



A Publication
of Your
Nashville
Old-Time
String Band
Association

ASSOCIATION
EVENTS

1st Thursday Jam
May 4
Slow & Regular Jam
6:30 to 8:30 PM
Two Rivers
Mansion
♫

2nd Thursday Jam
May 11
Regular Jam
6:30 to 8:30 PM
Buchanan
Log House
♫

3rd Thursday Jam
May 18
Slow & Regular Jam
6:30 to 8:30 PM
Two Rivers
Mansion
♫

4th-Sunday Jam
May 28
2 to 5 PM
Hosted by
Ron and Cynthia
Whitlow

The Old-Time Times

MAY 2006

In This Issue

Mt Airy Approaches, pg 1 The Other Nashville Old-Time Jam, pg 2 Bear on the Square, pg 2 Old-Time Music in California, pg 2 Fiddle Contest in Holladay, pg 3 The Jam Session, pg 3 Blue Creek Ramblers in San Diego, pg 4 Historic Union Grove Fiddlin' Event Will Continue, pg 5 New Old-Time Banjo Web Site, pg 5 New Notsba Members, pg 5 Directions to the Jams, pgs 5 and 6 **Events**, pg 6 Hosts for 4th-Sunday Jams, pg 7 A Penny Learned, pg 7 Newsletter and Notsba Info, pgs 7 and 8 Classified Ads, pg 8 **Lost and Found for BUW**, pg 8

Mt Airy Approaches!

~Phil Sparks

It's fair to say that Mt Airy, North Carolina, is the prime representative of "small town USA." This friendly little town was the model for Andy Griffith's Mayberry, and it's the home of one of the nation's foremost old-time music festivals. The festival at Mt Airy is called a "Bluegrass and Old-Time Fiddlers Convention," but it's mostly old-time. We generally see one Bluegrass jam for every four or so old-time jams.

The festival takes place in the Veterans Memorial Park, which is well within the city limits. The official dates of this year's event are Friday and Saturday, the 2nd and 3rd of June, but those who have attended for years have expanded those dates to include Wednesday through Saturday or even a full week, starting Saturday, the 27th of May. Some folks arrive at Veterans Memorial Park a week early, set up camp (taking all of the trailer hook-up spots), and spend the rest of the weekend in Union Grove, which is only about 40 miles south of Mt Airy.

When you first arrive, you will drive around a large soccer field to the entrance gate. If there is room for you and your tent or camper in the festival grounds, you pay and go in. If all the room is taken, you pay and camp on the soccer field (it's fine). Thereafter, you and your little wristband can go in or out of the festival grounds at will.

The festival grounds feature public toilets, showers, and junk food stands. If you want a nice motel or restaurant, they are only minutes away.

As you enter the grounds, you will see a long ridge up on the right. That's where most of the young "hipsters" congregate, those kids I call the "new hippies" (as opposed to those of us who are "old hippies"). Man, some of those kids can *pick!* At Breakin' Up Winter we saw an excellent sample of their music as played Evan Johnson and Casper Nichols' friends, fiddler A.D. Norcross and his banjoist Gabriella.

In the unlikely event that you grow tired of jamming, you can shop for CDs with John Hatton, check out the deals offered by the various instrument vendors, or enjoy the almost nonstop contests. By the way, I'm told that those who enter the contests have their entry fees refunded.

If you haven't been to Mt Airy, you must give it a try. See you there, I hope. □

The Other Nashville Old-Time Jam

In Nashville, we are blessed with two major series of jam sessions. One, of course, is run by The Nashville Old-Time String Band Association (Notsba). These jam sessions currently meet in the extreme eastern regions of Nashville. The other is the so-called Pegram Jam, which gathers in Pegram, a small community just west of Nashville. It is run by Kirk Pickering and his friend Susie Coleman and is attended by many Notsba members.

When Kirk took up the fiddle in December of 2001, his teacher, Jim Wood, emphasized the importance of playing with others. Kirk took the advice seriously and began holding jam sessions in his home every Tuesday evening. He contacted the few pickers he knew, and to his surprise, they actually came to play. Since that first jam, they have played *every* Tuesday evening.

Much of the success of the Pegram Jam can be credited to Julie Mavity-Hudson and her husband Eddie Hudson. Julie and Eddie, like Kirk, know a great deal about music in general, and they have an almost inexhaustible repertoire of old-time tunes. Alan O'Bryant is another yet key figure at the jams. When he works for a living, he plays banjo for the famous Nashville Bluegrass Band, but when he comes a-slumming to Kirk's jam sessions, he brings his mandolin and his love of old-time music.

Both the Notsba jams and the Pegram jams are associated with Web sites. The excellent Notsba Web site (www.nashvilleoldtime.org) is generally well known, but Kirk's (www.peggramjam.com) is something of a secret, in spite of the fact that it is certainly the world's most fabulous old-time music Web site.

Starting with that first jam session, Kirk began to assemble chord charts for the settings they played. These charts are now on Kirk's Web site so beginners can print them off and join in the jam sessions without prior knowledge of the music.

Kirk also records each jam session and puts the tunes on his Web site so the pickers can hear how well—or not so well—they did.

Kirk is an engineer and a certified computer guru. He has all the skills required to create and maintain a top-notch Web site, and he loves old-time music.

Check out the jam and the Web site. □

Bear on the Square Festival

Dahlongega held its annual Bear on the Square Festival on April 22 and 23.

The music was great and the weather was wonderful, after a couple of stormy nights. This year the music was primarily old-time with a little Bluegrass thrown in. Jamming took place on the sidewalks, under shade trees, around the court house, and under the available workshop tents.

Workshops on several topics were held, including Old-Time Fiddle and Banjo Tunes, Harmony Singing, Yodeling, and others.

Saturday night, the Tune Dogs played for the dance. Sunday morning began with a heartfelt gospel sing. Several attendees led in singing familiar songs, while gospel bands led in other songs.

This is a great festival to enjoy in the north Georgia mountains. Check their Web site, www.bearonthesquare.org, for more information. Maybe we'll see you there next year. □

Old-Time Music in California

~Phil Sparks

Notsba has only one Californian among its members, Carl Pagter of Walnut Creek, a town of some 65,000 residents near San Francisco.

Carl regularly attends Breakin' Up Winter, making the long trip from California to show us how magnificent old-time banjo picking can be. Back home, he has organized his own old-time music association with its own newsletter.

In addition, he and two of his friends have organized the Golden Old-Time Music Festival, which is held June 2-4 in Yreka, a town in far northern California, about 100 miles north of Redding, California, and about 45 miles south of the Medford-Ashland, Oregon, area.

This year's performers include Dirk Powell, The Foghorn String Band, The Stairwell Sisters, and last year's band contest winners, The Mercury Dimes.

Square dances will be held Friday and Saturday nights to live bands with callers. A wide-open band contest (anyone can form a band on the spot) will be held with a first-place prize of \$300 and a possible booking for next year's festival. A maximum of 16 bands can enter so preregistration is encouraged.

There will be workshops, lots of time for jamming, ample room for tent camping, and plenty of RV hookups. All camping fees are included in the modestly priced festival tickets, and numerous motels are located near the fairgrounds.

For more information, call 530-842-1611 or 707-829-8012, or visit www.goldenoldtime.com.

If you will be anywhere near the West Coast in early June, take this opportunity to support old-time music in California. □

The Fiddle Contest in Holladay

~Phil Sparks

Kitty and I attended the fiddlers' contest at Holladay, Tennessee, on Saturday, April 15 and had a wonderful time.

We saw lots of familiar faces, including Bill Jones and Tyler Andal, who won second and third in the 19 through 55 fiddle contest, as well as Rebekah Weiler, who won first in the old-time banjo contest. Tyler also took third in the old-time banjo contest.

As you might suspect, I rounded up a fine guitar player, Dennis Baumgardner of the Jackson Plectoral Society, and entered the 55 and up fiddle contest—this time taking third.

While there, I met a budding young old-time banjo player from Paris, Tennessee, and an enthusiastic beginning fiddler from the Holladay area. I also made some new friends from the Jackson area.

I met a man, a fine old-time fiddler, from Murray, Kentucky, my home town, and learned that the university there will be hosting a fiddle contest in September. I'll be there.

Contests are not just fun, they are our chance to meet and encourage those isolated musicians who want to know more about old-time music. Dag nab it, you all need to come out to these contests more often. □

The Jam Session

~Jim Lawrence

There was a time before the present when a musician could not access a rendition of another musician. Yes, there were recordings available after nineteen hundred, but these were the finished products and had been months in the process. At that time they were the cutting edge of technology but represented only one particular artist's version of a piece of music. Unless they traveled a lot, musicians were isolated to an arrangement that they had heard or made up themselves. They still didn't know what was going on in the next valley or city. All of us know this is true from the numerous versions we find of the tunes we play.

As far as we know the "jam session" is a product of the jazz musicians of the early nineteen-twenties who would get together to feed off of one another for ideas or to just play their music the way they wanted to. Most musicians worked for a band leader who dictated how the music would be played. Should a musician not agree with the leader, he had no option. Most band leaders wrote their arrangements, and these arrangements were actually a trade mark of that band leader and his band. The other reason for the jam session was to get ideas from other musicians about a particular rendition on a piece or solo break of that piece. A particularly astute rendition might appear in a solo break a couple of weeks later by another musician. As time went on a rendition might become "standard" due to the fact that it was adopted by so many prominent musicians. Other musicians of other fields adopted this type of session. Who came up with the final structure, I don't know.

The term "jam session" came from the attempt to jam as much into a tune line as you could: "Man you sure jammed some stuff into that tune." The original and authentic jam

session was a structured, semiserious affair that a musician was invited to. Even spectators (very limited) were there by invitation.

I have been fortunate to have been a spectator at three jam sessions. One was after-hours in Printers Alley years ago. Several prominent musicians were there. One was Ronnie Milsaps on the keyboard, and another was Paul McCartney on acoustic guitar. There were seven musicians, I believe, but only about twenty spectators. In a session such as this, spectators are strictly the guests of the various musicians, and they should keep very quiet. And no requests!

A structured jam session generally started out with one of the musicians taking the lead and the rest either accompanying the lead or staying out until their turn came. The tune line is carried through the complete piece, either one round or until the lead passes to the right. The next musician either takes up the tune line or passes to the next player to the right. This goes on until the turn comes back to the first musician, who can end the piece or start a new round by starting a different rendition of the same tune line. The attending musicians provide harmonies and accompaniment where appropriate.

There were also jam sessions that could have been considered a type of challenge to determine who could construct the best variation of a tune line. I was again fortunate to witness such a session. This was a blues session between two excellent guitar players. One was a guy who worked in a grocery store here in Nashville, and the other was Jimmy Hendricks. The grocery store guy won by audience acclaim.

I was asked to videotape another challenge session at the Station Inn. I do not recall the name of one of the fiddlers, but the other was the late Randy Howard. Randy won that one.

I am writing my experiences with jam sessions because I have read about jam etiquette in our newsletter articles and entirely agree with what was said there. These suggestions are a direct outgrowth of the original etiquette. If you weren't invited, you didn't play.

I would like to follow up with an article next month that makes further comment on this topic. □

The Blue Creek Ramblers Take San Diego by Storm

~Phil Sparks

The Blue Creek Ramblers, featuring our own Rebekah Weiler on banjo, performed with great success at the 33rd annual Adams Avenue Roots Festival, April 22 and 23, in San Diego, California.

A strong wind whipped across the stage and made the mikes roar, but they still did a great job. They received a standing ovation and were called back on stage to do an additional number. The next day, The San Diego Union-Tribune ran a large color photograph of them, a local television station featured them on the evening news, and a radio station interviewed them. In addition, they were interviewed for a future Web-cast special on folk/roots music.

There were several special moments: Leland saw the ocean for the first time and was deeply moved. The whole gang tried fish tacos, enjoyed a drive along the coast, watched the sea lions play, and ate in the neat old diners in San Diego, the ones that were established in the 1930s and are still "slinging hash."

Their hotel was built in the late 1940s and was once a hideout for the Hollywood jet set. Lots of neat old black and white photos cover the walls and the Olympic-size pool was designed by Johnny Weissmuller, the Tarzan star of days gone by. Downstairs, they discovered the old ballroom used by the big bands when they came through. The classic fiberglass band shell is still there, and the Blue Creek Ramblers used it one night for their rehearsal—pretty cool!

The remaining men who served on the USS Oklahoma in World War II, along with their wives, were holding a reunion in the hotel. When they found out about the rehearsal, they came down to listen. What fun!

All in all, the Blue Creek Ramblers were warmly embraced by the arts community in San Diego. The Adams Avenue Roots Festival has opened new doors for Rebekah and her

friends and will always provide them with fond memories.

Historic Union Grove Fiddlin' Event Will Continue

*Editor's Note: The following article come from our sister newsletter in Charlotte, North Carolina, the **Folk Calendar**. No author was given.*

The oldest festival of its kind in North America, a North Carolina tradition and a national treasure for 82 years, the Ole-Time Fiddler's and Bluegrass Festival in Union Grove, North Carolina, will take place on Memorial Day weekend, May 26-28, 2006.

The unexpected death in March 2006 of Wanona Van Hoy, who, along with her husband Harper, was a devoted caretaker and promoter of this family-run and family-friendly festival, had put the future of the 2006 festival in jeopardy. However, friends and supporters have rallied in recent weeks to make sure that this "show will go on."

"It is wonderful how friends of this event have so readily come forward to help continue Dad and Mom's vision, helping with every detail of the festival. It's like a big extended family pulling together in hard times, and we are very grateful," said Hank Van Hoy, son of Harper and grandson of the event's 1924 founder, H.P. Van Hoy.

This event kicks off the festival season in this region. The Van Hoy family urges those who appreciate traditional music and who support the preservation of our musical heritage to show up at Union Grove to play, to listen, to learn—for the best of ole-time and Bluegrass competition and entertainment.

For ticket information or information about performing or competing, call 828-478-3735 or see the Web site, www.fiddlersgove.com or e-mail info@fiddlersgove.com. □

New Web Site for Old-Time Banjo Pickers

~Patsy Weiler

Members of the Notsba who enjoy discussing banjo will be pleased to know that the Banjo Hangout Web site has now joined forces with the editors at *Banjo Newsletter* to

provide a forum on Banjo Hangout to discuss the articles in *Banjo Newsletter*.

Here is the link for the old-time banjo article forum: <http://www.banjohangout.org/forum>.

□

New Notsba Members

We extend a warm welcome to nine new members, most of whom are already longtime friends:

Joy, Nic, and Tyler Andal
Jeff Cales
Randy, Patsy, and Rebekah Weiler
Steve Williams
Rod Yonkers

We thank you all for joining us and for supporting old-time music. □

Directions to Jams at Buchanan Log House

From more or less the center of Nashville, take I-40 East. From I-40 East, take the Donelson Pike Exit (Exit 216C), and merge onto Donelson Pike (State Route 255). Go about 0.4 mile on Donelson Pike, and turn right onto Elm Hill Pike.

Go 0.5 mile on Elm Hill Pike to the Buchanan Log House, on the left, at 2910 Elm Hill Pike. □

Direction to Jams at Two Rivers Mansion

From the south or east of Nashville, take I-40 East to Briley Parkway North (State Route 155).

Exit Briley Parkway at the Two Rivers Parkway Exit, taking Two River's Parkway East. Continue to McGavock Pike, and take a left (north) on McGavock Pike.

Go about ¾ mile on McGavock Pike, past McGavock High School, to Two River's Mansion is at 3130 McGavock Pike (the first driveway on the left past the high school).

From the north or west of Nashville, take Briley Parkway East (State Route 155), and exit at Two River's Parkway. Then follow the directions given above. □

Directions to the 4th-Sunday Jam

This month's 4th-Sunday Jam will be hosted by Ron and Cynthia Whitlow. Ron and Cynthia live at 5329 Stonewall Place, Brentwood, TN 37207. Their phone number is 615-373-7914, and Ron's cell phone number is 615-500-7669.

From more or less the center of Nashville:

- Take I-65 South to the Old Hickory West Exit.
- Exit to the right, and follow the ramp to Old Hickory Boulevard.
- Stay on Old Hickory Boulevard (west) for approximately 2 miles, and you will come to Granny White Pike (at a traffic light).
- Turn left (south) on Granny White Pike, and go approximately 1 mile, passing 2 traffic lights.
- When you come to the 3rd traffic light, turn left onto McGavock Road.
- Go ¼ mile to a stop sign at Post Oak Circle, and turn right.
- Go 100 yards and turn right onto Stonewall Place, a cul-de-sac.
- Ron and Cynthia's home is the two-story brick house, 5329, at the end of the cul-de-sac.

If you lose your way, give Ron and Cynthia a call. □

EVENTS

TENNESSEE

Railroad Rendezvous Springfest

Held in Cookeville, Saturday, May 6. The flyer I have does not say where, in Cookeville, the events take place.

Although this is the 7th annual Springfest, it's the first time I've heard of it. The do have contests, but no differentiation is made between Bluegrass and old-time music, and the musicians compete with one another without being categorized by age.

If any of you attend this festival, please report back to me, Phil Sparks, so we can learn more about this Middle Tennessee event.

For more information, e-mail them at eduncan@cookevillechamber.com or call Ellene Duncan at 931-526-2211. □

Old-Time Music Festival

Held in Williston, near Jackson, Friday and Saturday, May 19-20. It features old-time, Bluegrass, country, gospel, and mountain music.

It takes place May 19-20 at the Crawford Airport near Williston, Tennessee.

Directions: Go 6 miles south of Somerville on Highway 76. Turn right on Highway 193 to Railroad Street. Turn right on Railroad Street to the airport.

Here's the schedule:

Friday: 5 to 10 PM, open jamming with no stage performances. Everyone is welcome, and it's free.

Saturday: 10 AM to 8 PM, stage performances and shade tree picking.

Bring lawn chairs, but leave your drugs and booze at home.

Cost: Adults \$5, children under 12 free.

For more info:

Call John Few at 731-427-9685
or Don Horne at 731-742-2921
or Coley Graves at 901-382-1197

□

ALABAMA

Sam McCracken Days

Held at West Limestone High School in Lester, near Athens, Friday and Saturday, May 12-13. This event has the support of several Notsba members. For more information, go to www.touralabama.org/events/details.efm?id=4894 or call 256-233-3233.

NORTH CAROLINA

Mocksville Lions Old-Time Fiddlers' and Bluegrass Festival

Held Sunday (?), May 14 (?) in Mocksville. The Web site for this event has not been updated for 2006, so it is difficult to provide much information. In fact, I wonder if it is even being held this year. For more

information, you might call Jonathan Wishon at 336-998-8877. □

Old-Time Fiddlers and Bluegrass Festival

This one is the famous “Union Grove” festival. It is held Friday through Sunday, May 26-28, at the Fiddler’s Grove Campground in Union Grove. Many folks attend this event and move directly on to the Mt Airy festival.

For more information, go to www.fiddlersgrove.com or call Harper Van Hoy at 704-539-4417.

See the article about the “Union Grove Fiddlin’ Event” elsewhere in this newsletter. □

Mt Airy Bluegrass and Old-Time Fiddlers Convention

Mt Airy is probably the second most important old-time music event of the year. Only Clifftop (July 29 through August 5) surpasses it.

It is held at the Veterans Memorial Park in Mt Airy, Friday and Sunday, June 2-3. Actually, folks start showing up as early as the previous Friday, May 26. Many of them lay claim to their camping spots and then move on to Union Grove for a day or two.

For more information, go to www.visitmayberry.com or e-mail them at ssch@surry.net.

See the lead article entitled “Mt Airy Approaches” in this newsletter. □

WEST VIRGINIA Vandalia Gathering

Held at the Cultural Center on the State Capitol Grounds in Charleston, Friday through Sunday, May 26-28. For more information, go to www.wvculture.org/vandalia/ or call 304-558-0220. □

FLORIDA Florida Folk Festival

Held at the Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center in White Springs, Friday through Sunday, May 26-28. For more information, go to www.floridastateparks.org/folkfest/. □

CALIFORNIA Golden Old-Time Music Festival

Held at the Siskiyou Golden Fair in Yreka, Friday through Sunday, June 2-4. For more information, call 530-842-1611 or 707-829-8012 or go to www.goldenoldtimemusic.com.

See the article entitled “Old-Time Music in California” in this newsletter. □

Hosts for 2006 4th-Sunday Jams

We now have hosts for all of the 4th-Sunday Jams to be held in 2006. Darlyne will soon be after us to sign up for 2007. □

A Penny Learned

According to the *Violin Owner’s Manual*, edited by Heather K. Scott, a fiddle needs to be played for about a half an hour before it sounds its best.

The length of time a fiddler needs to warm up is another matter altogether.

Please Contribute to Your Newsletter!

If you 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 or a book, contact Phil Sparks. If you don’t contact him, he will contact you!

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

General Contact Information for the Nashville Old-Time String Band Association:

E-mails for All Members

friends@nashvilleoldtime.org

Don Kent, President

615-868-9951

Shamrock1@mindspring.com

Ed Gregory, Web Master

615-889-5566

edgregory@comcast.net

HELP!!!!

If you know about an upcoming old-time music event, don’t assume that we already know about it. If it’s not posted on our Web site (www.nashvilleoldtime.org), we

need the information desperately. *Please help us keep our old-time community informed.* □

You can reach Phil at:

kpsparks@msn.com

or

615-797-4356

or

2020 Claylick Road

White Bluff, TN 37187

The *submission deadline for June's newsletter* is **Tuesday, May 23**. This early deadline is necessary because Kitty and I will be leaving for Mt Airy on Friday, May 26. □

Classified Ads

STRING BAND MUSICIANS FOR HIRE

Notsba members are willing to perform for the public for a small fee. All of our earnings go to the organization, none to the pickers. If you know of someone who might make use of our services, contact Don Kent at www.nashvilleoldtime.org, or call him at 615-868-9951. □

FINE GUITAR FOR SALE

1995 Taylor 810 BR, Brazilian Rosewood, Original owner must sell, \$2250.

This guitar is not in collector's condition, but she's certainly worthy of a collector's attention. She has not spent her life in a case. She's played countless festivals and all-night jams, bringing home her share of dings and scratches.

Without doubt, she's a singer's guitar and has been played frequently, boldly, and lovingly. Her voice is smooth and rich and she plays like a dream all the way up the neck. She gained volume from being played, and her lovely sustain supports the female voice particularly well in a solo environment. She's won many singing contests for me over the years.

I bought this baby new at the Rock Block in 1995 for \$2000. A new 810 now runs over \$3000 with Indian rosewood. Brazilian rosewood could cost an additional grand, if they can get it. The difference in the quality of

the sound between the Brazilian and Indian rosewoods is significant.

It comes with its original case (deep fuchsia interior), which has some wear.

If you are interested in learning more about this guitar, please e-mail me, Susie Coleman, at susieco@comcast.net or call me at 615-662-5577 (Pegram, Tennessee). □

WANTED: OLD-TIME BANJO PLAYER

We are seeking a touring banjo player for the San Francisco-based old-time string band The Crooked Jades to support our brand new release *World's on Fire* for our US, UK, and European tours.

The banjo player must have a highly rhythmic and melodic style and be able to play both fretted and fretless clawhammer (drophumb-style) banjo at slow as well as breakneck tempos and with a great groove. He or she must be a quick learner with good ear for detail, be open-minded with a sense of adventure, and be willing to learn and respect the Crooked Jades' material. He or she must be a person who is willing to consider setting up a fretless banjo with thick nylon strings, who doesn't mind using a capo and is willing to change keys (and instruments) regularly during a live set.

For more information please e-mail the band manager, Kyra Baele, at the e-mail address below.

Music samples are available on the Web site, cdbaby.com or on myspace.

Kyra Baele

The Crooked Jades

www.crookedjades.com

kyrabaele@earthlink.net □

Lost and Found

(from Breakin' Up Winter)

Left in Cabin 6

1 folding musician's chair: Round back and seat with "DITO" handwritten on the back

1 black sweatshirt, "Jerzees" brand

Left in the Group Lodge

1 blue "Companion" flashlight, 6 inches long with a yellow ring near the front end and a blue cord with a yellow knob on the other end.

To claim these Items, contact Phil Sparks or any other member of the board. □