in the deliberate planning of the program's content, but also in the vibrant community of artists that came together to create and share traditions. The interactions between students, staff, and instructors have shaped the program over the years, creating the "Augusta experience."

#### **Chapter 4: Growth and Development, Augusta 1981-Present**

When Margo Blevin was hired as Augusta's first permanent director in 1981, the program was in a precarious position. Blevin inherited a financially struggling craft program with its records stored in cardboard boxes in a barn, and no preparations yet made for the upcoming summer. Despite these beginnings, Blevin served as Augusta's director for twenty-six years, building connections with a diverse group of musicians, crafters, dancers, folklorists, and arts administrators who helped her shape a new model for Augusta. She extended Augusta's focus, offering workshops in a variety of genres, and expanded the summer workshop program into a full-fledged center for the documentation, preservation, and dissemination of traditional art forms. Forging relationships between full-time staff, seasonal staff, instructors, students, and visitors, Blevin nurtured a growing community of people who were passionate about the traditional arts. Many of these individuals became equally passionate about Augusta, about West Virginia, and the people they met there and experiences they shared. This growing "Augusta family" sustained the program and provided continuity across summers, genres, and generations.

As Blevin articulated in a March 2014 interview, "The people who paid to come to Augusta are only part of what Augusta is." A Folk Arts Apprenticeship program, field documentation by a staff folklorist, and Augusta's involvement in many other cultural endeavors in West Virginia provided the foundation for high-quality workshops. By

experimenting with new genres and making calculated program decisions, Augusta offered workshops that were in great demand. Staffing choices and organizational structures created both continuity and variety from year-to-year, keeping the programs both familiar and fresh for returning participants. Blevin and her staff built an intimate, cooperative learning environment, cultivating a community of learners and teachers.

### **New Leadership**

Margo Blevin moved to Elkins in the late 1970s after a weekend visit to the area. Blevin said, "I had just gotten tenure for the second time in my life [teaching art], and I looked around at these other teachers ... who had tenure, and I thought, 'We're going to grow old together, and I don't like them that well now!'" (Blevin-Denton, Telephone). Blevin was ready for a change; she wanted to pursue art full-time, and she felt moving to the mountains would allow her to do so (Ibid.).

After moving to Randolph County, Margo Blevin began networking with local artists. She taught craft classes at the Elkins/Randolph County Senior Center and was hired by Davis & Elkins College as an adjunct instructor in the art department. Although she could not afford the tuition to attend Augusta's workshops, she exchanged art and design work for tickets to Augusta concerts. She was then approached by the Creative Arts Council and asked to organize Augusta's craft fair, an event which later evolved into the annual Augusta Festival (Blevin-Denton, Telephone).

Willetta Hinkle, an Augusta instructor and organizer, unexpectedly phoned Blevin about a job opening at D&E. Although the women had not met each other at the time, Hinkle knew of Blevin through mutual acquaintances in the art community. Craig Merriam coordinated an "Informal Skills" adult education program for the college and

intended to leave to teach art full time. Blevin interviewed for the position and was hired. She described the job as “a small, learn-by-the-seat-of-your-pants experience that taught me everything I’d need to know to run Augusta” (Blevin-Denton, Telephone). She learned to publicize the program on the radio and in the newspaper. She wrote press releases and took photos to accompany them. She advocated to groups like the local Rotary club. She organized program logistics and hired and supervised instructors (Blevin-Denton, Telephone).

After the summer of 1980, the Augusta Workshop was in financial trouble. According to Margo Blevin, D&E President Gordon Hermanson was eager to adopt the program under the college’s auspices (Blevin-Denton, Personal). With the support of several members of the Creative Arts Council, Blevin was hired by the College as Augusta’s first permanent director in 1981 (Lilly, “Augusta” 6). Although she was hired in January, the position officially began in the spring. Since the summer program was fast approaching, and “nothing had been done,” according to Blevin, “I just started going to work as if they were paying me.” She said, “I should have started last week!” (Blevin-Denton, Personal).

Under the Creative Arts Council, Augusta’s coordinators served for eighteen months, running the Workshop for one summer, hiring the next year’s instructors, then leaving the position. The next year, the coordinator oversaw the summer program, planned and executed the next program, and again passed the position over to a new coordinator. With this model, coordinators often oversaw a summer program that someone else planned, and there was little structural continuity from year-to-year. Blevin said, “It only worked because they had good people” within the community and



the Arts Council who rotated through these positions. When Blevin was hired as the first permanent director, she inherited boxes of correspondence and program files, but funding shortfalls had curtailed planning for the upcoming summer. Blevin salvaged the files from storage and began reading about the previous workshops.

At first, the Augusta directorship was supposed to be half time, and in her “spare time,” Blevin was to continue coordinating the “Informal Skills” program. She quickly discovered that both of these positions involved full-time hours, and eventually the D&E administration dropped “Informal Skills” to allow her to focus her full attention on Augusta. Blevin consulted musicians and crafters, seeking advice about hiring decisions. For Augusta 1981, the program varied little from the previous year’s lineup. Blevin designed a one-page foldout to advertise the Workshop, but “the names and addresses of the 1980 participants [had] been misplaced” (“Special” n. pag.). Blevin contacted two or three other arts organizations to explain the situation and request a one-time use of their mailing lists to publicize Augusta. They agreed, and one organization even sent her peel-off mailing labels (Blevin-Denton, Telephone). Despite the relatively last-minute mailing in March (the summer workshop was to begin in early July), the response was significantly larger than the previous year. In 1980, student enrollment was 433 over the course of five weeks; in 1981, the number increased to 585 (Randolph, *Final AH 80113* n. pag.; Augusta Heritage Center, “Augusta Heritage Center Historical” n. pag.). In 1982, enrollment drastically jumped to 999, and reached 1620 in 1990 (Augusta Heritage Center, “Augusta Heritage Center Historical” n. pag.). The stability of Blevin’s permanent position allowed her and a growing staff to build on the program’s successes

from year to year, gaining a better understanding of student and instructor interests and needs, and offering programs for which there was highest demand.

### **New “Theme Weeks”: Expanding Music and Dance**

“Life is full of weird coincidences,” said Margo Blevin in March of 2014. Davis & Elkins College “had been interested in me as an artist, but they didn’t know I had been a folk singer!” Blevin had learned to play guitar as an art student in the late 1950s, inspired by the music of Jean Ritchie, John Jacob Niles, and Pete Seeger, but she stopped playing music for years before she moved to Elkins (Blevin-Denton, Telephone). Her interest in music lingered, however, and shaped Augusta’s growth over the following two and a half decades.

Perhaps the earliest prototype of a theme week was the Appalachian music course.<sup>17</sup> Offered from the very first summer, the workshop was open to all instruments, adding instructors as enrollment grew. Students enrolled in “Appalachian Music” divided their time between visits with master artists, single-instrument workshops, and playing informally in multi-instrument groups. In 1979, organizers introduced “Augusta Dance Week,” which offered evening workshops with six instructors in various “regional dances of the United States” (Randolph, *Augusta Brochure* 1979.). It was the first program to broaden the mission of Augusta beyond a strictly Appalachian focus, incorporating “New England squares and contras ... dances traditional to Pennsylvania, Appalachia, Afro-American culture, [and] western squares” (Randolph, “Augusta Dance” n. pag.). Blevin introduced a class named, simply, “Vocal Music” in 1982, led by three instructors: Jean Ritchie, John McCutcheon, and Ethel Caffie. It featured a variety of singing styles, including “Appalachian, old-time &

bluegrass, gospel, blues, ballads,... [and] shape note singing” (Augusta Heritage Arts, 1982 n. pag.).

After observing local people jamming in the Icehouse (the campus pub), Blevin began adding theme weeks that expanded to other genres beyond what was typically viewed as “Appalachian Music.” Each time Blevin introduced a theme week, she began by inviting a musician/scholar who was well-connected within the genre to act as coordinator. Examples include, in chronological order by founding year, these names and coordinators: Irish Music Week (1982), coordinated by Mick Moloney; Blues Week (1983), coordinated by Joan Fenton; and Bluegrass Week (1984), coordinated by Buddy Griffin (Augusta Heritage Arts, 1982 n. pag.; Augusta Heritage Arts, 1983 n. pag.; Augusta Heritage Arts, 1984)

The adoption of theme weeks allowed Augusta to include a broader selection of American music, dance, craft, and folklore traditions. The organizational model that developed—using an off-campus coordinator for each theme week—brought instructors from among the most preeminent and up-and-coming artists in traditional music. Coordinators were heavily immersed in their respective genres as professional musicians, building connections with other musicians who could serve as instructors.

The music program grew tremendously, supplanting crafts as Augusta’s primary focus (see Appendix D for a timeline of theme weeks).

Not all theme weeks remain on the schedule. When asked why some theme weeks were discontinued, Blevin said that some programs “were not going to grow except in those communities” (Blevin-Denton, Telephone). Enrollment and logistical concerns indicated whether or not a theme week would be viable. In the case of Scottish

Music and Dance Week, Blevin believed that Scottish heritage was celebrated in other ways that were more popular, for example, the Highland Games at Grandfather Mountain, North Carolina.

Augusta's enrollment remained above 1,000 students each summer, requiring a full-time staff of eight as the Center thrived during the 1980s and 1990s (Lilly "Augusta" 8). Blevin's leadership brought stability, and the organizational model she developed incorporated year-round staff, summer staff, theme week coordinators, instructors, and volunteers. This structure continues in a modified form today and is most easily identified by the nametags Augusta employees wear during program weeks. All Augusta students are required to wear badges for entry to classes, concerts, dances, and other events. Student badges are rectangular and indicate the student's name, class, and the year, and they are color-coded by week. Instructors, summer staff, and permanent staff wear round badges. Year-round staff wear one color for the entire summer, five-week summer staff wear another color, and weekly staff and instructors wear a specific color by week.

The year-round staff members communicate with the "theme week coordinators" (often referred to as, simply, "coordinators") to plan and publicize the summer programs and register attendees. Coordinators, selected based on their connections to the genre, recruit instructors and consult with the year-round and summer staff to design the schedule for their theme weeks. Support staff (also known as "Summer Staff" or "Five-Week Staff"), hired for the summer program, coordinate instructor travel and housing, run sound and lighting for concerts and other events, set up classroom spaces weekly, and work with the year-round staff to manage the

countless other logistical details. Instructors teach classes, present with other instructors in group sessions, perform in concert on the Augusta stage, provide music for dances, and participate in other events at Augusta.

In addition to workshops, Augusta also produces festivals, concerts, dances, lectures, documentary films, and audio recordings. During the early years of the program, Michael Kline oversaw folklore documentation. Since the late 1980s, Gerry Milnes has documented Augusta programs and his own field work, producing films and audio recordings and developing an extensive archive (Milnes, Interview).

One area of confusion has always been the connection between the Augusta program and the other components of Davis & Elkins College. The relationship has changed over the years as Augusta and other college employees have come and gone. At Augusta, as in the larger field of Appalachian Studies, there have been tensions between academics and non-academics. In 1982, writer Jim Wayne Miller identified two opposing camps in Appalachian Studies, the “action folk” and “creative people,” and argued that, “the potential effectiveness of Appalachian Studies would be dissipated by division between these groups and by their failure to understand their usefulness to one another” (105). The complex and sometimes strained relationship between the “creative people” who organized Augusta and the “action folk” among the faculty of Davis & Elkins College continues to create similar challenges.

According to Margo Blevin, when Augusta first officially became part of Davis & Elkins College, the administration took a relatively “hands-off” approach. Blevin and her staff organized Augusta’s programs with little oversight from college officials. At first, when the management of Augusta transferred to the college in the early 1980s, Judy

Van Gundy said, “It was kind of its own entity.... It was kind of the Augusta Heritage program housed within Davis & Elkins College. And gradually it’s been absorbed ... and now it is pretty much a college entity.”

Augusta was expected to make a surplus of \$75,000 (later \$85,000) for D&E, and as long as that happened, the Augusta staff was free to plan programs as they saw fit (Blevin, personal). As a result, Augusta’s office was mostly insulated from the rest of the campus. Although financial accounts were handled through the College’s Business Office, Augusta’s staff was responsible for managing student enrollments and collecting payments for their workshops and events. On-campus housing and meals required coordination with other departments on campus, but Blevin and her staff handled publicity, registration, and logistics for Augusta’s programs. Because of this structure, and perhaps because most of Augusta’s program weeks did not overlap with the regular academic year, Augusta remained relatively separate from the College’s other programs.

Tensions arose occasionally between college faculty, staff, and students and Augusta’s staff and students, usually due to miscommunication or conflicts over the use of shared space. Despite these conflicts, there were some benefits to Augusta’s rather insulated programming. Augusta students dealt primarily with a handful of year-round staff in preparation for attendance, so a close-knit community formed among Augusta students and staff. The organizational structure also facilitated interactions and community-building between Augusta students, staff, and instructors during program weeks. Sharing meals in the dining hall and sleeping in dormitories also created a sense of community. For a time, a “Friends of Augusta” (FOA) volunteer/barter program

allowed students to work in the Augusta office or in the residence halls in exchange for a discount on tuition. Although this system has been discontinued, it did offer some students an opportunity to participate when financial barriers may have prevented it, and gave them a stake in the program. Over the years, many participants returned annually to Augusta, often bringing their families along.

Augusta staff and students have always been concerned about reaching out to young people and passing traditions on to the next generation. Blevin and several other informants expressed concern about what they called “the graying of Augusta,” noticing at some point that Augusta’s concerts and other events looked like “a sea of gray heads” (Blevin-Denton, Personal; Van Gundy; Focus Group 2). To combat this trend, Augusta’s scholarship program expanded. Blevin first noticed Augusta’s aging clientele in the mid-1980s, and she began approaching instructors, asking them to recommend students to invite to Augusta on a scholarship. At first, according to Blevin, the money for scholarships was just included in the general cost of the program week, without separate funds. Margo Blevin and Folk Arts Coordinator Gerry Milnes attended regional festivals and events, approaching young people on the dance floor and in jam sessions to offer scholarships. Blevin said, “I felt like a Hollywood talent scout. It was fantastic!” (Blevin-Denton, Telephone). Soon supporters began making donations, and a more formal scholarship program was eventually established.

Some workshop programs were established specifically for young people, such as Folk Arts for Kids (now known as Augusta for Kids) and Teen Week. The multi-generational Family Week (later renamed Folk Arts Week) offered a sampler of music, dance, and crafts open to all ages. Youngsters and their parents and grandparents could

take classes together during that week. Long-term students and staff can share many stories of instructors and well-known musicians who began as Augusta students.

Augusta has always emphasized the value of intergenerational learning. Throughout the years, many National Heritage Fellows have taught and performed at Augusta, and several have been nominated by the Center's staff. Augusta has offered many Elderhostel (later named Exploritas, now Road Scholar) programs, geared towards senior citizens. Several students described the excitement of continuing to learn as an adult (Focus Group 1, Focus Group 4).

Margo Blevin's retirement in 2006 began a period of change that continues today. Her directorship was characterized by staff continuity, enrollment growth, and program development. However, the years after 2006 ushered in rapid change in staffing, declining enrollment, and a focus on maintaining the Augusta Heritage Center's extensive offerings. Notable exceptions include the addition of Early Country Music Week as a new theme (Augusta Heritage Center, *Augusta 2010* n. pag.) and an undergraduate Appalachian Studies minor in 2010 (12). Interviews conducted during the spring of 2013 with current and former staff supplement the five focus group interviews of Augusta students enrolled during the summer session of the same year (Chapter 2 includes details about methodology). This chapter will describe and analyze the results of these interviews, which were conducted after a period of severe financial uncertainty at Davis & Elkins College. Some of the transitions are included in a timeline compiled from archival materials, staff interviews, and my own experience and observations as an Augusta staff member since 2004 (see Appendix D). The narrative below describes the most influential changes in recent years.



### **Transitions: 2006 – 2013**

Gerry Milnes served as interim director immediately after Margo Blevin's retirement until a selection was made to fill the vacancy in 2007. The college hired Kathleen Lavengood, at the time finishing her Ph.D. in ethnomusicology from Indiana University Bloomington. D&E administrators hoped Lavengood could draw on her academic and classical music background to liaison between Augusta and the music department, teach undergraduate courses, and otherwise integrate Augusta into the college year-round.<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, Lavengood came to Davis & Elkins on the cusp of an economic crisis.

After many years of decreasing enrollment and increasing debt, by 2007 the economic climate at Davis & Elkins College had reached a crisis point. This period of economic hardship was characterized by low cash flow, layoffs, program cuts, and administrative reorganization. No new programs were added, and others were eliminated entirely (the Fine & Performing Arts Department was particularly hard-hit), and other austerity measures were instituted. An outside firm was hired to evaluate the college's finances and make recommendations for cutting costs and increasing revenue (Davis & Elkins, *Davis* 7).

Over the next few years, Augusta's personnel diminished from eight mostly full-time, year-round staff (director, grants and programming coordinator, administrative coordinator, folk arts coordinator, web coordinator, information coordinator, bookkeeper, and archivist) to five employees (director, folk arts coordinator, web coordinator, administrative assistant, and AmeriCorps VISTA) in 2013. This staff reduction was achieved through a combination of outright cuts, vacancies left unfilled,

reductions in hours, and consolidation of duties, decisions which were mostly made by D&E administrators. During this time, several staff members left to retire or pursue other opportunities.<sup>19</sup>

Most of these sweeping changes began in 2007. The changes to the administrative coordinator position illustrate the shifting and consolidation of responsibilities. Initially, the administrative coordinator served as an office manager, with responsibilities including hiring and supervising summer staff, coordinating staff training, handling contracts, timesheets, and other paperwork, ordering supplies, and other related duties. Joyce Nestor held this position from 1991 until 2004 when she accepted an opportunity to manage the D&E College Bookstore. She now serves as Director of Business Enterprises for D&E (Davis & Elkins, "Nestor" n. pag.). After Nestor's transfer, future director Joyce Rossbach performed Nestor's duties on an interim basis for the summer of 2004, and Terry Hackney was hired as administrative coordinator in the fall. He served in the position until 2007 amidst the growing turmoil of the college's financial situation. After Hackney left the position, it was combined with the information coordinator post. The information coordinator had originally covered duties related to student registration and communications (acting, in effect, as both admissions office and registrar). By consolidating these two positions under the new title "enrollment coordinator," most of the burden of both positions rested on one individual.<sup>20</sup>

Also in 2007, a vacancy in the grants and programming coordinator position led to its elimination. Effectively an assistant director, this position shared planning and negotiation duties with the director while coordinating the publication of the annual

Augusta catalog and managing several important grants. All of these responsibilities were transferred to the director. The bookkeeper position was eliminated that year as well. The following fall, after seeing Augusta through one summer session, Kathleen Lavengood resigned. Gerry Milnes again filled in as interim director until Joyce Rossbach was hired.<sup>21</sup>

Davis & Elkins College President G. Thomas Mann retired in 2008, and President G.T. “Buck” Smith took office on the first of July (Davis & Elkins, *Forward* 12-14). Smith had proven himself as a driving force to turn around small, struggling colleges when he drastically improved a similar situation at Bethany College (WV) (Ibid.). An effective fundraiser, he led Davis & Elkins out from under a \$10 million debt burden in 2008 to no debt in 2012, putting the college in “the strongest financial position in the College's 108-year history” (G.T. Smith, n. pag.). His administration increased recruitment and retention initiatives, and under his leadership, in 2012 the college reached “the highest enrollment in more than 25 years” (Ibid.).

The tone on campus under Smith transformed from negativity and apprehension to hope and excitement. This president saw Augusta as an asset to D&E and encouraged the establishment of an Appalachian Studies minor at the college under the Center's auspices in 2010. A dance team and a string band (collectively known as the “Davis & Elkins College Appalachian Ensemble”) now offer scholarships to talented D&E students, and a newly formed Appalachian Music & Dance Club sponsors events on campus for college students, which creates a pool of potential participants for Augusta programs and the Appalachian Studies minor. Among its new endeavors, Augusta

sponsors the Mountain Dance Trail, a project that showcases traditional dance in West Virginia.

In 2013 the Augusta Heritage Center employed two full-time staff, two part-time staff, and one AmeriCorps volunteer. With more competition from similar summer programs than ever before (a side-effect of a new revival) and still feeling the effects of the economic downturn since the recession of 2008, Augusta again needed to adapt to changing conditions. Moving beyond Augusta's 40th anniversary in 2013, Augusta is navigating a complex web of challenges. Augusta is perhaps more integrated with the rest of the college now than ever, but the small staff is overtaxed with the large program's operation. The schedule for 2013 included seven weeks of workshops with just under 1,000 enrolled participants.<sup>22</sup> Themes included Spring Music Week, Cajun/Creole Week, Early Country Music Week, Blues/Swing Week, Irish/Celtic Week, Bluegrass Week, Old-Time Week, Vocal Week, American Vernacular Dance Week, and October Old-Time Week as well as craft and folklore classes, Augusta for Kids, the Augusta Festival, and a Fiddlers' Reunion ("About Augusta" n. pag.). To begin to form a vision for the future at this critical juncture, it makes sense to draw on the ideas and experiences of Augusta's diverse community of supporters.

## **Chapter 5: In Their Own Words, Staff & Student Reflections**

The importance of Augusta can best be understood through the words of long-term students and staff. This chapter includes individual interviews with eight current and former staff members (both volunteer and paid staff) and group interviews with over twenty-five Augusta students. Their candid reports on their own experiences help to deepen and expand the available history of the Augusta Heritage Center.

### **The Augusta Staff: A Folk Revival Community**

The current and former year-round Augusta staff members interviewed for this project all moved to Elkins, West Virginia, from other states. In the order of earliest involvement with Augusta, Ken McCoy was the first informant. He was born in Kansas and moved to Elkins to join the faculty of Davis & Elkins College in the early 1970s. In 1974, he served as co-coordinator of Augusta alongside Willetta Hinkle and Kay Gillispie. Since then, as his work responsibilities changed and he lost touch with early participants and instructors, he has become less involved with Augusta. Now retired, he lives in the area with his wife (McCoy). Next, both Gerry Milnes and Judy Van Gundy moved to West Virginia in 1975, Milnes as part of the back-to-the-land movement, and Van Gundy as the spouse of a newly hired Davis & Elkins College faculty member (Milnes, Interview; Van Gundy). Milnes came from Pennsylvania, interested in old-time fiddling and banjo playing, and was hired as a music instructor. He recently retired from his longtime position as Augusta's Folk Arts Coordinator (Milnes, Interview). Van

Gundy, who proudly claims her great-grandmother's West Virginia roots, came from Pennsylvania by way of Connecticut. Her first Augusta experience was attending a white oak basketry class in 1975, and she has worked for Augusta as both summer staff and year-round volunteer. Van Gundy has been most notably involved in coordinating volunteers, assisting with Elderhostel, and serving on the jury for the Augusta Festival craft fair (Van Gundy).

Margo Blevin, originally an art professor, moved to the Elkins area in the late 1970s (Blevin-Denton, Telephone). Blevin served as the longest-running director of Augusta from 1981-2006; much of her story was told in the previous chapter (Ibid.). Scott Prouty first came to Augusta from Maryland in 1984 as a ten-year-old attending the Augusta Festival with his parents. His father regularly attended classes at Augusta, and Scott eventually followed suit, participating annually through high school and college. Prouty has taught beginning and intermediate fiddle classes at Augusta and in 2012 moved to Elkins for the second time (his parents moved there in 1998). A trained archivist and librarian, Prouty served as Augusta's volunteer archivist at the time of his interview (Prouty). Joyce Rossbach, from Greenville, South Carolina, first came to Augusta in 1993 as a hammered dulcimer student, and began taking more and more weeks of classes before accepting a summer staff position "to support my Augusta habit." In 2008, she moved to Elkins to serve as director, the position she held at the time of her interview. She also met her husband at Augusta (Rossbach).

The two youngest informants who have held staff positions shared a similar path to Augusta. Becky Hill, a native of Michigan, came to her first summer session as an aspiring twelve-year-old dancer during Teen Week in 2002. Matthew Kupstas came

from Maryland and, like Hill, was recruited by members of the Footworks Percussive Dance Ensemble who led the Teen Week program. Both Hill and Kupstas apprenticed with Footworks and have become accomplished dancers. They moved to Elkins to work for Augusta through AmeriCorps. Kupstas is now the administrative assistant for Augusta, while Hill coordinates the Mountain Dance Trail and the dance component of D&E's Appalachian Ensemble (Hill; Kupstas).

Each informant lent a unique perspective about Augusta, although several themes and patterns emerged. All informants cited childhood events that fostered their interests, so that by the time they became aware of Augusta, it seemed to be a natural fit for them. This suggests that Augusta's program content may appeal naturally to certain people who can relate to it through past experiences. All informants have participated in various aspects of the program; only two have *not* taken Augusta workshops (McCoy and Milnes). All staff informants described Augusta and its mission as "very important," both personally and institutionally. Some patterns among sub-groups of informants emerged, influenced mostly by the age at which their involvement began and the different roles they have played in Augusta's programs.

When describing the Center's mission, staff informants who first became involved in Augusta during the 1970s (when Augusta was primarily a craft program) emphasized Augusta's role in preserving craft traditions, while others who became involved later emphasized the value of music and dance fostered by Augusta. The two informants who have never enrolled in an Augusta workshop emphasized the importance of the traditions that Augusta preserves over the experiential aspects of the program. The other informants, who mostly began their involvement with Augusta as

students, emphasized the experience. All informants cited both the importance of “passing on” traditions and the “Augusta experience.” The two categories—“Passing It On” (an emphasis on program content), and the “Augusta Experience” (an emphasis on the kinesthetic and social components of the program)—provide a simple organizational rubric for understanding the nuances of Augusta’s magnetism. That said, these two areas cannot be oversimplified; they are almost inextricably connected, as the following discussion will demonstrate.

### **“Passing It On”: The Importance of Tradition**

Although their individual interests are diverse, Augusta staff members and students share an appreciation of tradition. “We started off with an idea. We started off with the thought that there ... is something we ought to be doing to [preserve the] arts of Appalachia,” said Ken McCoy. He said, Augusta is “a summer activity ... to promote and preserve the precious heritage crafts of the Appalachian region.” McCoy’s involvement with Augusta was during its infancy, when its programs primarily focused on local craft traditions. The emphasis on Appalachian crafts was so important to him that he used the word “precious” to indicate its significance and fragility throughout the interview. When asked what makes the crafts “precious,” he said, “It’s hard to use any other word but ‘precious’ because they truly were a part of the historical development of the Appalachian Region,” and he seemed to share the fears of revivalists throughout history that these traditions are endangered. He said simply, “We live in a different world now, of electronics” (McCoy), a point that all of the informants acknowledged.

The informants also shared some criticism of modern life. Perhaps the most extreme example was Judy Van Gundy’s statement that electronics create a “disconnect



from your fellow citizens,” and that modern technology represents “a movement against the poor and the elderly because the poor can’t have computers, and the elderly can’t understand them.” She and several other informants described a windstorm that brought widespread power outages across West Virginia, and expressed concern about the ability of society to cope without electricity (Van Gundy). While all of the informants acknowledged the benefits of technology, the idea of absolute dependence on it for basic survival made them uneasy.

According to Van Gundy, Augusta began when “One of the professors at the college [Margaret Purdum Goddin] was concerned about losing that tradition of how to weave, how to make baskets, how to can ... the basic survival skills. They were afraid of losing the old ways” (Van Gundy). Although Augusta’s workshops primarily focused on the arts, some of Augusta’s craft classes—edible and medicinal herbs, canning, log cabin construction, stone masonry, etc.—also incorporated “survival skills.” Van Gundy’s husband, a retired environmental science professor, taught a natural history course at Augusta several times. For Judy, the connection between the environment and the cultural elements taught at Augusta is obvious. “There’s the move for sustainability now, which is what Augusta has been doing all along: sustainability in how to live, and skills you learn, and crafts that have been passed down through the ages, and in the music traditions” (Van Gundy). Augusta’s Administrative Assistant, Matthew Kupstas, remarked that “playing the banjo is a relatively carbon-neutral form of entertainment” (Kupstas).

Augusta participants have a tendency to seek a simpler life than the consumer culture that is promoted in the media. Kupstas said, “I choose not to have internet in my

house, and I went without a cell phone for a while.” Another Augusta staff member, Becky Hill, pointed out that her “modern life is probably different than a lot of other people.” She does not own a television and her house is heated with a wood stove.

Kupstas puts it this way:

I certainly appreciate lots of things about technology, but also [recognize] there was a time when people couldn't watch television, couldn't turn on the internet, or couldn't purchase their pre-made food.... A lot of social cohesion, social glue, was provided by people getting together and preparing food together or preserving food together or dancing or playing music. A lot of that has disappeared in modern society, to a great detriment to all of us.

Both illustrated a desire to live differently from mainstream society, which they perceive as somewhat disconnected. None of the informants reject technology outright, however. They all make use of it in many ways, and they seek to reconcile their use of technology with their social and environmental values. Ken McCoy, a 1975 co-coordinator of Augusta, articulated this when he said, “We have these electronic possibilities and potentials right at our fingertips ... but there is still a lot of living to do in our lives that is person-to-person.” Although technology allows for easy communication, the informants all agreed that it makes for shallower relationships, and they identified differences between long-distance communication and face-to-face connections. In response to this feeling of disconnectedness, Kupstas said, “For a long time now, I've just had this real, solid desire to be ... intimately connected with a place.”

Some of the earliest Augusta participants, unsurprisingly, were part of the back-to-the-land movement in the 1970s. Judy Van Gundy said, “They bought some land; they built their own homes, and had big gardens, and started their families here in the hills of West Virginia.” Gerry Milnes and his wife were among them. They built a timber-framed home in Webster County, “across a couple creeks and two miles from the mailbox” (Milnes, Interview). Both Milnes and Van Gundy remarked that several of those original “back-to-the-landers” still reside in the Elkins area. According to Van Gundy, “They came to this area because of the beauty, because of the remoteness from the big city, and it was a good place to come back to the land and start a life for these young people.” She said she could probably “name twenty or thirty people who were part of that early movement.”

For a variety of reasons, Augusta staff and students have at times been labeled as the “hippies on the hill.” This label is rather simplistic when, in fact, Augusta’s participants represent a broad spectrum of alternative and mainstream communities who range from activists to casual hobbyists. The connotation that Augusta is somehow separate “on the hill” from the rest of the town below, and from the college at large, provides a little insight into the Augusta community, which can be somewhat insular.

Among many, including the younger generation, the connections between Augusta, a sense of place, and an environmental ethic are evident. Matthew Kupstas said that Augusta “definitely contributed to my worldview around ... community and environmental issues that we’re facing today.” He described when he first became aware of mountaintop removal and the immediate emotional connection he made

between the threat this practice poses to the land and his passion for dance and music from the mountains.

When I first saw mountaintop removal, I was totally heartbroken.... I have this great love for this part of the world.... I understood even at that time how much the culture relates to the land; how much the land relates to the people.

Becky Hill said, "The people that come to Augusta really want to learn with their hands ... and it kind of spreads from music to cooking to gardening to being outside." The connection between an environmental ethic and a desire for hands-on activities is a recurring theme in interviews with Augusta staff members.

The relationship between Augusta and the folk revival of the 1960s and '70s is more difficult to articulate than its relationship with the back-to-the-land movement. The term "folk revival" can have many definitions. Most of the informants seem to associate the term with a singer-songwriter genre popularized during the 1960s out of the hippie counterculture (various associations with Pete Seeger, the Kingston Trio, and The Brothers Four were mentioned). Augusta participants tend to be more "traditionalist," with a preference for older musical styles. While they acknowledge the connections between folk music and the growth in popularity of old-time music in the 1970s, most of them distinguish between "folk" (i.e. commercially popular acoustic singer-songwriter music) and "traditional" (i.e. older, less-commercialized) music.

The familiar debate between traditionalism and revivalism is particularly interesting in terms of Augusta. Despite participants' preferences for more "traditional" forms, genres such as swing, bluegrass, and early country are an integral part of

Augusta's program offerings. Although these represent commercial genres disseminated widely in popular culture, they are accepted in the Augusta canon, whereas contemporary country music is not. Perhaps the most striking example of nontraditionalism at Augusta is American Vernacular Dance Week, introduced in 2013 (Augusta, *Augusta 2013* 16-17). Evolving from Dance Week, which emphasized contra dance (a popular New England dance style that has largely supplanted square dancing in Appalachia), American Vernacular Dance Week incorporates West African dance, North Atlantic step dance, contemporary urban social dance, and square dance calling ("American" n. pag.). As Scott Prouty noted, "Augusta has sort of negotiated this interesting line between ... promoting really traditional culture ... while at the same time inviting younger artists to participate.... Some of those artists were from traditional cultures ... and some were not."

The role of so-called "revivalists" has been undeniably important in Augusta's history, considering the number of Augusta staff members and students who came from outside the region. Prouty also explained that "the folk music circuit ... is a little different than the traditional music circuit. But they're related; all these things overlap." According to Prouty, Augusta's emphasis on older artists is an important part of how it represents traditional music. Gerry Milnes made a similar assertion when he said, "One thing that I think was really special about Augusta through the years was we brought in what we called 'old masters.'" He said,

My favorite part of being involved with all of those Augusta classes was the attention and the respect that was given to the older musicians.... It seemed like it was almost the standard if somebody was over eighty years

old and they played a concert set, they got a standing ovation. Now that really meant a lot to the people, and to me. (Milnes, Interview)

It is impossible to be totally purist about tradition, even in old-time music. The “old masters” so celebrated by Augusta also lived in an age of recorded music and were inevitably influenced by it to varying degrees. The concept of “living” tradition allows for change over time, but there is a certain conflict built into that concept, particularly when making judgments about what is “traditional” enough to be of interest to Augusta constituents.

Many of the “old masters” that once graced the Augusta stage are now gone, a fact that all of the informants acknowledged. Their passing has in some ways increased the importance of the “folk revival” generation of musicians; in many cases, they are the ones carrying on the music. As Milnes noted, “That oldest generation is about gone, but I played music last night with Dave Bing, and he’s one of the most powerful musicians I’ve ever met. I guess he and I are the old guys now” (Milnes, Interview) A similar sentiment was echoed by Becky Hill. To her generation, Gerry Milnes and others who came into old-time music in the ’70s are the “old guys.” She said, “The folk revival folks, they’re getting older. And we want to ... learn from them [to] keep it all going.”

Judy Van Gundy spoke of the concept of folk revival in broader terms when she said, “There have been several folk revivals since Augusta began.” She listed Si Kahn and his protest songs, John McCutcheon reviving the hammered dulcimer, the revival of Irish music and dance, Dwight Diller’s influence in preserving the traditions of the Hammons family, and a current old-time music and dance revival.

Regardless of the semantics about “traditional” and “folk,” and despite the broad range of styles taught at Augusta, participants value the heritage arts in a general sense and view their importance locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. Becky Hill used the example of Cajun Week to describe the way Augusta can empower people to take pride in their own heritage.

A lot of those musicians that grew up in Louisiana didn't know how important their music tradition was. And every year new scholarship kids come from Louisiana and ... see this broader community of people from all over the state, all over the world that are really interested in their music. So then they go home and they have this new sense of pride.

Hill observed that, “In these small communities [on the Mountain Dance Trail], it's not *cool* to be in high school and go to your square dance because there's all old people there.” She sees her job as a way “to break that gap, to get people my age or younger to come. And I think it's worked in a lot of communities.” A recent example occurred when [Fourteen high school] kids showed up in Sutton and every older square dancer wanted to talk to them.... After the dance, all of these couples went over and talked to them and introduced themselves and told them about another square dance they should go to.... Stepping back and watching that exchange, [I realized] I was helping stabilize the space where that exchange could happen.

Hill compared this with her experiences at Teen Week, and identified them as two examples of Augusta's creation of a safe space for youth to explore the traditional arts.

Informants agreed that Augusta's "location right in the heart of Appalachia" is important to its success (McCoy). The back-to-the-land movement and folk revivalists that converged on the small town of Elkins in the mountains of rural West Virginia have "changed the community," according to Margo Blevin (Telephone). Augusta's mission incorporates traditional art forms found in "local, regional, and ethnic traditional folk cultures" ("About Augusta" n. pag.). When Becky Hill was asked why heritage is so important, she did not mention its regional significance but said, "It's foundational. It's in the roots of the United States."

Over time, Augusta has become well-known, and informants are proud of its international recognition. Matthew Kupstas pointed out that "Having people from all over the world and all over the country come to Elkins ... with the closest major airport being two and a half hours away, speaks to the global impact Augusta is having and has had." McCoy remarked that "Some of those instructors were world-renowned individuals who came to ... little old Elkins, West Virginia, to teach." Indeed, Augusta has certainly put Elkins on the map within the traditional arts world. Augusta's broad reach is exemplified in Judy Van Gundy's many stories about people she has met in her travels from the Florida Everglades to Barcelona, Spain, who have been to Augusta. Augusta students have come from all fifty states in the U.S. and many countries abroad.

Regardless of where these traditions came from, Augusta emphasizes "keeping traditions alive" ("About Augusta" n. pag.), rejecting to some extent the idea of (capital "T") "Tradition" as a stagnant remnant of the past (J. Smith 266). As Gerry Milnes said, "Tradition is something that acts in the present. It's based on the past, but it has to act in the present, or it doesn't exist" (Milnes, Interview). Becky Hill asked, "How can we make



the tradition present for the next generation? How can we make square dance calling present now in a day with modern technology? To keep it going, it has to be present.” Joyce Rossbach said that the importance of Augusta is “honoring traditions, but also taking those traditions and making them your own some way. Traditions change because people change with the generations.” Margo Blevin said, “Whatever is being taught at Augusta is an older tradition that is still alive.... None of it has died out; it’s a living, breathing art form” (Blevin-Denton, Personal). As the researcher was leaving Ken McCoy’s house after his interview, he said, “Keep those traditions going!”

### **The Augusta Experience: The Importance of Community**

“It can be a great jam; it can be a hot dance; it can be a lifelong friendship,” said Joyce Rossbach, describing the power of Augusta. Hands-on learning, face-to-face interactions, and friendships are an important part of Augusta, particularly in the context of the twenty-first century. Scott Prouty said that,

Modern life since World War II experienced a big disruption.... For thousands of years, people were largely agrarian or some version of hunter-gatherers. And suddenly, we had these corporate food chains. And before that, industrialization ... served to disconnect people from [traditional] ways of life.

As the nation became more urban, he said, culture became more consumer-based and passive, and he attributed the “groundswell of interest” in old-time music in the 1970s as a response to that. He said some people need “a taste” of a more traditional life, and the 1970s generation was “rejecting the parent generation [that had adopted the new consumer culture] ... in favor of the grandparent generation” who remembered a more

traditional lifestyle. If this consumer culture and the technological changes of the past half century have caused a disconnect in society, then Augusta participants have found connection through their shared experiences.

Joyce Rossbach noticed a change in family relationships during her lifetime:

When I was growing up, I was surrounded by family.... As I got older ... everything started spreading. And what I see is that now, rather than big family reunions ... the way we keep in touch is Facebook.... I find that very sad. It's really easy to be connected these days. Everybody carries a cell phone. You've got a computer. You've got email.... But everybody is so busy, it's really hard to stay in touch.... In some way, coming here to Augusta provides a bit of family support for folks who are wanting to stretch their wings.

This idea of Augusta as an analog for family is widely recognized among participants as a key component of the "Augusta experience." Many friends have been made, couples have met (and in some cases married), and children have grown up at Augusta. The term "family," in this context, however, does not apply specifically to genetic ties, but to the close-knit nature of the group of people who participate in Augusta year after year. While some attend different music camps every year and others attend sporadically or only once, a core group of people attend nearly every year; they are familiar faces and names to the staff on registration day. (The focus groups conducted in this study were populated with these "familiar faces.") Ken McCoy described this familiarity in the early years, and it still exists today (although in most cases, today's Augusta family is not made up of the same individuals). Judy Van Gundy

said that members of the Augusta family “have this really warm, deep feeling for the other people that are involved.” “There are folks that probably haven’t missed ... a year; they can call and I recognize their voice before they tell me who they are,” said Rossbach (who did not miss a summer in twenty years herself). When asked why she continues to participate, Becky Hill said that, “Now it’s like a family.... It’s been a big part of my summer, a big part of my life. I don’t know what I would do if I was somewhere else during the summer.”

The Augusta family is formed by pursuing common interests in a nurturing environment and reinforced by ritual and the shared memories of transformative experiences. In many cases it has been described in religious or mystical terms. During its annual program weeks, Augusta acts as a miniature society with its own social norms, rituals, and lexicon. It begins like this, as Joyce Rossbach described it: “People come together because they share a passion ... and it’s very easy to find common ground. And then they come back and you see them again.”

As Judy Van Gundy said, “I’ve always been interested in the old things and the old ways. And so here was a group of people who were doing it!” For a first-time Augusta participant, the discovery of such a community can be an inspiring revelation. Scott Prouty said,

It was like coming into a room full of brightly lit colors, and such a contrast to my everyday life.... Coming here, there was so much sensory input that I wasn’t used to. It was music, and it was people, and different kinds of people, and being social in a different way than I was used to

back home in high school.... I didn't know you could be that way, you know?

A sentiment shared by most of the informants is that being at Augusta offers a deeper experience than everyday life. This includes the hands-on aspects of Augusta and the social dynamics that provide a welcoming space for exploration. Prouty said, "I felt like ... a more quick, shallow judgment of people didn't really exist ... in the kind of culture that was created when everybody came together to play music." Becky Hill had a similar observation: "All of those boxes that you think you're in are just disappeared and you have a connection with someone on a different level." This removal of assumptions and expectations allows participants to feel a sense of belonging as they join the group.

This experience has been especially important for nurturing the interests of children and teens. Among the informants for this project, Becky Hill and Matthew Kupstas are the best examples of this demographic; both describe their participation in Teen Week as a formative experience. Hill said about Augusta, "It is really, *really* important to me. I feel like it's really shaped my life. It's hard to put into words. You know, you can be really passionate about something ..., but if you don't have someone supporting you ..., you don't really find your potential." She said, "I wouldn't be the person I am today without going to Augusta [as a teenager]. It was a place where it was okay to be into arts; it was okay to be yourself." Matthew Kupstas said,

In a sense, I grew up at Augusta.... I feel like Augusta's been the most consistent thing in my life in that I went to college for four years, I went to

high school for four years, I went to middle school for three years, but I've come to Augusta for about twelve years now. It's been kind of an anchor.

Scott Prouty also began his relationship with Augusta at an early age, and he said,

It shaped who I am. There's no question about that, I mean, I wouldn't be the same person.... Augusta was sort of like this incubator. I even wish I'd gotten involved sooner.... It's been hugely important. It's not just what I learned, but also the connections I've made.

For these youngsters (now adults), Augusta provided a safe space to explore their interests and develop their identities in a nurturing, engaging environment. For others who found Augusta as adults, it has also had an impact on their lives and personal identities. Ken McCoy, who was involved for only a short time, said Augusta is "absolutely" important. "It's part of my heritage." He is very proud of his role in Augusta's beginnings. When asked why she participates in Augusta, Joyce Rossbach said, "Oh, my gosh. It's in my blood now. It's in my heart. I believe in it." For many, Augusta has been a place to learn about oneself by learning about history and tradition, expanding one's skills, and developing a network of friends. According to Rossbach,

You have to have some knowledge of where things came from for it to make sense.... If you can't figure that out, then it's difficult to be comfortable with who you really are or what you really came from. And you have to decide that it's okay.... You have to decide to be comfortable within your own skin. And how you find that, that's your journey.

Augusta has facilitated that journey for the informants in this study, and likely for many others.

Central to understanding why Augusta has had such a personal impact is examining the hands-on component of the learning process. Rather than passively consuming entertainment, participants are fully engaged in a physical process. “It’s not something you go out and buy; you’re creating it,” said Joyce Rossbach. “I think a lot of people [are] really sedentary,” said Becky Hill, “TV is great, and computers are great—but so many people spend so much time in front of them that they aren’t moving—they aren’t sharing with each other....” Hill’s description of herself as “a very sensory person” who wants to “touch and feel and taste and learn with [her] hands and feet and body” is a common characteristic among Augusta participants. This kinesthetic learning process was described by Matthew Kupstas as

A spiritual experience ... that brings me into closer connection with the present moment, whether that’s relating with another person or getting those goose bumps that I was talking about listening to a room full of people sing ‘Let there be peace’ over and over again, or just the high from taking part in a really good jam or taking part in a dance to a really great band.

He considers “getting together with a group of people ... creating something where we can have the time of our lives” as sacred. Matthew describes what Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi identifies as a state of *flow* (see p. 22 for a detailed description).

“They’re what we would call ‘Augusta moments,’ those times when you realize later that that was something that will never happen again, you will never see again, and it was incredible” (Rossbach). These “Augusta moments” are “intrinsically motivated, fully-involved activities” (Waterman et al. 1449). Becky Hill described “moments every

year ... when there's a really good square dance or contra ... and it just feels like this vibration.... There's just all this energy and all these people moving and dancing."

These experiences transcend generations. Joyce Rossbach described a similar example of *flow* at a dance. "What can I say?" she said, "It's enticing; it mesmerizes you; it draws you in; it works its spell." She said the dance lasted until 3:00 a.m. "You live every moment; it didn't matter what you had to do in the morning. You didn't want to miss anything" (Rossbach).

At Augusta, *flow* is often accompanied by a sense that "this may never happen again" when a participant intensely focuses on a craft project or during a euphoric, almost trance-like state late at night, is overwhelmed by the rhythm and motion of music. But the experience of *flow*, if not the specific circumstances of each moment, does happen again and again. The frequency of *flow* at Augusta reinforces relationships among participants on a deeply personal level. This is Augusta family bonding, and it is intergenerational. In this context, it is unsurprising that the core group of participants (the "Augusta family") values Augusta tremendously; Augusta has been said to change lives.

Clearly, the intensity of these experiences stands in stark contrast to everyday life, and for some, Augusta is an escape. In the early days, before cell phones and Wi-Fi were prevalent, when there were no interstate highways in the area, Augusta felt quite remote to participants who came from cities. Joyce Rossbach said it was "nice not to worry about what was going on outside this cocoon." This escape can also provide some emotional or spiritual renewal. As Kupstas says, "The arts are ... a requirement for the

wellbeing of the human spirit.... Without being able to renew my spirit, I can't be very effective at ... trying to create a more peaceful and sustainable world."

Judy Van Gundy maintains that "people who have music in their lives are more content." Several informants agree with Van Gundy's assertion that learning is important, and "even though people might be bogged down with their lives, given a moment, they want to learn more." Her description of Augusta participants as "vibrant, exciting, passionate, [and] interested in what they're doing" is key to understanding the atmosphere at Augusta and the excitement that surrounds the learning process there. Shared learning is not only enjoyable, but Scott Prouty maintains that it "makes some kind of difference in the way people play."

Of course, technology plays a role in the dissemination of traditional music and its offshoots. The presence of YouTube, file sharing, and social media have made music more accessible for free, by remote. This has led to the spread of the newest folk revival, but it lacks the interpersonal sharing that many Augusta participants seek. Becky Hill said, "A lot of people in the world ... spend their whole lives searching for a community that they can really feel a part of and can contribute to, and I think the thing with Augusta is I've had that community since I was twelve...." After taking a few summers off during high school, Hill returned because she wanted to be "where I was the last time I was really, really happy."

### **The Student Perspective**

Twenty-seven long-term participants from Augusta's 2013 summer program weeks participated in focus group research for this project. One focus group interview was conducted each week for the five weeks from July through August, and each



included four to seven participants. The participants were chosen from enrolled students who had participated in Augusta at least five times. They represented participants in most of the summer's music and dance theme weeks and included several craft students. The longest-running student in this sample began attending in 1982, while the newest participant began in 2007. The focus group informants had participated in Augusta between five and fifty-five times. (Each week of attendance or class taken was counted separately.) Most had participated in ten to thirty program weeks at Augusta, with an average of almost twenty weeks.

All focus group participants completed surveys with demographic information and details about their history with Augusta (see Appendix C). The informants ranged in age from thirty-nine to eighty years old, with an average age of sixty-one. All of the informants had attained at least some post-secondary education: associate's degrees, two; bachelor's degrees, nine; and graduate degrees, seventeen. Four of the informants came from West Virginia and eight from the bordering states of Ohio (1), Pennsylvania (2), Maryland (3), and Virginia (2), plus one from Washington, D.C. Kentucky was the only unrepresented border state. Four came from elsewhere in the Northeast, four from the Southeast, and four from the Midwest. One student travelled from the West Coast.

The focus group sessions were video recorded by an assistant. Informants were encouraged to engage each other in an open discussion based on four or five prompts. Despite the short list of questions, the discussions included a broad number of topics and stories, addressing most of the questions asked in the individual interviews without specific prompting.<sup>23</sup>

From these simple questions, informants described transformative experiences that characterized their years at Augusta. Many described feeling a sense of belonging, building lasting friendships, and overcoming personal challenges. In every session, participants mentioned the generosity and humility of instructors, as well as the impressive talents of other students. Many of them look forward to returning annually to “recharge their batteries,” as several informants noted. “I love this place and the people, the sense of family and unity, and the support that you get for your music,” said Blues Week participant Gina DeLuca. “All year long you have ... things that happen that kind of deplete your well and you start running dry,” she said, “You come here and fill your well again” (Focus Group 2).

The excitement of being exposed to a wide variety of programs is also an important part of their shared experience. Focus group participants reported they appreciated having more opportunities to expand their knowledge and skills. The support and encouragement of a close-knit group of like-minded individuals fueled their desire to learn, and many of them implemented their new skills in their home communities.

Although no specific questions were asked about youth, the importance of sharing traditions with children and young adults was a major focus of their discussions. Informants thought it was important for young people to have the opportunity to learn and carry on the traditions taught at Augusta, both to preserve the traditions and to enhance the personal development of youth. Several informants shared touching stories about the transformations they observed in young family

members, school-aged students, and other youth at Augusta. The important thing about Augusta, several argued, is that young and old people can learn from each other.

The next section describes some of the personal journeys of the focus group informants as they helped to build the Augusta community. Students express their thoughts about the future, the importance of youth, and Augusta's role in the modern world.

### **A Sense of Wonder**

For nearly all of the focus group informants, music or crafts had always played some part in their lives growing up, but most discovered traditional art forms later, primarily through the music of the 1960s folk revival. Most of the informants first came to Augusta to learn a specific skill, either seeking out a place to take workshops in their areas of interest or being told about Augusta by instructors or other students. When asked to describe what it was like to come to Augusta for the first time, Kathy Fletcher, an Irish Week participant, said, "I was so scared on the way down, I cried on the way down. But then I cried on the way home because I was leaving it" (Focus Group 3). Fletcher's experience was echoed by several others who said they were intimidated or nervous at first, but by the end of the week they were sad to leave. Many immediately started planning to return the next year.

One reason these students have returned year after year is for personal growth, both in their chosen fields of interest and in their social lives. This includes transformations that they have experienced themselves, witnessed in others, and—importantly—also helped facilitate in others. The informants share a strong sense of purpose in their interactions at Augusta, and they have built a strong, close-knit

community that is continually rejuvenated by the introduction of new members. In many ways, the stories they all told were variations on the theme of personal growth, a process of working toward their potential as artists and human beings.

Some described being shy and unsure of themselves when they first arrived at Augusta, but feeling invigorated and encouraged by the end of the week. Blues Week student John Witter described a common experience for Blues Week participants: being too shy at first to sing during a vocal jam session in the Icehouse. He said that is “something all of us have gone through,” and he described overcoming his fear, and then “a year or two later,” watching someone else do the same. “You watch somebody new come in ... and they’re standing in the corner.... And maybe by the end of the week, they get out there and sing, and everybody goes ‘Yeah!’” (Focus Group 2).

Mike Grace from Bluegrass Week said Augusta “fills a number of ... voids in my life. For one thing, it helped me come out of my shell, so to speak, because I’m relatively shy.” He was interrupted by the surprise of the other group members who laughed and teased him, saying, “Wow!” and “This is not a liar’s contest!” Grace interjected, “No, seriously. I have learned over the years that this is a wonderful environment, and you don’t have to be the person other people think you are.... You can just be yourself” (Focus Group 4).

Many participants agreed with Grace’s assertion that “You don’t have to explain anything” because people at Augusta understand each other’s interests.

For all of the informants, their emotional ties through the relationships they have built connect them to Augusta as an organization. Many also share a sense of place surrounding the Davis & Elkins College campus, a location imbued with memories of some of the most transformative moments in their lives. Most of their stories began

with “I was sitting right over here in the Icehouse,” “We were in the dance pavilion,” or “We were on the singing porch” (an Irish Week designation for the President’s porch at Halliehurst). Cindy Sumerano, a Vocal Week participant, said, “This place is very special to me, but to both of my girls it’s kind of sacred ground.... It’s become a part of who we are” (Focus Group 5).

At Augusta, participants felt a new world of possibilities had suddenly opened up to them, and they were determined to return to continue the process they had only just begun. Informants in all of the focus groups described how quickly a week at Augusta passes, their sadness upon departure, and how they look forward to returning each year. For several, it is their primary vacation. Making the annual journey to Augusta and arriving on campus marks the passage of time as participants age and events in their lives move forward. Gina DeLuca said of her friends at Augusta, “They are my chosen family.... Even though we don’t see each other for a whole year, when we all show up on Sunday and bump into each other, it’s just like ‘Hey! We made it! We made it another year!’” (Focus Group 2). Bluegrass Week participant Ray Rossell said, “On the way up here I’m thinking about how sad it’s going to be when it’s over.” Rossell travels with his friend Mickey Luck every summer, making their reservations a year in advance before they leave. Rossell said, “I will leave here, and I’ll get the blues, I mean ... for about two or three weeks. And then I’ll forget about it until ’til about January. Then I’ll start looking at the calendar, and by May I’m counting down. And by July, July just lasts forever [laughter].... You just really look forward to it” (Focus Group 4). Kathy Fletcher said during Irish Week,

One of the things that Augusta does for me ... is it kind of gives me a deadline to get ready, so every year, throughout the year, it's like my reward or my target.... It helps me with goal-setting because I know that when I come here that week ... I'll be singing in a circle and want to come up with something new instead of my six old favorite songs that I've mastered. Or dancing with people and in an informal set dance, [I want to] know the sets well enough that I can be the one getting people through the set when we don't have a caller and we just want to dance.

(Focus Group 3)

The variety of activities amazed many informants upon first arriving at Augusta, and some even described being overwhelmed or worried about missing something important. Karen Skidmore and Kathy Fletcher wore homemade T-shirts to the Irish Week focus group that said, "I didn't come to Augusta to SLEEP." Megan Downes, an Irish Week student and past dance instructor, referred to the T-shirts when she said, "It's just the idea that you always want to be 'on.' You always want to be with your eyes open and your chin up and paying attention. And you can't just be focused on what you think you were coming here to get.... You never know what you're going to learn ... or who you're going to meet" (Focus Group 3).

Craft student Marilyn Leung said, "I don't really play any instruments, but yet ... to be able to walk through when you're on your way to breakfast or lunch or down to the dance ... and people are just gathered and jamming. There's music here and music there [gestures in several directions].... So even from a non-player's standpoint, it's just like, 'Whoa! There's music in the air!'" (Focus Group 2). Every focus group identified the

importance of “cross-pollination” between music and dance styles, crafts, and folklore. Unlike programs that focus on a single instrument, Augusta’s appeal includes the opportunity to form impromptu bands and to play informally with players of other instruments. Several informants described an Augusta week as being “immersed in a culture” (Irish culture, bluegrass culture, etc.).

“Augusta moments,” powerful experiences that feel as if they may never happen again, fuel the excitement of participants. Cindy Harris from Vocal Week said, “One of those things that keeps me coming back is that really high energy that ... allows those sorts of moments to happen.” Of those “Augusta moments,” she said, “Probably all of us have had them.... I’ve got literally dozens. I think almost every year there’s been one” (Focus Group 5). During Bluegrass Week, R.B. Powell said,

We’re excited about tonight [the evening concert]. We don’t even know what those festival moments are going to be. They happen in “Roundup” [the large group sessions held after lunch]. They happen on the stage. They happen in your class. There are so many prime teaching moments and learning moments ... that uplift the spirit. (Focus Group 4)

Personal transformations at Augusta are based on an intellectually and socially engaging learning process. As Bluegrass Week participant R.B. Powell stated,

You put your friends that you’ve made here, you put your peers who are struggling at different levels to learn something, and you put one of your idols in front of you to teach you how to get up the ladder a little bit with your music.... One of the most exciting things that happens in a human mind is to learn something new, and each time you come [to Augusta],

you learn something new. And then you go to a jam session, and you find that music is very much a social event.... It uplifts the human spirit and enhances whatever we do ... as a human being. (Focus Group 4)

As Powell and Everett described, learning continues beyond the confines of formal classes. By watching other people and participating in jam sessions, students learn skills from each other, including the ability to play in a group. Craft students often work into the evening, and many craft instructors offer to keep their work areas open late.

Cajun fiddle student Sabra Everett said, "The challenge of learning is extremely invigorating and energizing" (Focus Group 1). The combination of challenge and support and the accompanying emotions of frustration, nervousness, and triumph are central to the learning process. Week after week, informants shared stories of overcoming stage fright or working through other personal and musical challenges.

Gina DeLuca described some of her experiences at student showcases:

You will not find a more receptive audience ... and the reason I think is because we've all been there. We've all ... had that moment where we're terrified to do this thing, but you know what, I'm going to do it because ... that's what I am supposed to be doing here. I applaud anyone who has the strength and the courage to bust through that fear. When I first started, I had debilitating stage fright.... I know what that feels like, so when I see someone bust through that wall, whether it was good or not, it doesn't matter." (Focus Group 2)



She explained that overcoming challenges like stage fright gives people confidence to face other challenges in their lives.

Students help each other through the challenges they also have experienced, and they develop a support system within the Augusta community. Blues Week student John Witter said, “If you come back here every year, you watch people grow.... It’s not just watching them grow technically—it’s like they’re growing as human beings” (Focus Group 2). Participants share a sense that, not only have they developed themselves, but they also have helped to empower others, which reinforces their sense of purpose. Interacting with strangers and old friends this way creates a model of community in which everyone plays an important role.

The introduction of new members is important for the community to maintain its numbers, and it also invigorates the returning participants. Instrument Repair student Rebecca French said, “You meet a lot of nice people, and it’s heartening to realize—because you hear so much bad news—and it’s heartening to [know] there’s a lot of good people left” (Focus Group 1).

Students gain new hope for the world and the future as they watch others awaken to the same sense of wonder. The process of meeting new people and sharing new experiences, not knowing what might happen during a week at Augusta, is another important reason students return. Kathy Fletcher said, “I’ve been to twenty-one Irish Weeks, and no two of them are the least bit alike. Even if I took set dancing eight years in a row, or the Ceili dance mini-class ten years in a row, or Bridget [Fitzgerald]’s class six or more years in a row, because what would change each year is the people who would come.” Students welcome new members into their community, as Kathy Fletcher

described Irish Week. “I want other people to have a positive experience. When Karen was my roommate that first year, I would try to help show her the ropes.... When I’m dancing with people, I try to dance with beginners, and I just want other people to have as much fun as I have . . .” (Focus Group 3). This sense of belonging empowers participants with a feeling of ownership over their role in the community and over the spaces they inhabit (even if they inhabit them for only one week each year).

Knowing that many of the students and staff will return the following year is important too. As an anonymous informant said, “That made it easier the subsequent years if you’re—like me—not too gregarious” (Focus Group 2). Many of these returning students and staff have become lifelong friends. Two of the informants married someone they met or reconnected with because of Augusta, and one came to Augusta for the first time with his fiancée just after their engagement. According to Andy Wilkins, when he got engaged, his fiancée, who had already made plans to attend Augusta, said, “See you in a week!” and she was off. By mid-week, she invited him to come visit her because her Augusta friends wanted to meet him (Focus Group 5).

Those who return each year often describe the Augusta community as a family, “my chosen family,” or simply “the Augusta family.” In fact, informants mentioned the term “family” several times during each focus group interview. Megan Downes said that some of the Augusta participants “really become a huge part of the fabric of who you are and what you do all the rest of the year” (Focus Group 3). Perhaps because of the intensity of a short-lived Augusta week and the culture of support and encouragement that exists there, many students described a great deal of emotional intimacy shared with people they met at Augusta. Ginny Shilliday described the “camaraderie” she has

experienced: “There is such a close bond with people when you make music with them. It’s really almost indescribable if you’ve never done that” (Focus Group 3). Another Irish Week participant, Karen Skidmore, described “the intimacy and power of singing with other human beings at the same time, and blending ... voices together” as “an incredible experience” (Ibid.). Donna Fletcher said, “Blues Week has, I think, a very special feel, perhaps it’s because ... it’s a very soul-baring kind of music. I remember, especially in the early years that I came, having conversations with people deeper than I had had with anyone in decades.” She described a woman who was assigned to be her roommate one year—a stranger before they met at Augusta—who shared a deeply personal story she had kept from everyone, including her family.

This intimacy has helped people heal through the music and community they have found at Augusta. During Focus Group 2, for instance, participants described music as “therapy,” and the blues as “cathartic,” helping them face the struggles in their personal lives. One participant shared the story of his grieving process after his son’s cancer. He came to Augusta to pursue music as a way of healing and found comfort in the words of an instructor, herself a cancer survivor, who said, “The blues is about healing and moving on.” He said, “This is my family, really. This is my family” (Focus Group 2).

The Augusta family has shared its own losses, particularly as older master musicians have passed on. For Irish Week participant Ginny Shilliday, her first summer at Augusta coincided with the year Frank Harte, a beloved long-time instructor, passed away. Harte traditionally led singing sessions during Irish Week, and Shilliday was

welcomed into Augusta's Irish singing community as they commemorated his life and mourned a deeply felt loss.

There were ... impromptu memorials for Frank, and people trying to sing a song that Frank sang. The last night of the week, we sat on the singing porch. And people were kind of in their cups and talking about Frank a lot.... The session itself went on 'til at least 4:30 in the morning, and then a couple of us walked around campus, walking and singing a little bit more, 'til about 6:30. (Focus Group 3)

Another Irish Week participant, Sally Burnell, remembered that evening: "When we were on the porch that first year after Frank died, there was a ... spot on the balcony where he always used to sit, and we left that seat vacant. Nobody was allowed to sit there. That was Frank's chair" (Ibid.). Every focus group mentioned master artists, many of them gone, that left an impression on them.

Through this "chosen family," many participants have developed a sense of personal identity. Participants described the first time someone said to them, "You're a dancer!" or when they realized for themselves, "I'm a songwriter!" There is a sense of accomplishment and pride in adopting these labels. As an adult, it is refreshing to realize your identity does not necessarily stop evolving after your so-called "formative" years. Several participants said of Augusta, "It changed my life."

Because of the deep connections they made at Augusta, and the transformative impact these connections have had on their lives, many of the returning participants in this study have become adamant about continuing to attend. During Blues Week, Bill Redding said, "If I lost my hands or my voice, I'd still come here. If I couldn't sing or

play, I'd still come here every year for the experience outside of the music and playing. It's the camaraderie and the support system" (Focus Group 2). Participants during several focus groups joked, "I'll stop coming when I'm dead."

### **"What an Impact": Young People and the Future of Tradition**

Most participants sought out Augusta because they desired to take part in older traditions, to connect with the past, and to learn a specific skill. They return each year to reconnect with old friends, meet new people, and refresh their processes of personal growth. For Augusta students, the importance of building a community and developing personal identity through experience cannot be overstated. However, the traditions remain central to the whole process. While staff members and students both declared the importance of preserving the past, students mostly spoke of "passing it on" in terms of the future. One of their biggest concerns, which dominated much of their conversations, was the participation of youth in Augusta's programs and the importance of appreciating and understanding the past in order to prepare for and guide the future. Augusta's students began with the traditions, and this chapter began with the importance of "passing it on," sharing traditions across generations. As students look to the future, they find hope in the passion of young people for traditional art forms, healthy intergenerational social interactions, and the strong sense of self-confidence that can come from participating in the Augusta community as a child and young adult.

Several participants described bringing their own children and grandchildren to Augusta, and there is a group of students who have "grown up" at Augusta. Most of these students began in Folk Arts for Kids (now Augusta for Kids), a program designed

for eight- to thirteen-year-old students to sample a variety of activities including crafts, dance, music, games, and outdoor activities. The Teen Week: Roots and Rhythm program, organized by Eileen Carson-Schatz, was geared toward middle school and high school students and addressed self-esteem, teamwork, and other issues in addition to teaching dance and music. As students “age out” of these programs, many begin attending “adult level” classes. Andy Wilkins and Grace Mason, who both participated in Focus Group 5 and regularly bring their children to Augusta, agree that D&E’s small campus and Augusta’s close-knit community allows the children “a sense of freedom and responsibility.” Wilkins described allowing his sons to walk from class to their dorm room or the dining hall, trusting them to find their way with little worry.

Augusta provides a physically safe space for young people, but also an emotionally supportive atmosphere. Focus group participants agreed with the assertions by staff members Becky Hill and Matthew Kupstas that Augusta allows young people to explore interests that may be described as “uncool” by their peers elsewhere. Bob Turbanic, who annually brings students from the Wheeling Park (WV) High School Bluegrass Club, requires his students to attend and *dance* at an evening contra or square dance. He said,

Ninety-nine percent of them just love it.... You can have live musicians playing at a dance in a place where you don’t stand on the sidelines because you’re too tall, you’re too short, or you’re not in the “in” group. The reality is, when you have a contra dance, at some point in time every person on that floor is going to be your partner.... In fact, they ask me, “Mr. T., how do we start one of these at our school?” (Focus Group 4)

Turbanic described the change in his students who came to Augusta listening to their iPods, and left wanting to start a contra dance at their school. He said, "It's because they don't have any access to it" outside of Augusta (Ibid.). Informants in all five focus groups agreed that Augusta offers hands-on exposure to music and crafts that is not readily available for young people elsewhere. According to Vocal Week student Cindy Harris, Augusta offered her children "a place where you saw these things [traditional music and dance] as a natural part of life." Harris explained that the significance of bringing kids to Augusta is "to take ... those traditional arts and make sure that they're still a part of the mainstream. If it weren't for a program like this, these things would be extremely esoteric" (Focus Group 5).

As young people interact with adults at Augusta, both groups learn to respect each other. Focus group participants hope these exchanges will inform intergenerational communication elsewhere in society. Several participants described the encouraging realization that it is possible to learn something new as a middle-aged or elderly adult. Likewise, informants in almost every group expressed amazement at the skill of some of the young people who attend Augusta. Karen McGrath said during Cajun Week, "The scholarship kids astound me" (Focus Group 1). All of the Bluegrass Week informants laughed together, agreeing that some of the young people at Augusta "play better than we do!" (Focus Group 4). R.B. Powell told the story of a teenage boy in an advanced banjo class, learning alongside the others in the class where "the average age is probably sixty, maybe sixty-five" (Ibid.). Ray Rossell, another Bluegrass Week student, said, "I ain't got enough years left to learn what these kids already know!" He said, "There is a kid walking around here now playing the fiddle, and he is literally from

another planet. He is an aberration.... And it's fun to watch!... For my part, half of the trip is to be able to learn from all of these other people ... and to just be able to watch some of the crazy things these people can do on an instrument. It's amazing!" (Ibid.).

The respect for one another's skill, shared passion for the same music, and willingness to share, regardless of age or other factors, has a leveling effect. Turbanic described it best:

In our normal society outside of Augusta ... in a lot of contemporary society, the intergenerational relationships that are not family relationships, from an adult to a young person, they tend to be top-down, authoritative. And from the bottom they tend to be rebellious. Here ... at Augusta, that top-down authoritative [relationship] is gone; there's no need for it. And the rebellious and dismissive [behavior] on the younger part is gone because ... there's a reason to sit down and listen to what a person who is older than you is saying. These young people are actively inquiring and trying to become better musicians and singers and performers." (Ibid.)

Older people also take an interest in sharing traditions with children. According to Turbanic, this process mimics the learning that traditionally took place within families. He said, "If we could take that and somehow transfer that into the general population, into the general meetings between young people and old people,... what an impact that would have" (Ibid.).

On a personal level, the one-on-one interactions and the specific skills taught at Augusta provide for young people much of what the adults have experienced: the



powerful experiences of playing, dancing, and learning with other human beings, fulfillment through the physical process of creating art, and the excitement of curiosity and inquiry. Blues Week student Donna Fletcher expressed the importance of “the community that is built by playing music together.” She said, “There is nothing that creates friendship, warmth, [and] community better than playing music together. If kids don’t get a chance to do that ... at a young age,” she expressed concern that “isolation will continue” (Focus Group 2). Referring to Karen Skidmore’s comment about the “intimacy and power” of group singing, Irish Week participant Ginny Shilliday said, “We’re biologically hardwired for that, which we get less and less of in the modern world.... Augusta is all the more essential because you’re not going to find it nearly as easily within communities or even within families” (Focus Group 3).

While focus group informants shared a concern that conventional communities are breaking down, they also acknowledged the “instant gratification” nature of mainstream American culture today. Augusta, by contrast, teaches young people patience, dedication, and the ability to build skills through frequent practice. Understanding the long-term benefits of daily activities and being praised for hard work prepares young people to achieve other goals in life. Also, the simple ability to entertain oneself without electronics was described by informants as an important life skill that many young people have not built.

Most of the focus group participants who brought their children, grandchildren, and students to Augusta described a visible transformation in those youth. Some changes—like Turbanic’s story about his students’ sudden interest in contra dancing—come within the course of a week; others happen over years. Bob Turbanic said of his

student bluegrass musicians that, “In a week’s time, I take back fundamentally different musicians than I bring. Their enthusiasm, their understanding of the music, their skill level on their own instruments, and their ability to play with other students is all just transformed in a week” (Focus Group 4). Mike Grace held back tears for a moment as he said, “I brought my grandkids here, and I’ve seen a transformation in them.” He continued, “They were introduced to the world, really, and I think it gave them more of a basis to expand their horizons” (Ibid.). The following week, Cindy Sumerano said both of her daughters, who are now professional performers, “they both had this sort of revelation that when they came here that it was just about how much you loved it.... It wasn’t about how good anybody was; it was simply about the joy that it brought to them.”

The opportunities for creative exchange, confidence-building, and belonging to a community are important to adults too, but informants placed particular significance on these experiences for young people, both for personal growth and, more generally, for the future of mainstream culture. Young people learn to synthesize the new and old, and in some cases span two worlds—the mainstream culture of their peers and school life, and the world of Augusta and their creative life. Two Blues Week participants agreed that many young people do love old music, and “they love it right next to hip-hop” (Focus Group 2). Vocal Week student Cindy Harris described her daughter’s cultural transition from Montessori school to public school in seventh grade:

She realized that she didn’t know *anything* about the music that these kids were talking about.... So her reaction was ... she didn’t say anything about her own musical background, which of course by that time was

pretty folky influenced ... and instead, she kind of casually figured out which station the kids listened to, and she tuned that station into the radio in her room, and she made a *study* of what the music was so that she could talk intelligently about it.... She understood that it was a genre ... and it didn't matter if she liked it or not, but it was important to know how it fit in and how to talk about it. (Focus Group 5)

Cindy Sumerano said her daughters, at first, "kept it quiet that they even knew about this stuff initially because it might not be cool.... They talk about when they 'outed' themselves as being into this stuff" (Ibid.). Learning to navigate and integrate these "two worlds" can be challenging, but many informants view it as critical to continuing traditions into the future.

Taken together, the Augusta staff and students in this study share certain values and perspectives; they embody Augusta's connection to broader communities of historically minded, creative individuals who share concern for the future. Although they have many different specific interests and personal motivations, their shared desire to "pass on" traditions in an experiential way is representative of Augusta's ethos as a whole.

## Chapter 6: Augusta's Challenges, Changes, and the Future

Living traditions have continued to change with the generations and Augusta's mission has evolved over the forty years of its existence. Augusta has survived the ebb and flow of folk revivals and the uncertainty of administrative changes. It has grown from a local craft workshop to a broad-based traditional arts program with a strong music emphasis. Augusta's organizers have modified its format over time, using enrollment as a gauge of public interest and a guide to programming decisions. While this flexibility has been effective for increasing enrollment, the changes have brought some criticism. Judy Van Gundy observed that

As the craft emphasis has shifted to the music emphasis, you get more professional musicians coming to practice their skills or to take classes with a known professional, which isn't the same value as some young woman wanting to learn how to weave for her own gratification.

Scott Prouty noted that at Augusta today, there seem to be more participants who make at least some income as performers.

With the shift toward broader musical styles, there has been an influx of participants from outside of West Virginia. Initially, most participants were from the state, with a majority from Randolph County (Randolph, *Report* 1973 n. pag.). Some have criticized Augusta for not actively recruiting locals and for hiring musicians from outside the region over local talent. Augusta once offered discounts for West Virginia

residents, for instance, a practice that has been discontinued. Recently, Augusta has increased its outreach in Randolph County and among Davis & Elkins College students through the Mountain Dance Trail and the Appalachian Studies program. Informants from four of the focus groups recommended further outreach to locals.

Augusta's relationship with Davis & Elkins College has also evolved over time, integrating the Center's programs more fully with the rest of the College's systems and activities. For several decades, the Augusta office functioned relatively self-sufficiently and independently from the college at large. With a small staff, each Augusta employee could easily answer questions about the courses being offered, the instructors, and logistical details. Building relationships with students was an important part of the registration process from Augusta's beginning. Some focus group participants expressed concerns about recent changes in the year-round staff because a lack of continuity sometimes creates miscommunication and other registration problems. Ken McCoy, a coordinator in 1975, said that helping students through the registration process made it easier to get to know students once they came to campus. They had already spoken and written to each other and as McCoy said, "putting names with faces" when they arrived helped them feel welcome (Interview). Building relationships between staff and students improves the overall experience for students, both new and returning. For instance, staff members can ask new students a series of questions to determine whether they should enroll in a beginning or intermediate guitar workshop or recommend a craft class for the spouse of a musician. If returning students forget to list a roommate request, the person making housing assignments can automatically pair them with their old friend. Such small details make the experience more personal, more

welcoming, and less frustrating or daunting. It adds to the sense of belonging for returning students and helps new students feel more at ease.

Students and staff members interviewed for this project were also concerned about publicity and communications. Augusta used to create all of its publicity materials, and the publicist (and often other Augusta staff members) traveled to festivals and events, distributing flyers, recruiting staff and students, talking to prospective scholarship recipients, and staying informed about trends and up-and-coming artists within traditional music, dance, and crafts communities.

The relationship between the college at large and the Augusta office has never been particularly clear to Augusta students, and most think of the two as separate entities. Several focus group informants described feeling personally connected to D&E, however. Augusta students have been added to the D&E alumni and community newsletter, and several of the informants for this project said they enjoy receiving the weekly D&E email. One said, "I sort of feel like an alum" (Focus Group 1). Others suggested that Augusta needed to improve its own electronic communication and send out its own email updates.

Although the transition toward integration with the college has been in many ways positive, several informants alluded to "growing pains" and conflicts. Informants felt that some past college administrators perceived Augusta as a burden, while some Augusta staff members felt as if the Center was undervalued and taken for granted by D&E officials. Although Augusta staff members have typically tried not to communicate their concerns to Augusta students, the focus group participants were clearly aware of the tension. Some described Augusta and D&E as operating under "different structures,"

while others expressed concern that Augusta is underappreciated by the D&E administration. Focus group participants suggested that college administrators should observe Augusta classes and participate in events, talking to students and instructors to learn about the program. Informants recognize the potential for growth as Augusta becomes more integrated with the college, but most are wary of how those changes will take shape.

Joyce Rossbach said, “What we now have is more integration with the college because we now have the Appalachian Studies minor.... The Appalachian Music and Dance Club was created ... and from that, we started the dance team and string band... There are scholarship opportunities for that, which is a major change.... We’ve had more presence during [D&E’s] Winter Term courses and during the [academic] year” (Interview). Kupstas agreed, “Now there’s much more of a commitment of the college ... that other departments on campus will provide support for Augusta.... I think this is definitely a big transition year” (Interview).

Informants agree there will be challenges in the process. Some indicated concern that other offices on campus do not fully understand Augusta’s programs and the needs of Augusta students. For instance, shifting the student registration process out of the Augusta Office to the College Registrar’s Office will necessitate training about Augusta’s courses. Currently, the College Registrar’s Office and Augusta’s Administrative Assistant share these tasks, with most student questions handled by Augusta.

Despite the shared concerns of students and staff, there is overwhelming agreement that Augusta must continue to adapt to survive, particularly to meet the needs of the next generation. Over the years, Scott Prouty has witnessed a shift in

demographics due to the expansion of Youth Scholarships and the addition of Folk Arts for Kids (now called Augusta for Kids):

It was still kind of a [baby] boomer thing [when I began at Augusta].... I don't really know what the demographics are these days, but there's definitely more young people, and they're different from younger people in the past ... they learn differently. They're going to grow up not having known Melvin Wine [one of the "old masters," a fiddler from West Virginia].... Myself and some of my peers were lucky enough to hang out with those folks because they were from a really different place and time than we were. And as time goes on, that difference just increases, I think.

(Interview)

Despite the addition of this new generation, Augusta's main constituency has aged, and most members of the "Augusta family" are over the age of sixty. Scott Prouty recognizes that

There's a big community of learners out there, whether they go to music camps or not. They go to parties or take part in their local music communities. There's definitely been another resurgence of ... old-time music.... A lot of people probably go to Augusta or one of these camps ... maybe once or twice, but then they get good enough that—it's not that they couldn't stand to learn something else—but maybe they can't afford it, or they got enough of a start to do what they want to do. (Interview)

Kupstas noted that "It's hard for someone to spend a thousand or more dollars to



come ... so we're sort of limited to a certain demographic" (Interview). The availability of free learning opportunities through YouTube and widely available recordings means young traditional musicians have easier, more affordable access than ever before. In the current economic climate, with tuition for one week at Augusta at \$450 (not including housing or food), it is more affordable for young people to learn at home or attend local weekend festivals. Augusta students and staff interviewed for this project share concerns about cost and competition. The key for Augusta will be its ability to serve the needs of this new generation.

"As far as the future goes [Augusta] will have to continue to evaluate its audience," said Scott Prouty,

It'll have to evaluate what its role is going to be. It's certainly served a role in the past ..., but I think its audience has changed a little.... I don't mean that it needs to go away entirely; I hope that doesn't happen. It still creates community every summer; it fills a need for sure. But I think the needs have changed a little. (Interview)

Despite the current uncertainties, all of the interviewees remain committed to Augusta. Gerry Milnes said, "I hope it goes on forever," and Judy Van Gundy said, "It just would be a tragedy if it faded away" (Milnes, Interview; Van Gundy).

All of the informants offered recommendations for the future. These ranged from fundraising for Augusta's endowment and scholarship funds to creating smoother connections to the college and expanding Augusta's year-round presence. Staff mentioned streamlining administrative processes, perhaps involving other college departments. D&E's Appalachian Studies program is regarded as an area for potential

growth. In connection with the Appalachian Studies program, Prouty advocates for increasing the accessibility of the Augusta Archive of Folk Culture for use by students, scholars, and artists. "If the doors [to the archive] were thrown open, that could be an asset Augusta can offer" (Interview).

The biggest concern among the informants is the need for more staff. Today, the hiring of instructors, registration of students, planning program logistics, advertising, fundraising, and daily clerical tasks are mostly handled by the Director, the part-time Web Coordinator, and the full-time Administrative Assistant. As Folk Arts Coordinator, Gerry Milnes maintained his many projects including filmmaking and coordinating the Mountain Dance Trail while also filling orders for the Augusta store and addressing inquiries about the archive. Gerry retired in May, 2013, and his replacement has not yet been hired. Becky Hill now coordinates the Dance Trail, but Gerry's other responsibilities have been divided between the existing staff or put on hold. As Judy Van Gundy said, Augusta is "desperate for staff" (Interview). Hiring decisions and greater efficiency, especially through technology and further integration with other on-campus offices, will likely prove crucial to the program's future success.

Augusta has operated without interruption since 1973, and the intimacy of the small, wooded campus and the community formed by returning students and staff has fostered personal growth for thousands of participants. At least two factors have clearly contributed to Augusta's longevity: an evolving mission and the relationships between participants and staff. Informants agree that Augusta continues to be relevant. Augusta serves to facilitate interpersonal exchanges that happened more frequently in homes and local communities in the past, and it helps carry the past into the future. As

Cajun Week fiddle student Sabra Everett said, “When you keep age-old traditions alive, that’s part of the base of our culture, so that has to continue” (Focus Group 1).

### **Augusta for the Twenty-First Century**

Augusta’s success in the past stems from its ability to adapt and respond to student needs, and the relationships between staff and students that nurtured a community of learners. It follows, therefore, that to succeed in the future, Augusta will again need to be flexible while not neglecting relationships with new and returning students. Augusta’s greatest three assets are its dedicated constituency, its history, and the support of Davis & Elkins College’s current administration. Its three biggest challenges will be (1) adapting its structure, processes, and staff to changing needs, finding a niche in which to compete with other programs; (2) working hard to build and maintain the relationships that will support it for another generation; (3) and reaching financial stability.

### **Adapting to Changing Needs**

Augusta has arrived at a major turning point in its history, perhaps comparable to the changes that came in 1980-’81. In the last few years, the D&E administration has been more interested in and supportive of Augusta than most informants ever remembered. D&E has demonstrated its dedication to integrating Augusta with the college’s year-round offerings, including Augusta as a major component of D&E’s identity. It is time for Augusta to also reevaluate its identity and mission, particularly as a part of D&E College.

Since the mid-1980s, Augusta’s official title has been the “Augusta Heritage Center of Davis & Elkins College.” Although the title “Center” is appropriate in the sense

that Augusta is much more than a workshop program, Augusta has no visitors' center. When guests come to campus looking for the Augusta Heritage Center, they find a suite of offices and a small store that carries Augusta's recordings and other merchandise. Another potential attraction for the Center could be the archive, but it is largely inaccessible to the public. Augusta has not employed an archivist for almost ten years, and its holdings are not listed in the D&E Library Catalog. Establishing a true Heritage Center, with both a physical and online presence, will help tell Augusta's story, make its resources more available to the public, and attract visitors to D&E.

The intense experiences of Augusta's summer workshops form the core of Augusta's programming and absolutely should continue. Students and staff value this five-week summer program more than Augusta's other endeavors. To mitigate the "graying" of Augusta, it will be critical to find ways to include more young people in the summer program and consider additional programming formats for young participants.

In the current economic climate, many people have stayed closer to home, seeking workshops, private lessons, and weekend festivals in their own backyards. Considering this trend, Augusta has become too reliant on non-local participants and those who can afford to spend a week away from their other commitments. Weekend programs and festivals, workshops during other times of the year, programs designed specifically for young people, college courses, off-site apprenticeships, and a wide variety of other options might be possible.

Several of the informants for this project expressed concern about Augusta's growing competition from other workshop programs and festivals, but Augusta is the only program of its kind in West Virginia. Additionally, there are few Appalachian

Studies programs and no other American Vernacular Dance majors in the state. Augusta could claim its niche as West Virginia's collegiate center for traditional arts and regional studies, offering programs and financial assistance to in-state and local residents, and hiring more West Virginians as staff and instructors.

Working with other departments on campus and truly becoming part of campus life will strengthen both Augusta and the College as a whole. Involving college students in Augusta's courses will support a younger generation of artists, while Augusta's programs can also recruit students for the College.

The Augusta Heritage Center provides a case study demonstrating some of the ways people have coped with the changes of the past half century. As such, this research illuminates some timely and perhaps timeless issues about modernity, identity, community, tradition, and experience. Interviews with staff members and students make it clear that Augusta has continued to operate for forty years in large part because of its dedicated supporters. This network—the “Augusta family”—values Augusta for the traditions that it perpetuates and the experience it provides. As Augusta celebrates its fortieth anniversary, it is in a period of transition. Although it is impossible to predict the future, Augusta's newest projects (the Appalachian Studies program, the Appalachian Ensemble, the Mountain Dance Trail, and the American Vernacular Dance major) demonstrate the program's ability to test new approaches to heritage preservation.

### **Nurturing Relationships**

Administrative coordination with other D&E offices can make Augusta's systems more efficient, particularly with registration, publicity, and technology. Ideally, this

would allow Augusta's staff more time to communicate with staff and students, actively recruit participants, and provide better customer service. Technology can help sustain relationships by creating a more consistent presence via email and social media. However, to really build relationships and run its programs successfully, the Center needs more year-round and seasonal staff.

Relationships are particularly important to student retention, and special attention should be paid to first-time participants who are often overwhelmed or confused upon their arrival. Making the website and registration process simpler, as well as re-thinking the check-in and orientation process could have a significant impact on whether a first-time student will become a returning student.

With all this attention to younger students and new students, it is critical not to overlook the returning students. Augusta has a built-in army of supporters, and many would appreciate opportunities for greater involvement in the program outside of the weeks they attend. Several focus group informants expressed a desire to be asked to give more for Augusta. The "Augusta family" could be an invaluable resource as volunteers, publicists, and donors. Many informally publicize Augusta in their local communities already. These participants come from a variety of backgrounds, are collectively well-educated, and have a wide variety of skills. They could also help Augusta build partnerships with other organizations. A major volunteer program would take a good deal of coordination, but if effectively organized, would likely surpass expectations.

## **Financial Stability**

Finances can undoubtedly be the most worrisome aspect of arts administration, and Augusta is no exception. Historically, Augusta has depended on tuition to fund the majority of its operating budget, with additional support from grants and a small amount of gifts. Diversifying Augusta's sources of revenue so that it can be less reliant on student enrollment will be crucial in the future. Working with the College Advancement Office, Augusta's staff could organize an annual fundraising campaign to support Augusta's Margo Blevin Endowment and Annual Fund. Continued fundraising for Youth Scholarships (which receives the bulk of donations) will be necessary.

Augusta may need to adjust expectations for enrollment, setting reasonable targets and budgeting within those limits. The early directors were concerned that, if Augusta grew too big, it would lose its intimacy; perhaps that is a reasonable concern today. Applying for additional grant funding is a possibility with a larger staff or by coordinating with other College offices. The biggest question that remains unanswered is "What will Augusta's future will hold?" This study should be useful to Augusta as it navigates a new era.

## **The Role of Augusta in the Bigger Picture: A New Revival**

Today, at the intersection of artistic and environmental sustainability movements, there is a new revival of interest in traditional music, crafts, gardening, and foodways. Like the previous folk revivals, the present is a period of discontent with the forces of modernity. An economic recession, the "War on Terror," environmental disasters like the Gulf of Mexico oil spill, and growing concern over climate change have shaken the confidence of a new generation. Mountaintop removal threatens the very

mountains themselves. The gulf between the wealthy and the poor is again growing as governmental policies and international trade agreements allow for the concentration of wealth into increasingly large, multinational corporations. Global mass media has also led to an increasingly homogenous popular culture that values urban life, wealth, and consumerism.

A new back-to-the-land movement has arisen, and with it the “slow food” movement, urban homesteading (vermicomposting in city apartments; container gardening on balconies; guerrilla gardening on highway medians), and a growing environmental movement. Recycling (or “up-cycling”), hand-crafting, and a “vintage” aesthetic characterize a new counterculture. In fact, this counterculture is quite large and highly visible in mainstream society. Music, too, has drifted back toward “roots” genres. Following the media frenzy surrounding the 2000 film *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, bluegrass and old-time music (and even pop music with banjos and other acoustic instruments) has grown in popularity.

The young musicians that are now in their teens and twenties bring hope and inspiration to Augusta staff and students. Joyce Rossbach describes this generation as “the younger folks that are on fire for the music, for the dance, and for the singing.” To the informants, sharing traditions with young people—“passing it on”—remains the cornerstone of Augusta’s mission. The participants in this study are energized and encouraged to see youth carrying traditions forward. Joyce Rossbach explains,

There’s a tremendous interest in old-time music in younger folks, and I mean 12- to 16-year-olds. And I see that in bluegrass too. It’s very similar in Irish, although their interest starts even younger. And also in the



Cajun/Creole.... But I think it goes in cycles. Some things are in fashion for a while; then it goes on the back burner; then it comes back or something takes its place. (Interview)

She was particularly excited to describe increased interest in “unaccompanied ballads, that style of singing that is hard-edged and honest” among young people.

There’s no pretense. There’s no artifice. There’s no ornamentation for ornamentation’s sake. We’re not talking *American Idol*, where everybody sounds the same. We’re looking at folks who really want to be individuals and use their own voice and not be the imitators. (Interview)

“There are links from generation to generation,” said Ken McCoy, “and I think that’s where Augusta comes in” (Interview). Technological and cultural change is not going to slow, but people still desire to connect with traditions and experience “flow.”

Current educational trends in some ways echo those of the 1970s, with new Sustainability Studies programs and renewed interest in Appalachian Studies. In fact, Davis & Elkins College established a Center for Sustainability Studies in the same year that Appalachian Studies returned to the college catalog. In many ways, Augusta and Appalachian Studies have come full circle. The Augusta Heritage Center of Davis & Elkins College originated out of a folk revival tradition in Appalachia that continues today. Augusta’s diverse offerings in the heritage arts help to situate Appalachian culture within American culture. The diversity of Augusta’s programming has long honored American diversity with its emphases on ethnic and regional folk traditions, particularly in music. When paired with Appalachian Studies curricula, Augusta adds to

the public's understanding and appreciation of Appalachia in all its diversity and complexity.

The coalescence of interests in sustainability, hands-on learning, and cultural diversity creates an ideal climate for Augusta to reassert its identity and usefulness to a new generation. Davis & Elkins College has a unique opportunity to fill a niche in West Virginia by meeting the needs of this new generation, including their interests in sustainability, Appalachian Studies, and hands-on traditional arts learning. There is great potential for a strong, cooperative program that draws on Augusta's established tradition. The Augusta Heritage Center has the potential to contribute significantly to the field of Appalachian Studies.

There is still a place for Augusta today, and likely into the future, if its structure can adapt to meet the changing needs of its constituency. As McCoy said, Augusta can "make the connections between where we came from, where we are today, [and] perhaps even have an influence in where we are headed for tomorrow" (Interview). Time will tell if John Lilly's description of Augusta's niche will hold true for a new century. He said, "From the backwoods to cyberspace, there is nothing quite like Augusta!" (Lilly, "Augusta" 2). Augusta seems poised for success. Everyone whose lives Augusta has touched seems to see a great deal of hope and possibility for the next generation.

### Endnotes

1. Folk revivals in other parts of Appalachia and the United States are described by Cantwell, Rosenberg, and Whisnant. See the chapters entitled “Music” and “Folklife” in *High Mountains Rising* for a summary (Straw and Blethen 114-46).

2. Berea College president, William Goodell Frost, famously referred to mountain people as “our contemporary ancestors” in an 1899 *Atlantic Monthly* article, describing them as intellectually “behind the times” (92). David Whisnant’s book, *Modernizing the Mountaineer: People, Power, and Planning in Appalachia*, analyzes missionary and governmental programs designed to solve the perceived “problem” of Appalachia.

3. Philis Alvic has written extensively on craft movements around the turn of the twentieth century through the Depression. See *Weavers of the Southern Highlands* for an examination of Berea College’s “Fireside Industries,” Pi Beta Phi Settlement School’s Arrowcraft program, the Penland Weavers, and the Weavers of Rabun Gap. Jane Becker analyzed the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild and other aspects of the crafts movement in her book, *Selling Tradition: Appalachia and the Construction of an American Folk, 1930-1940*.

4. For more on the political and cultural implications of the War on Poverty and the radicalization of Appalachian Volunteers, see Kiffmeyer’s *Reformers to Radicals: The Appalachian Volunteers and the War on Poverty*, Eller’s *Uneven Ground: Appalachia Since*

1945, and Guy and Candy Carawan's article "Sowing on the Mountain: Nurturing Cultural Roots and Creativity for Community Change."

5. See Paul Salstrom's "The Neonatives: Back-to-the-Land in Appalachia's 1970's" for a description of his experiences with the movement in North Carolina and Jinny Turman-Deal's "'We Were an Oddity': A Look at the Back-to-the-Land Movement in Appalachia" for analysis of the movement in West Virginia. Carter Taylor Seaton's book, *Hippie Homesteaders: Arts, Crafts, Music, and Living on the Land in West Virginia*, explores the connections between the back-to-the-land movement and the arts. George Hicks's book, *Experimental Americans: Celo and Utopian Community in the Twentieth Century*, describes the Celo community in North Carolina and its part in the back-to-the-land movement.

6. Over ten years as an Augusta staff member, the researcher witnessed a transformative process that has affected many students and staff members. Struggling to find a simple framework to explain this pattern, the researcher developed the concept of these three stages.

7. For a description of purposive sampling and its effectiveness, see Bernard, pp. 145-47.

8. See Morgan for a description of the focus group method and a comparison to other methods such as individual interviews and participant observation (15-24).

9. Saturation occurs when the researcher is likely to predict the answers of the focus group, after which point little new information can be gained from additional groups (Morgan 42).

10. The snowball method is also known as a “chain referral” method, where one or more informants suggest others to include in the study (Bernard 147-48). The method was chosen for this research to identify perennial Augusta students who fit the criteria and were most likely to participate in a focus group.

11. Other short-term, intensive workshop experiences may replicate this phenomenon; for example, accounts of the Appalachian Writers Workshop at Hindman Settlement School, as illustrated in the anthology *Crossing Troublesome*, provide similar evidence (Kendrick and Lyon).

12. The early coordinators included Dr. Margaret Goddin and R. Dale Wilson (1973); Kay Gillispie, Willetta Hinkle, and Ken McCoy (1974); Jim Wiest and Scottie Roberts Wiest (1975); Kay Gillispie (1976-1977); Eleanor Lesser (1978); and Marion Harless (1979-1980). Lilly’s “Augusta: A Living Tradition” provided a preliminary list; In a 2013 personal interview, Ken McCoy credited Kay Gillispie and Willetta Hinkle as his co-coordinators of the 1974 Workshop (Lilly, “Augusta” 6; McCoy).

13. The college’s departments were organized into divisions; the arts and humanities fell under Division I (Ross).

14. The following instructors taught at Augusta in 1973: Scottie Roberts Wiest, Pottery; Olive Goodwin, Weaving; Catherine Candace Laird, Basketry and Caning; Willetta G. Hinkle, General Crafts; Ruth Ann Musick, Folklore; Claire Fiorentino, Folkdrama; and Nowell Creadick, Appalachian Music. R. Dale Wilson, President of the Randolph County Creative Arts Council, and Dr. Margaret P. Goddin, Chairman of the Division of Arts coordinated the Workshop (Randolph, *Randolph County* n. pag.). The names of the two D&E student assistants are currently unknown to the author.

15. Tole painting is a stylized form of decorative folk art that comes from a German tradition and is most often hand painted on household objects.

16. Financial data can be tracked through grant final reports, treasurer's reports in Creative Arts Council meeting minutes, and in-house reports available from Augusta's Archive. See final reports to the West Virginia Arts and Humanities Council for examples (Randolph, *Report 1973*; Randolph, *Report 1974*; Randolph, *Final AH 77006*; Randolph, *Augusta 1978 Final*; Randolph, *Final AH 80113*).

17. At Augusta, the term "Appalachian music" was used interchangeably with "old-time music," "old-time Appalachian music," and "mountain music." The first class with the title "Appalachian music" included instrumental instruction on banjo, fiddle, guitar, and dulcimer (Randolph, *Randolph County* n. pag.). See Ted Olson and Ajay Kalra's article in *A Handbook to Appalachia* for a more detailed analysis of types of music that have been historically labelled "Appalachian" or otherwise associated with the region (163-179).

18. This comes from personal observations; the researcher attended the director candidates' public presentations.

19. These are observations of the researcher, who served on Augusta's full-time staff at the time. Because these were personal decisions, more detail about their reasons will not be included in this study.

20. Observations of the researcher (see above).

21. As an Augusta employee at the time, the researcher witnessed these changes.

22. For enrollment data for summer and fall workshops, see Augusta Heritage Center, "Section Availability Report" 7 Aug. 2013 and Augusta Heritage Center, "Section

Availability Report” 1 Nov. 2013. Data for Spring Dulcimer Week were unavailable due to technical issues at Augusta, but enrollment was estimated at less than 100, based on recent trends.

23. See page 33 for focus group questions.

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## **Appendix A: Interview Guide**

- I. Personal Involvement Questions
  - A. When did you get involved in Augusta? How?
  - B. Why were you interested in the program?
  - C. Can you describe what Augusta was like when you first got involved?
  - D. How have you been involved since that first year?
    1. Have you attended concerts or dances?
    2. Have you participated in the festival?
    3. Have you taken classes?
    4. Have you taught classes?
    5. Have you been part of the staff?
    6. Have you been a volunteer?
  - E. Have any of your family members been involved in Augusta? If so, how?
  - F. Who were some of the memorable people you interacted with at Augusta?
  - G. What are some classic “Augusta moments” or stories?
  - H. What has changed at Augusta since you first became involved?
- II. Augusta and Davis & Elkins College
  - A. How was Augusta connected to Davis & Elkins College when you first became involved?

- B. What was the relationship between the college faculty and Augusta?
- C. What was the relationship between Davis & Elkins College students and Augusta?
- D. Have any of these relationships changed over time?
- E. What is/was the relationship between Augusta and Appalachian Studies?

### III. Reasons for Participation

- A. Why do/did you participate in Augusta?
- B. Is Augusta important to you? In what way?
- C. Do you think Augusta is important in a broader sense?
- D. What do you think has been Augusta's impact?
- E. What is the most important thing people should know about Augusta?
- F. Is Augusta an important part of who you are? Explain.
- G. Does Augusta represent the kind of person you are? (If yes, what kind of person is that?)
- H. Why do you think other people participate in Augusta?
- I. Do you think Augusta fills some need for people? If so, what might that be?
- J. Do you think Augusta is part of a larger movement? Explain.

### IV. Folk Revival & Back-to-the-Land

- A. How would you describe modern life?
- B. How are people connected today?
- C. Does Augusta help people find connection? (Ask for examples.)

- D. Do you participate in art, crafts, music, or dance outside of Augusta?
  - E. Do you garden or spend time outdoors?
  - F. Do you think people that participate in Augusta are interested in traditional skills like cooking, canning, gardening, hunting, crafting, etc.?
  - G. Do you think people that participate in Augusta are interested in the environment or the outdoors?
  - H. What is the connection between Augusta and these other interests?
  - I. Do Augusta participants share certain values or a certain lifestyle? Explain.
  - J. Is Augusta part of a folk revival?
  - K. There was a folk revival in the 1960s and '70s, do you think there is another one now?
  - L. Do you know about the back-to-the-land movement? (If yes, is there a connection between Augusta and the movement?)
- V. Conclusion & Background Questions
- A. Who else should I talk to about Augusta?
  - B. How old are you?
  - C. What is your educational background?
  - D. What is/was your primary occupation?
  - E. Where were you born?
  - F. Where were your parents born?
  - G. Did you live in the Elkins area before you became involved with Augusta? (If not, did Augusta influence your decision to move here?)

## **Appendix B: List of Informants**

### Individual Interviews:

- Margo Blevin-Denton: February 2 and March 12, 2014
- Becky Hill: March 4, 2013
- Matthew Kupstas: March 13, 2013
- Ken McCoy: March 11, 2013
- Gerry Milnes: March 3, 2013
- Scott Prouty: March 13, 2013
- Joyce Rossbach: March 13, 2013
- Judy Van Gundy: March 14, 2013

### Focus Group 1: July 11, 2013

- Sabra Everett
- Rebecca French
- Karen McGrath
- James L. "Sandy" Wilson

### Focus Group 2: July 17, 2013

- Gina DeLuca
- Donna Fletcher
- Marilyn Leung
- Bill Redding

- John Witter
- 2 anonymous participants

Focus Group 3: July 24, 2013

- Sally Burnell
- Megan Downes
- Kathryn Fletcher
- Virginia "Ginny" Shilliday
- Karen Skidmore

Focus Group 4: August 1, 2013

- Michael E. Grace
- Mickey Luck
- Rowland B. "R.B." Powell
- Ray Rossell
- Robert A. Turbanic

Focus Group 5: August 7, 2013

- Bruce Angier
- James L. Berry
- Cindy Harris
- Grace M. Mason
- Cindy Sumerano
- Andy Wilkins

### Appendix C: Focus Group Survey Results

The following data were collected from focus group participants in a questionnaire.

Group	Age	Currently Enrolled In
1	67	Cajun/Creole Week: Accordion, Intermediate
1	55	Cajun/Creole Week: Cajun Cooking
1	68	Cajun/Creole Week: Fiddle, Intermediate
1	52	Instrument Repair
2	39	Blues/Swing Week: Guitar & Songwriting
2	67	Stained Glass
2	70	Stained Glass
2	65	Blues/Swing Week: Blues Guitar & Vocals
2	65	Blues/Swing Week: Guitar & Songwriting
2	65	Blues/Swing Week: Pizza Box Percussion & Songwriting
2	68	Blues/Swing Week: Swing Guitar & Vocal Warmup
3	44	Irish/Celtic Week: Banjo
3	53	Irish/Celtic Week: Bodhran & Singing in Irish
3	66	Irish/Celtic Week: Songs, Singing, & Performance; Songwriting
3	56	Irish/Celtic Week: Songs, Singing, & Performance; Songwriting
3	53	Irish/Celtic: Set Dance & Irish Singing
4	73	Bluegrass Week: Banjo, Advanced
4	62	Bluegrass Week: Chaperone
4	75	Bluegrass Week: Dobro
4	72	Bluegrass Week: Fiddle, Intermediate
4	67	Bluegrass Week: Songwriting
5	47	Dance Week
5	80	Old-Time Week: Fiddle, Intermediate
5	64	Vocal Week
5	54	Vocal Week
5	56	Vocal Week
5	49	White Oak Basketry

### Education and Occupation

Group	Highest Education Attained	Occupation
1	Master's	Librarian
1	Master's	Teacher, Retired
1	Master's	Music/P.E.Teacher
1	2 Masters'	Real Estate Property Manager, CPA
2	B.A.	Part-Time Music Programmer, Band Leader, Retired
2	B.A.	Retired College Administrator
2	Master's	Teacher, Retired
2	Master's	High School Biology Teacher, Retired
2	F.N.P.	Family Nurse Practitioner
2	Ph.D.	Teacher & Writer, Retired
3	B.A.	Housewife
3	B.A.	Library Assistant
3	B.A.	Folk Dancer
3	Master's	Singer, Formerly College Professor
3	Master's	Computer Support and Training
4	B.A.	Retired
4	B.S.	Educator
4	B.S.	Retired
4	2 Masters'	Educator, Retired, Businessman
4	M.F.A.	Retired College Professor
5	2 Associates'	Farmer/Surveyor
5	B.A.	Stay-At-Home Mom
5	Master's	Art Educator
5	M.B.A.	Internet Consultant
5	L.L.B.	Retired Circuit Judge
5	all but dissertation	Retired



### Geographic & Family Data

<b>Group</b>	<b>Birthplace</b>	<b>Current Residence</b>	<b>Did parents participate in traditional arts?</b>	<b>Did grandparents?</b>
4	Virginia	Alabama	N	N
4	Alabama	Alabama	Y	N
1	Texas	California	N	N
1	Minnesota	Illinois	Y	Y
1	Indiana	Indiana	N	N
2	Maryland	Maryland	N	N
2	Missouri	Maryland	N	N
2	Iowa	Maryland	Y	Y
3	Indiana	Michigan	Y	Y
2	New York	Minnesota	N	N
2	New York	New York	Y	N
3	New York	New York	Y	Y
5	Connecticut	New York	Y	N
5	Minnesota	New York	N	N
2	New York	North Carolina	Y	N
4	Washington, D.C.	North Carolina	Y	N
3	Ohio	Ohio	Y	N
4	Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania	Y	Y
5	New York	Pennsylvania	N	N
1	Rhode Island	Rhode Island	Y	Y
5	Oregon	Virginia	N	N
5	New Jersey	Virginia	Y	N
2	New Jersey	Washington, D.C.	Y	?
3	Washington, D.C.	West Virginia	Y	Y
3	West Virginia	West Virginia	N	Y
4	West Virginia	West Virginia	Y	N
5	West Virginia	West Virginia	N	N

## Years Attended

<b>Group</b>	<b>First Year Attended</b>	<b>First Class Taken at Augusta</b>	<b>Number of Weeks Attended</b>
4	1982	Instrument Repair	55
2	1987	Blues Guitar	30
3	1989	Irish Folklore	25
1	1990	Vocal Week	55
3	1990	Irish Set Dance	29
3	1991	Tin Whistle?	20
2	1992	Swing Dance	No answer
2	1994	Dance Week	19
5	1994	Vocal Week	20
4	1995	Fiddle	18
4	1995	Banjo	18
5	1995	Clogging miniclass	19
5	1995	Beginning Dulcimer	7
1	1996	Instrument Repair	5
2	1996	Swing Guitar	20
3	1996	Harp	18
2	1997	Guitar/Vocals	16
2	1998	Swing Dance	14
5	1998	Elderhostel, Appalachian Heritage	40
5	1998	Autoharp	17
5	1999	Chaperone/Road Scholar	11
4	2000	Dobro	13
1	2001	Int. Accordion with Paul Daigle	13
1	2002	Dancing	9
2	2004	Blues Week - Advanced Vocals	10
3	2004	Singing in Irish	6
4	2007	Banjo	7
<b>Average</b>			<b>20</b>

### Theme Weeks Attended

Theme/Category	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Total
Bluegrass Week	0	0	1	5	1	7
Blues Week	0	3	0	1	0	4
Cajun/Creole Week	3	2	0	1	0	6
Craft Classes	1	2	1	1	2	7
Dance Week	0	1	2	0	2	5
Folklore Classes	0	1	0	0	0	1
French Canadian Week	1	0	0	0	0	1
Guitar Week	1	1	0	0	0	2
Irish Week	0	0	5	0	0	5
October Old-Time Week	0	0	0	0	2	2
Old-Time Week (summer)	0	1	1	0	1	3
Spring Dulcimer Week	1	1	0	0	3	5
Swing Week	0	5	0	1	0	6
Vocal Week	1	1	1	0	4	7
Elderhostel/Road Scholar	0	0	0	0	1	1

Early Country Music Week, Native American Week, Scottish Music and Dance Week, Step Dance Week, and Winter Augusta were included in the survey, but have been omitted here because no respondents reported attending those weeks.

### Primary Reason for Attending Augusta

Focus Group	Music	Dance	Crafts	Folklore
1	2	1	1	0
2	5	0	2	0
3	3	1	0	0
4	4	0	0	0
5	4	2	1	1
Total	18	4	4	1

**Events Attended** (in addition to full-time workshops)

<b>Focus Group</b>	<b>Augusta Festival</b>	<b>Concerts</b>	<b>Dances</b>	<b>Fiddlers' Reunion</b>	<b>Mini Courses</b>	<b>Jam Sessions</b>
1	2	2	2	1	2	3
2	3	6	6	0	4	3
3	3	4	4	1	3	4
4	1	4	3		2	3
5	6	6	5	3	5	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>19</b>

### Appendix D: Timeline of Augusta's History

The following timeline was compiled from Augusta's historical catalogs and primary sources from Augusta's archive (listed in the Works Cited).

<b>1972</b>	Randolph County Creative Arts Council decided to organize workshop series
<b>1973</b>	First West Virginia Arts and Humanities Council Grant awarded
	First summer session of the Augusta Heritage Arts Workshop (July 9 - August 3). Tuition: \$25 per week per class
	Undergraduate credit and limited "credit for teacher certificate renewal" available
	<i>Augusta Bugle</i> newsletter began
	First Appalachian Arts Exhibit Festival (a showcase of student work)
<b>1974</b>	Augusta student enrollment doubled from 99 to over 200 from the previous year
<b>1977</b>	Two- and three-day "Mini Courses" introduced
	First Mountain Music & Crafts Festival (now the Augusta Festival)
<b>1978</b>	Out-of-state participants outnumbered West Virginians for the first time
<b>1979</b>	First "Augusta Dance Week" introduced as an evening class for \$55
<b>1980</b>	First grant awarded from the National Endowment for the Arts
<b>1981</b>	Randolph County Creative Arts Council officially transferred sponsorship of Augusta to Davis & Elkins College
	Margo Blevin hired as first permanent director
<b>1982</b>	First "Irish Music Week"
	First "Vocal Music" class (precursor to Vocal Week)
	Augusta student enrollment reached 999
<b>1983</b>	First Blues Week
	Augusta Heritage Records released its first album, <i>Fiddlin' John</i>
<b>1984</b>	First Bluegrass Week

<b>1985</b>	The name "Augusta Heritage Center" was adopted to reflect Augusta's growing focus
	First Scottish Music & Dance Week (ran through 1991)
	First appearance of the <i>Pennywhistle</i> newsletter
<b>1986</b>	Augusta catalog changed from a fold-out brochure to the booklet format used today
	First Cajun Music & Customs program (now Cajun/Creole Week)
	First Step Dance Week (ran through 1990)
<b>1987</b>	First Old-Time Week
<b>1988</b>	First Folk Arts for Kids class taught by Mary Alice Milnes
	First Native American Week (ran through 1989)
<b>1989</b>	The West Virginia Folk Arts Apprenticeship program began
	First Swing Week
<b>1991</b>	First Elderhostel programs offered
<b>1996</b>	First "Roots and Rhythm: Clogging and Movement for Teens" (also known as "Teen Week")
<b>1997</b>	25th anniversary celebration
<b>1998</b>	First Guitar Week
<b>2003</b>	First Family Week (renamed Folk Arts Week in 2006; ran through 2009)
<b>2006</b>	Margo Blevin retired
<b>2007</b>	Kathleen Lavengood served as director
<b>2008</b>	Joyce Rossbach began as director
	G. T. "Buck" Smith became president of D&E
<b>2010</b>	Appalachian Studies minor re-introduced at D&E
	First Early Country Music Week
<b>2013</b>	Dance Week renamed American Vernacular Dance Week, introducing more diverse styles

### **Vita**

Brittany R. Hicks grew up in Hampshire County, West Virginia, with her parents Rebecca Moore and Richard Hicks and brother Tristan Hicks. Since 2004, she has worked for the Augusta Heritage Center of Davis & Elkins College in Elkins, West Virginia. During this time, she served two years as an AmeriCorps VISTA and was instrumental in establishing an Appalachian Studies minor at Davis & Elkins College. She completed a self-designed B.A. in Appalachian Studies at Davis & Elkins College in 2007, and an M.A. in Appalachian Studies from Appalachian State University in 2014. After completion of her degree, she plans to return to Elkins, West Virginia to live near her family and return to the community and the mountains where she is most at home.