

A Publication
of Your
Nashville
Old-Time
String Band
Association
and the
Stratford
Community
Education
Department

UPCOMING
ASSOCIATION
EVENTS



Thursday
August 5
Slow Jam
6:30 to 8:30 PM
Stratford High
Cafeteria



Thursday
August 13
Regular Jam
6:30 to 8:30 PM
Stratford High
Cafeteria



August 22
4th Sunday Jam
2 to 5 PM
Hosted by
Don and Darlyne
Kent

Old-Time Times

August 2004

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EVENTS

Tennessee

Bell Witch Bluegrass Competitions

Held in Adams, August 13-14. For complete information, call Patrick A. Fitzhugh at (615) 696-2589, or go to "Festivals & Contests" at www.nashvilleoldtime.org.

West Virginia

Appalachian String Band Music Festival

Commonly known as "Clifftop" (the name of the nearest community), this festival is probably the premiere old-time music event in America. It is held at Camp Washington-Carver, a state park, from August 4 through August 8. Many campers will arrive as early as the previous Saturday, July 31, to claim the best campsites and start the picking early. For complete information, call Pat Cowdery at (304) 558-0220, Ext 130, or go to "Festivals & Contests" at www.nashvilleoldtime.org.

Virginia

69th Old Fiddlers Convention-Galax

Held in Galax, August 9-14. "Galax" is another fine old-time music event. Many lovers of old-time music go from Clifftop to Galax as soon as the festival at Clifftop is over. For complete information, call (276) 236-8541, or go to "Festivals & Contests" at www.nashvilleoldtime.org.

FOURTH-SUNDAY JAMS

Homes have been found for all of 2004's 4th-Sunday Jams, but it's never too early to schedule your home for a 4th-Sunday Jam in 2005. E-mail Darlyne Kent at dkent@davidsonacademy.

DIRECTIONS TO THE FOURTH-SUNDAY JAM FOR AUGUST

August's 4th-Sunday Jam will be hosted by Don and Darlyne Kent.

From Nashville, take I-65 North to I-24 West. Follow I-24 West (toward Clarksville) until you reach Exit 40 (Old Hickory Boulevard). Turn right onto Old Hickory. Go to the first traffic light, and turn right onto Brick Church Pike. Take the first left onto Valley Trail. Take the next left onto Breckenridge Court.

Don and Darlyne live at 1424 Breckenridge Court, at the top of the cul-de-sac.

WE NEED YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS

Ed Gregory is updating our directory of E-mail addresses. Please send Ed your E-mail address at ed@gregorynet.net.

In the Woods Performs at Sewanee

In the Woods played for a contra dance in Sewanee on May 14. (This article was submitted for an earlier newsletter, but Phil accidentally left it out.) Members of the band include Eddy Hudson, Julie Mavity-Hudson, Ed Gregory, Larry Vito, Tim Roberts, and Pam and Jim Selman. The band was rounded out by a group of people who hold Tuesday jams in Flat Creek with Jim Wood, a fiddle teacher. Pam Selman brought the band together and organized the dance.

Eddy, the band's only fiddler, prepared the medley list for the evening, and Ed set up a Web site where all the musicians could access the tunes in the form of mp3s. These recordings were made during the Pegram jams and were supplied courtesy of Kirk Pickering.

The band was in essence a "virtual band" with all the medleys, chord charts, tune lists, and mp3s posted on the Internet. All of the band members had computer access and practiced on their own. They came together for the first time at the dance and were a big hit. Eddy did a great job on the fiddle, and the rhythm section was fantastic. The evening was a huge success and everyone had a great time.

~Julie Mavity-Hudson

Rebekah Weiler Appears on Fox 17

On Monday, July 5, at 7 AM, Rebekah Weiler appeared on Channel 17 to promote Uncle Dave Macon Days in Murfreesboro.

She played and sang "Little Liza Jane" while her good friend Thomas Maupin did some fine old-time buck dancing.

Rebekah and Thomas put on a great show. No one watching could have guessed that Rebekah has been playing the banjo for only three years or that the rubber-legged Thomas is 65 years old.

~Phil Sparks

NOTSBA Members Compete in Murfreesboro

Saturday, July 10, at the Uncle Dave Macon Days festival in Murfreesboro, NOTSBA was well represented.

Tyler Andal was the star of the event, taking 1st first place in the traditional fiddle contest. Bob Townsend came in 2nd, and Phil Sparks was 26th.

In the old-time banjo contest, Robert Montgomery took 1st, Nic Andal placed 2nd, and Rebekah Weiler won 3rd.

In the old-time band contest, a group of fine musicians from the St Louis area took 1st. Nic and Tyler's band, The Young Old-Timers, won 2nd. The world-famous old-time band called WHUT, (Buddy Ingram, Joe Fentress, Joe Peavyhouse, Jeff Rohrbough, Ed Gregory, and Phil Sparks) also entered. They won absolutely nothing and had a wonderful time winning it.

~Phil Sparks

Nic Andal is Kentucky's Champion Old-Time Banjo Picker

July 17 was a banner day for Nic Andal. He won 1st place in the old-time banjo contest at the Rough River Dam State Park near Litchfield, Kentucky,. That makes him the Kentucky's champion old-time banjo picker *for the second year in a row*, no small feat.

Nic, Tyler, and Bill Jones also entered the old-time band competition and took 2nd.

~Phil Sparks

Dedication of the Fiddlin' Charlie Bowman Highway

On August 14 in Gray, Tennessee, an official state of Tennessee highway marker will be unveiled. It will designate a road there as the Fiddlin' Charlie Bowman Highway. Gray is a small community on Highway 181, about 10 miles northwest of Johnson City.

New Luthier Sets up Shop in Nashville

Dustin Williams, a young luthier with a master's degree from the Violin Making School of America in Salt Lake City, has opened a shop called Williams Fine Violins. It is located at 1103 16th Avenue (Music Row).

Joining Dustin is Jeremy Timmons, an accomplished luthier who specializes in bow rehairing and repair. Jeremy formerly operated the Harmony Arts shop in Franklin.

I stopped by their shop a couple of weeks ago. Dustin was operating on a dismantled double bass but took time out to show me around. They offer a complete range of repairs for the violin family and have quite a few instruments for sale. Dustin also has some of his own made-from-scratch violins for sale. I tried one of them out. It looked and sounded fine.

Their phone number is 429-2927, and their Web site is at www.WilliamsFineViolins.com.

Nashville is fortunate to have fine luthiers like Fred Carpenter of the Violin Shop in Bellevue and Dustin Williams of Williams Fine Violins. When we need strings, bow rehairing, or other services, we must support them.

~Phil Sparks

The Guitar and Old-Time Music

(This article is a part of a presentation that the Melmac Lickers recently gave in Huntsville on the Evolution of the String Band.)

We look at the present standard configuration of an old-time string band, and it is easy to assume that the, instrumentation of fiddle, banjo, guitar, and bass has always been there. This is simply not true.

A solo fiddle would have accompanied any rural dance in 18th century. It may be difficult for us to imagine, but this was considered a complete sound of the day. They wanted to dance, and the fiddle was enough. Because of

this, here and in other countries, bowing techniques were developed that allowed the fiddler to incorporate rhythm in his playing.

By the 1850s, the banjo had become a regular member of the band. It was adapted from the African American culture and became the perfect accompaniment for the fiddle.

The first truly guitar-like instruments were developed in Spain around 1550, and up through the end of the 19th century, they remained parlor instruments played by mostly "gentle folk." Their bracing was rather fragile and would accept only gut strings. These instruments were just not loud enough to compete with the fiddle and banjo.

By 1900, two things happened that brought the guitar into the band. The fact that both of these things happened at virtually the same time insured market saturation with an instrument few people were familiar with.

The first thing that happened was that by 1900, Orville Gibson had changed the bracing pattern and beefed up the braces. He was able to adapt the steel strings of the mandolin to the guitar, giving it the volume the guitar needed to join the band.

Folks had been making their own fiddles and banjos for years, but the guitar is a larger instrument with more string tension. It is a much more difficult instrument to make. Something had to happen to distribute the instrument throughout what was then a very rural America.

The second thing to happen was that by 1900, mail order catalogs were appearing in almost every home outside of cities all across America. The Sears catalog began distribution in 1894. Montgomery Ward started distributing a one-sheet catalog as early as 1872. Mail order catalogs made more of an impact on rural life than the Internet (our 21st century equivalent) has made on today's society. Both of these catalogs carried guitars and other instruments made by major manufacturers. They made guitars available and affordable.

By the 1930's guitars became a staple in commercial and noncommercial music. Groups and individual artists like J.E. Mainer

and The Mountaineers, Gid Tanner and The Skillet Lickers, Charlie Poole and The North Carolina Ramblers, The Carter Family, and Jimmy Rogers were just a few of the performers of the 1930s to get the most out of what was essentially a new instrument.

I doubt that any instrument has made a larger impact on American culture than the guitar. It is used in virtually all types of popular music. It seems to be the perfect accompaniment for vocal music. For our purposes, the guitar gave the old-time string band the rhythm it was missing.

~Dave Cannon

CD Review: Trish Cannon's Favorites

(This article is a reprint taken from an earlier edition of the *Old-Time Times*.)

Camp Creek Boys, County #709, featuring Fred Cockerham, Paul Sutphin, and Kyle Creed.

When I hear certain tunes in my head, they are often the versions done by the Camp Creek Boys: "Fortune," "June Apple," and "Suziana Gal."

Old-Time Fiddle Classics, Volume 2, County #527.

This recording has great tunes like "Old Molly Hare" played by Clayton McMichen, "Citaco" played by Lowe Stokes, and my all-time favorite "Pike's Peek" played by Ted Sharp.

Sandy's Fancy, Flying, Flying Fish #260, featuring Alan Jabbour, Sandy Bradley, and Tommy Thompson.

This recording has excellent versions of some Henry Reed tunes like "Sally Ann Johnson," "Shoes and Stockings," "Ducks in the Pond," "Shortenin' Bread," and "Ebe-neezer." It also has some less well-known tunes worth having in a collection.

Nashville: The Early String Bands, Volumes 1 and 2, County #541 and #542 with liner notes by Charles Wolfe.

This two-volume collection of original recordings is well worth acquiring. It features tunes by Uncle Dave Macon, The Crook

Brothers, Deford Bailey, Sam and Kirk McGee, and Uncle Jimmy Thompson. I especially like "Robertson County" by Paul Warmack, "Brown's Ferry Blues" by Sam McGee, and "Billy Wilson" by Uncle Jimmy Thompson.

Lost Boy, by Bruce Molsky, Rounder #0361.

This one is an excellent collection of tunes, some familiar and some new to me: "Yellow Barber," "Wolves a'Howling," "The Blackest Crow," and "8th of January." I play this one over and over.

Say Old Man by Brad Leftwich, County #2714.

This is another CD I return to often. "Saro," "Kitty Wells," "Lazy John," and "Are You Getting There Rabbit?" are tunes I enjoy.

~Trish Cannon

Note: Trish was recently hospitalized with pneumonia. We are all grateful to hear that she is much improved and at home again.

A Penny Learned

I have my grandfather's fiddle. Since he passed away two years before I was born, I never heard him play it; still, it somehow landed in my childhood home and planted the seed that caused me to fall in love with fiddle music.

In my youth, it was coming apart at the seams and was completely unplayable. My brother, a banjo and guitar picker, had it restored enough for me to play it, but it sounds awful!

I recently heard that Fred Carpenter of the Violin Shop can "regraduate" old violins to improve the sound, so I took it to him.

First, Fred had to determine if grampaw's fiddle was a candidate for regraduation. The top or back had to be too thick, and the fiddle had to be of minimal value in its current condition. Since Grampaw's fiddle is a cheap German model made for the mass market in rural American, it qualified.

Fred says the fiddle needs regraduation and a new bass bar. He told me fiddle's sound

should improve, but he clearly stated that he cannot guarantee the results.

The job will be done sometime this fall and will cost about \$800—to be divided between my brother and me. I'll let you know how it turns out.
~Phil Sparks

A Note from Phil Sparks

I profited greatly from last month's newsletter. I ordered the CD that Julie reviewed and love it. I'm listening to it right now, as I work on the newsletter.

I also purchased The Amazing Slow Downer software. It is everything Ed said it would be. Learning new tunes will be much easier from now on.

If you have a tidbit on picking, learning tunes, caring for instruments, etc, please submit it for the "A Penny Learned" article.

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The *submission deadline* for September's newsletter is 9 AM, Tuesday, August 24.

Contribute to Your Newsletter!

If have information you want to submit, or if you have ideas for improving the newsletter, contact Phil Sparks.

If you are willing to review a CD, contact Phil Sparks. If you don't contact him, he will contact you!