

**Folklife and Traditional Artists
of
the Uwharrie Mountain Region of North Carolina**

North Carolina Folklife Institute

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INTRODUCTION

Since 1974 the North Carolina Folklife Institute (NCFI) has been engaged in the documentation, preservation, and promotion of the traditional cultures of North Carolina. In recent years the NCFI's documentary efforts have been framed by the Statewide Heritage Initiative. With the support of the National Endowment for the Arts, the North Carolina Arts Council, and the Resourceful Communities Program of the Conservation Fund, and in partnership with local cultural organizations, NCFI folklorists have conducted in-depth research on the folk traditions of distinct regions of the state. Usually these regions are areas of three or four contiguous counties with aspects of shared history, ecology, and other determinants of folk culture.

Beginning in 2011, the NCFI partnered with Central Park NC to document the traditions of the Uwharries region of south-central North Carolina, primarily Montgomery, Stanly, Anson, and southern Davidson Counties. The project was inaugurated with a community meeting on July 21, 2011, which Central Park NC hosted at STARworks in Star, Montgomery County. Marla Coulthard, Assistant Director of Central Park NC, led the meeting, with NCFI Board President Kirsten Mullen and NCFI folklorist Sarah Bryan. In attendance were Mayor Earl Poplin of Mount Gilead, local historian Rosemary Huntley, Patricia Webb, Director of Montgomery County Tourism, and several other representatives of cultural organizations and municipal entities in the area. Over a meal of hoppin' john that Marla prepared from her mother's recipe, cantaloupe from Parsons Farm in

Candor, Montgomery County, and bread from the Panagia Prousiotissa Green Orthodox Monastery in Troy, Montgomery County, the group discussed goals for the documentation project. In a lively conversation, the local participants shared impressions and reminiscences about the area's heritage, and made recommendations about the traditions and tradition-bearers they felt most represented the area's heritage.

Using these recommendations as a starting point, folklorist Sarah Bryan began interviewing folk artists and other tradition bearers. She also did archival research at the public libraries of Stanly, Anson, and Montgomery Counties, in the archive of the Oakboro Museum of Regional History in Stanly County, and in the collection of the North Carolina Folklife Institute. At the same time, the North Carolina Arts Council and Montgomery County Arts Council were carrying out research specific to Montgomery County, in which folklorist Joseph DeCosimo identified and interviewed traditional musicians, and documentarian Touger Vang created a directory of heritage artists in the Hmong community. Information drawn from DeCosimo's and Vang's work contributes significantly to this report.

A largely rural and forested region of the state, the parts of the Uwharrie Mountain area primarily researched in this project—Anson, Stanly, and Montgomery Counties—have a total population of fewer than 120,000 people. Of that population, roughly 70% are white, 26% African American, 7% of Hispanic ethnicity, and 2% of Asian ethnicity. Less than 1% of the population identifies as

American Indian.¹ 5% are foreign-born. Denton, in Davidson County, was also included in this study. Its population is approximately 98% white, 0.6% African American, 2% Latino, and 0.3% Asian.

Though so few residents of the Uwharries today identify as American Indian, the region is one of great significance to historical Indian communities. The Town Creek Mound near Mount Gilead, Montgomery County, was built more than six hundred years ago by people of the Pee Dee Culture. It is believed to have been a ceremonial site for religious and political activities. Several tribes and cultures have lived in the region over the course of different eras in history; Keyauwee and Saura/Cheraw are associated with Montgomery County and Davidson County; Davidson County also figures in Tuscarora and Saponi history. Historically the Catawba culture's area included present-day Anson County. People who grew up farming in the region in recent generations speak of the frequency with which they would find arrowheads and other implements of apparent Indian origin.

Well into the nineteenth century, the Uwharries retained a backcountry identity, even while cities to its west were thriving. The large expanses of undeveloped forestland inspire a continuing interest in, and identification with, frontier culture, as evidenced by the work of modern craftsmen who build traditional styles of backcountry rifles, and forge knives of historical forms. The forest themselves are of great importance to many modern Uwharries residents, who cherish a heritage of hunting, gathering medicinal plants, scouting, or working professionally in the timber industry or the field of forestry. There is also enduring interest in the region's history of gold prospecting and mining, which in Davidson and Stanly Counties dates to the 1820s. (The historic village of Gold Hill,

¹ Figures are calculated by averaging 2010 census totals for Anson, Stanly, and Montgomery Counties.

in Rowan County, has been included in the programming section of this study because of its significance to the area's mining heritage.)

In recent decades the Uwharrie region has become home to communities of immigrants from Latin America and Asia. Hispanic traditions are manifest in the region's commerce, from the many Mexican and Central American bakeries and grocery stores in the area, to dress shops advertising formalwear for baptisms and quinceañera celebrations. Latinos have founded churches in the area, like Troy's Iglesia Pentecostal Ríos de Agua Viva and Stanfield's Bethel Casa de Dios. Other churches have developed Spanish-speaking ministries and outreach to the Latino community. During Hispanic Heritage Month, Latino cultural programming can be found at events like Montgomery County Community College's Hispanic festival; and throughout the year, Stanly County English as a Second Language teacher Elsa Armijos, originally from Ecuador, leads her Hispanic and Hmong students in preparing presentations of their cultural traditions for local audiences.

In the early 1980s, a wave of immigrants of the Hmong ethnicity of Southeast Asia arrived in Montgomery County. Touger Vang, a Hmong documentarian from Troy, explains that many of these people came to North Carolina from the northern and western states where they had first settled as immigrants. They were drawn, Vang says, by manufacturing jobs that were particularly attractive to the women and elders of the community.

For a comparatively sparsely-populated area, the Uwharrie Mountain region has been the subject of a surprising amount of folklife documentation over the last hundred years. From the reminiscences that Stanly County's Dr. Allen recorded about local folk remedies, to stories recorded by family

elders for their descendants, to the Foxfire-inspired projects by area schools in the 1980s, there is a deep and varied body of literature about Uwharrie Mountain heritage.

Two collectors in particular deserve special recognition. Fred T. Morgan (1926-2009) was a native of Stanly County, and a longtime features writer at the Stanly *News and Press*. In his several books, he presented extensive lore of the Uwharries, with a special dedication to the region's ghost stories. His books include *Ghost Tales of the Uwharries*, *Uwharrie Magic*, *Haunted Uwharries*, *Uwharries*, *If These Graves Could Speak*, *The Revolt and 28 More Original Uwharrie Ghost Stories*, and *Uwharrie Bizarres*.

Joseph T. Moffitt, born in 1924 and a native of the Uwharrie Mountain section of Randolph County, has written eloquently about the lore of the woods which he grew up exploring. The longtime scoutmaster has preserved many wildcrafting and survivalist skills from earlier generations. He has made especially thorough documentation of natural remedies used in the Uwharries, and these form an important part of the "Healing" section of this report.

Much remains to be done. As work went on, Montgomery and Stanly Counties, and the area around Denton, Davidson County, became the areas of primary focus in this project. Anson County's fascinating heritage is touched upon, especially in the "Music" section of the report, but it merits much further attention, especially as it is home to the largest African American population in the region. The emerging Hispanic culture in the Uwharries is a rich topic for research, and there is also a need for more documentation of the local Hmong communities. Randolph County shares the Uwharries heritage of its neighbors, as do sections of Cabarrus, Union, and Person Counties. There

were many individuals throughout the region who could not be reached, or who expressed interest in sharing their stories but were not available for interviews during the project period; their names will be kept in the fieldwork materials at the NCFI for future research.

A few notes about what is not to be found in this report. At the outset of this project, we made the decision to focus on traditions other than pottery, despite the fact that one of the most renowned centers of ceramic art in the world, the community of Seagrove, is located very close to the Uwharries. There exists a wealth of research about Seagrove pottery gathered over the last thirty-plus years by scholars including Terry Zug, Nancy Sweezy, and Steve Compton, and institutions including the NCFI, the North Carolina Arts Council, the North Carolina Pottery Center, and the Museum of North Carolina Traditional Pottery. We are confident that the outstanding artistry of Seagrove potters will continue for many generations to come, as will scholarly interest in the tradition. However, because there is probably no other part of North Carolina that has felt the footsteps of so many folklorists as has Seagrove, we decided that this project's efforts should be focused on other veins of Uwharries heritage.

The following pages are divided into four sections: Music, Craft, Healing, and Resources. The choice was made to focus the report on music, craft, and healing because these were the three areas of tradition that most powerfully emerged in our fieldwork. However, they are by no means the only important categories of Uwharrie Mountain folklife. Readers are encouraged to consult the interview transcripts, and the secondary sources cited throughout the report, to dig deeper into the many other traditions that exist, including those of storytelling, agriculture, and oral history.

Sincere thanks are due to the following people, who gave interviews, shared recommendations, provided contacts, and assisted this research in many other ways: Elsa Armijos, Chip Badgett, Paulette Badgett, Steve Bailey, Jane Barnhardt, William Bishir, Wanda Brooks, Cristina Freeman Bryan, Louella Caison, Alice Clemens, Marla Coulthard, Joseph DeCosimo, Ken Fritts, Nancy Gottovi, Margaret Hall, Bertie Hatley, David Haywood, G. T. Haywood, Josephine Haywood, Michelle Haywood, Wilma Helsabeck, Rosemary Huntley, Jane Jarrett, Gail Johnson, Tommy Johnson, Dorothy Kee, Mary Helsabeck Livingston, Larry Mabry, Phyllis Mabry, Diane Maness, Sheila Menendez, Danny Moore, Barbara McAlister Smith, Sally Peterson, Earl Poplin, Brenda Spencer, Touger Vang, and Patricia Webb.

I would like to dedicate these pages to the memory of George Tilman “G. T.” Haywood of Montgomery County. Mr. Haywood was a woodsman, farmer, and a bearer of ancient healing traditions passed down in his family. He and his wife Josephine Parsons Haywood gave a wonderful interview in the fall of 2012.

As any folklorist can testify, interviewees often remember important and vivid information after the recording has been turned off. This was the case with Mr. Haywood. Once I’d put the recorder away, he remembered and sang a verse of the song “Mr. Catfish,” and then proceeded to pull my leg with a story—convincingly delivered and peppered with corroborative local details—about a ghost who says, “nothiiiiinnnnng . . . ”

I had hoped to return and do another interview, but Mr. Haywood passed away a few weeks later. His family must miss him very much—he was a lovely man. For me, the experience of interviewing him and then learning of his passing so soon after brought into sharp focus the dual emotions at the heart of the work of heritage documentation: the urgency of capturing a record of these traditions while we still can, and the debt of gratitude that we and the generations to come owe to people like Mr. Haywood, the stewards of our shared heritage.

-Sarah Bryan

MUSIC

Wilma Helsabeck (born 1916) and her sister Mary Livingston (born 1919) remember nights in their childhoods when their father, Filmore Helsabeck (1889-1957), would play his guitar on the front porch of the family home in Ether, Montgomery County. Wilma and Mary and their siblings would gather around the porch swing “like frogs” and sing with their father. Sometimes the neighbors would mention that they spent evenings listening to the Helsabecks singing as the sound traveled through the tiny crossroads community.²

For many older people from the area around the Uwharrie Mountains, music was enjoyed at home in just such situations. Some learned music from family, or in church or in school, from the radio and records, from friends and coworkers—or from some combination of these sources. Earlier generations in the Uwharries built a strong musical culture, which is sustained by today’s musicians.

Piedmont blues guitarist Blind Boy Fuller, whose real name was Fulton Allen, was born in Anson County in either 1907 or 1909. (Blues scholar Bruce Bastin writes that the date is uncertain because Anson County didn’t begin to register births until 1913, “even then omitting the first names of black children.”) In later life Fuller was most closely associated with Durham, where he lived, and the eastern counties of North Carolina where he played often at tobacco markets. Wadesboro was his

² Interview with Sarah Bryan (the interviewees’ cousin), May 15, 2012

hometown, though. Fuller was one of ten children, and according to Bastin, the parents were not musicians, and none of his siblings played music until later in life.³

After playing the guitar casually for some years he became serious about music as a young man. At the urging of white dollar-store owner J. B. Long, he made his first records in the summer of 1935 in New York City for the American Record Company [ARC]. (Long, who lived in Kinston before moving to Durham, was also responsible for starting the recording careers of Kinston gospel quartet Mitchell's Christian Singers, and eastern North Carolina country musicians Lake Howard and the Cauley Family.)

Fuller influenced other musicians who heard him play at tobacco warehouses on market days. South Carolinian Peg Leg Sam learned tunes from Fuller, and Tarboro blues guitarist George Higgs heard him perform as well. Harmonica player Matt Nelson of Warren County remembers hearing Fuller at a tobacco market, where he played what would become his best-known song, "Step It Up and Go." His widest influence, though, was through the dozens of records that he made over a five-year span, which were released on the ARC, Decca, Okeh, and Vocalion labels. He was arguably the best-known and most influential Southeastern and Piedmont-style guitarist of his era. Fuller died in Durham in 1941. His grave is unmarked, but a historical marker on Fayetteville Street in Durham commemorates the music that he, the Reverend Gary Davis, and other blues guitarist played in the city.

³ Bruce Bastin, *Red River Blues: The Blues Tradition in the Southeast*. 1986, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

Fuller's native Anson County has a strong tradition of African American gospel music. Albemarle singer Brenda Spencer, who performs both gospel and R&B, was raised in New York, in a family whose roots were in Anson and Stanly Counties. The family church was Garris Grove Baptist Church in Wadesboro.

Spencer's mother, Jessie Lee Rennick Turner, was a well-known local singer and a longtime member of Saint Delight Baptist Church in Albemarle. Jessie Turner was born on a plantation in South Carolina, and came to Anson County as a young teenager when, according to family oral history, she was "purchased" by a white family from Ansonville who wanted a cook. Other relatives came to Anson County as well, and in time she moved to Albemarle, Stanly County. She performed with the Gospel Singers of Albemarle, and later at church services and other venues, until her death in 2009.

Of her relatives in Anson County, Brenda Spencer remembers,

In Ansonville, my aunt had a farm . . . Now, her name was Mallie . . . Aunt Mallie had about fifteen children.

. . . And they could sing. They sang a capella. It's a singing family. In fact, when they left Ansonville, Anson County, they came to Mount Vernon, New York. I was there when they got there. And they got a chance to sing at the Apollo. But their mother was very religious, and she would not sign anything [authorizing her children to sing in a secular venue], and they were all underage. So they never made it.

. . . I used to sit and listen to them also. And you know how your spirit steals stuff that it needs? Sometime I can hear them when I'm singing, in my voice, different things I do in songs. Then my aunt in New York, the home that I was raised in with my grandmother, there was [cousins] Kenneth and Donald and Jean and myself. We sang too. And they could sing. Those boys could really sing, and my cousin Jean could really sing. However many of us it was, that was how many parts of harmony we had.⁴

⁴ Interview with Sarah Bryan for the NCFI, January 17, 2013.

When she was 15 years old, Brenda Spencer returned to North Carolina, and attended Kingville High School in Albemarle. There she became active in the school choir, for which she was a soloist, and in band, orchestra, and the home-ec class singing group of the Homemakers of America. In more recent years she has performed with the singing groups Ladies of the Bible and the Lambs, and with a group that became the Doreatha Brown Gospel Singers. She has also led several youth singing groups, including the Gleaners, associated with the Order of Eastern Stars, and the Esther Jephtha Youth Group at Resurrection Community Church. Now retired from a career in social services, Spencer is focusing on developing her career as a soloist, and at the time of this writing is recording an album.

Anson County is home to an active gospel scene today, with African American vocal groups including the Sons of Saron, from Polkton, Wadesboro's Hightower Gospel Singers (formerly the Glory Gospel Singers), and the Divine Angels of Wadesboro. Gospel artist David Marsh won an Anson Idol singing contest sponsored by the Anson County youth group Holla!, and he has gone on to release a debut recording.

In Montgomery County, the Gospel Gents of North Carolina carry on the tradition of a capella gospel music. The group has existed for more than twenty years, celebrating their anniversary each spring. The Gospel Gents currently include two Montgomery County natives – Reverend Hampton Bennett, who grew up near Candor, and Ricky Bowden, from Mount Gilead. Richard Pratt lives in Mount Gilead but is a native of Philadelphia, where he was a mainstay of that city's famous soul music scene. The newest member of the group, Reverend John McCullen, lives in Raleigh.

Traditional music, both vocal and instrumental, is carried on in the Hmong community in and around Montgomery County. Touger Vang, documenter of Hmong culture in North Carolina, compiled a directory of Hmong traditional artists in Montgomery County in 2012. Among the artists listed are several musicians. Vang describes the vocal style known as *kwj xhiaj* as a chanting form with songs about “life struggles or romantic courtship.” Local *kwj xhiaj* artists include Jer Xiong (Mrs. Wa Xao Vang)⁵ of Mount Gilead, Chia Yang (Mr. Chia Ge Yang) of Troy, Vue Vang (Mrs. Teng Vang) of Mount Gilead, and Touger Vang himself, who lives in Troy.

“The Hmong: An Introduction to their History and Culture,” published by the Center for Applied Linguistics, gives the following description of Hmong instrumental music.

Music is an essential part of Hmong life. Hmong musical instruments include the jew’s harp and various flute-like instruments. The most important instrument is the reed pipe or qeej: Where there are Hmong, there is the qeej. The instrument is played for entertainment, for welcoming guests, and at funeral rites. A Hmong person who wants to be a qeej player must be trained; it takes years of practice to memorize the flowery language of the instrument. Its music contains the entire repertoire of Hmong knowledge and wisdom.⁶

Touger Vang writes that “there are 32 tones for the *qeei* that are actually made up of parts of words from the Hmong language.”⁷ In Stanly County, Va Vang (Mr. Cha Va Vang) of Albemarle plays the *qeei*.

⁵ In Hmong culture it is common to have two names, one of them an honorific. In this report, the second name of each artist, in parentheses, is his or her “honor name” identified by Touger Vang.

⁶ John Duffy, Roger Harmon, Donald Ranard, Bo Thao, and Kou Yang, with Paul Herr, “The Hmong: An Introduction to their History and Culture.” Culture Profile No. 18, Center for Applied Linguistics, Cultural Orientation Resource Center. 2004, Washington.

⁷ Touger Vang, “Montgomery County Directory of Southeast Asian Artists and Community Practitioners of Folklife, 2012.”

Country string band music—encompassing the genres of bluegrass, old-time, country, and country gospel—is a deep-rooted part of the Uwharrie region’s heritage. Banjo player and band leader Fisher Hendley, an Anson native who lived much of his life in Stanly County, was a well-known radio personality throughout the Carolinas during the 1930s and ‘40s. He also made records with a variety of bands, the most memorable of which was the Aristocratic Pigs. Hendley was born in 1891 in Ansonville, into a family with a musical lineage. As banjo player and old-time music scholar Bob Carlin recounted in the *Old-Time Herald*, Fisher Hendley’s father William, a farmer, was a musician and played (according to his obituary) “a big fiddle” (which Carlin speculates may have been a cello). Fisher’s grandfather “Squire Jim” Hendley was a musician as well, of apparently unknown style or instrument; professionally he worked as a blacksmith.⁸

Fisher attended Rutherford College, and later Trinity College (now Duke University), and at both schools his specialties were playing baseball and the banjo. In 1924 Hendley won first place in the banjo contest at the North Carolina State Fiddlers Convention in Cooleemee, Davie County. The publicity that followed this win helped him come to the attention of the record and radio industry. In the spring of 1925 he performed over the radio for the first time on Charlotte’s WBT, and that summer he cut his first records in Asheville, which were released on the Okeh label. In September of 1925, Hendley returned to Cooleemee to defend his title at that year’s Fiddlers Convention; he and his fellow Stanly County musicians “had captured all but one first prize, forcing the surrender of the [silver loving] cup [trophy] by Rowan County, the 1924 winner.”⁹

⁸ Bob Carlin, “High on the Hog: Fisher Hendley and the Aristocratic Pigs.” *Old-Time Herald*, Vol. 10, number 6, p. 22.

⁹ *Ibid.*

Until his retirement in 1949 to Florida—where he and his wife Maggie bought and operated a motel—Hendley ran a gas station and garage, Hendley’s Auto Service, in Albemarle, while continuing to play music professionally. He made popular records, played music on the radio with bands, and eventually had a morning talk show with his wife. He and his bands, the Carolina Tarheels (not to be confused with the slightly earlier and slightly better-known string band of the same name, featuring Dock Walsh, Clarence Ashley, and Gwen and Garley Foster), the Rhythm Aristocrats, and the Aristocratic Pigs, performed from the Carolinas to New York.

In his research about Hendley, Bob Carlin has shed light on the wealth of string band music that existed in Anson and Stanly Counties in the early twentieth century. Prince Furr and his Musical Sons were a family band led by Prince Alexander Furr (born 1888, Stanly County). Also known at times as Prince Alexander Furr and the Nehi Orchestra, the musical Furrs included sons Belvin (“Pee Wee”), Marvin, Thad, and Rayvon Ebert. After the Depression, the family switched to a newer form of music, and became a dance orchestra; three of the brothers went on to form their own big band, the Tar Heel Club Orchestra.

Another Stanly County musical friend of Hendley’s was fiddler “Uncle Dan” Harris. Harris was born in 1856. He raised a large musical family, and in the 1890s led the first brass band in Stanly County. Fiddler Jack Harrington (1914-2007) and banjo player Dewitt Wheless (1889-1961), both Anson County natives and friends of Hendley, played together locally and on the *Crazy Water Crystals Show* broadcast on WPTF Raleigh.¹⁰

¹⁰ Ibid.

Oakboro, Stanly County, was the home of fiddling brothers Vance (1917-1975) and Newell (1919-2011) Hathcock. According to biographical information in the archive of the Oakboro Museum of Regional History, the brothers and their three other siblings grew up on Old Sandbar Road. Their father Jim and grandfather John were proficient fiddlers, but it was the family's neighbor whose playing first caught the boys' fancy. They "would lie on their bed on summer nights and listen to their neighbor Walter Brooks as he sat fiddling on his front porch. Mr. Brooks who lived across the hill a ways would invite the boys to come to his house and listen to some of his songs."¹¹ When Newell was eighteen years old he was invited to join Homer Briarhopper and the Dixie Dudes, a spinoff grouping of WBT's popular Briarhoppers. The Dixie Dudes played throughout the region, and on both WBT and WPTF, until World War II. Newell was drafted and served with distinction, and was a member of the honor guard at Ernie Pyle's funeral. After the War he farmed and worked in the Cannon textile mills, and founded a bluegrass festival which he hosted on his land in Stanly County.

Vance Hathcock had a lasting impact on bluegrass music in Stanly County too. In addition to winning many fiddle contests, he was a member of the Rocky River Boys, and he became a patriarch of a multigenerational bluegrass-playing family. His fellow Rocky River Boys included Lloyd and Terry Baucom and Junior Harris. Harris was Vance Hathcock's son-in-law, and he was influenced in fiddle both by Hathcock and by his own brother Bob Harris. Junior Harris has played fiddle, banjo, bass, and guitar both locally and with prominent national musicians. He has been the host of bluegrass jams at his tire shop in Oakboro, which are documented in the Oakboro Regional History Museum's archive. His brother Charles Harris (1935-2012) retired from his police career and

¹¹ Music files of the Oakboro Regional Museum of History.

opened Chollywood, a bluegrass and country music venue in Norwood. Junior Harris' nephew (and Vance Hathcock's grandson) Jeff Branch is a bluegrass bass player, and manager of the Oakboro Music Hall. Jeff Branch's cousins Mark Edwards and Amy Edwards Boger were encouraged by their grandfather to learn the fiddle and piano, and today they play bluegrass gospel music in the region.¹²

In Ophir, Montgomery County, Walser Morris (c. 1890s – c. 1980s) was a well-known area banjo player. Folklorist and musician Joseph DeCosimo documented stories about Morris, which indicate that he represented a pivotal phase of stylistic innovation in banjo playing.

There were many two-finger banjo players in Montgomery County through the years . . . [Walser's] father Presley Morris played two-finger as well. Walser's son Claude played a transitional style of three-finger banjo. Although Walser Morris played a two-finger index-lead style of banjo, his playing had a transitional quality to it, suggesting the shift towards three-finger bluegrass playing. His grandson Greg Corbett remembers that he would occasionally catch notes with his middle finger: "He played two-finger style, but he incorporated the three more so than about anybody. He was really good at what he did."¹³

Piedmont North Carolina and adjoining regions of South Carolina were a fertile ground for innovations in banjo playing during the first half of the twentieth century. The three-finger roll that Shelby native Earl Scruggs is often credited with inventing was part of a regional tradition, of which Scruggs was the leading exponent. Other famous members of the transitional generation of banjo players were Wade Mainer, DeWitt "Snuffy" Jenkins, and Don Reno. The description of Walser Morris' style is particularly significant in that it suggests a style halfway between old-time two-finger and bluegrass three-finger styles, in a region of the state to the east of that usually associated with that transition.

¹² Music files of the Oakboro Regional Museum of History.

¹³ Joseph DeCosimo, "Montgomery County Traditional Musicians and Artists Directory, 2011-2012," p. 18.

Another recent figure in Montgomery County music history was Frank Hamilton, a bluegrass fiddler from Troy. He was originally a mandolinist, but in the course of his work as a logger, he lost his right arm above the elbow in a sawmill. Reece Stutts, a musician and instrument maker in Candor, “crafted Hamilton a mechanism that allowed him to hold his bow.” Most fiddlers hold the instrument comparatively still in the left hand, while moving the bow with the right hand. Frank Hamilton, friends remember, “twisted the fiddle,” while holding the bow stationary. He went on to have a successful career as a bluegrass musician, appearing on recordings by Carl Story and the Rambling Mountaineers and the Jones Brothers and the Log Cabin Boys. In the 1970s, he organized a festival near Troy that brought the leading lights of bluegrass music to Montgomery County.¹⁴

Like Stanly County, Montgomery County has a heritage of bluegrass that follows the branches of certain prominent family trees. Fiddler Walser Morris inspired his great-grandson Greg Corbett to learn the banjo when he was eight years old. Corbett was playing with Charlie Waller and the Country Gentlemen by the time he was 19, and other well-known groups. He was the 1996 recipient of the SPGMA (Society for the Preservation of Bluegrass Music in America) Banjo Player of the Year and Album of the Year Awards. After more than thirty years on the road, Corbett now spends more time at home in Montgomery County. His wife Amanda and mother-in-law Gail Luther are members of a family with a tradition of gospel quartet singing, and Greg Corbett joins them in singing gospel music.¹⁵

Fiddler Frank Hamilton’s grandsons Justin and Austin Dunn are carrying on their family tradition as well. Justin is the mandolinist and youngest member of Blue Horizon, a band that has been playing

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 19.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 5-19

traditional bluegrass since 2000. Austin Dunn, who now lives in Richmond County, is the banjo player for Butch Reynolds and the Stone Mountain Bluegrass Band, who are based in Troy.¹⁶

Several other bluegrass bands are currently active in Montgomery County. These include C. H. Lineberry and Passin' Thru Bluegrass, based in Black Ankle; Thickety Creek Bluegrass Band; Solid Foundation Bluegrass Band; and the Gospel Wind, based in Star. Greg Luck, a bluegrass fiddler and guitarist who lives in Montgomery County, has also had a noteworthy career, playing with internationally-known bluegrass bands such as the Bluegrass Cardinals, J. D. Crowe and the New South, IIIrd Tyme Out, and Lost and Found. In addition to performing, Luck records and produces music for prominent artists at Riverside Audio Recording Studios.¹⁷

Certain areas of North Carolina have been renowned for generations for their traditions of ballad singing: Madison County, most famously, and Watauga County, both in Blue Ridge Mountains. The Uwharrie Mountains, though less famous, are also well represented in ballad collections. At least three ballads, composed in a deeply traditional form, are known to have originated from the Uwharries as they commemorated local events. In the morbid tradition of murder ballads and cautionary songs, "Alec Whitley" and "Lines Written on the Assassination of D. B. Tucker" both commemorate the 1892 lynching in Stanly County of accused murderer Alexander Whitley. The latter song was composed by Edmond Harrington, a minister and Civil War veteran from Anson County who was known to have written songs and told stories. Equally grim is the ballad "J. V. Johnson," which tells of the 1906 lynching of J. V. Johnson, a man accused of killing his brother-in-

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

law in Anson County. Folklorist Bruce Edward Baker examined the songs about both killings extensively in his 1995 University of North Carolina Curriculum in Folklore MA thesis “Lynching Ballads in North Carolina.”

The *Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore*, published in 1952, covers many forms of folklore documented in the early twentieth century. In the multi-volume anthology, the Uwharries area is well represented in the *Folk Songs* and *Folk Ballads* volumes. Contributors from Stanly County include Rose Efird, Merle Smith, and Mrs. R. C. Vaught. (Vaught collected songs from the schoolchildren she taught in Oakboro.) Many of the songs and verses that they shared are variants of well-known forms to be found in much of the region: classic ballads (“Barbara Allen” and “Butcher Boy”), sentimental songs from printed and oral sources, incidental verses to instrumental tunes, and work songs. The Stanly County singers also seem to have had an affinity for songs of a darker spirit. They range from familiar tragic songs like “The Orphan Child” and “The Ship that Never Returned” to the gruesome “Lexington Murder,” a variant of the song better known as “Knoxville Girl.” One Stanly contributor, Merle Smith, knew two verses of “Little Mary Phagan,” a topical song commemorating the 1915 murder of millworker Mary Phagan, and the subsequent lynching of the man accused of killing her, Leo Frank; the crimes occurred in Marietta, Georgia, in 1915. The date of the Stanly County ballad is not recorded.¹⁸

One of the most prolific contributors of songs that are included in the *Frank C. Brown Collection* was Jewell Robbins of Pekin, Montgomery County, parenthetically identified as later having been Mrs. C. P. Perdue of Gastonia. Though only brief notes as to context are included, those that appear are

¹⁸ Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore, Volumes 2 and 3. 1952, Durham, Duke University Press.

tantalizing. She shared a song that her father reportedly learned late in the Civil War, in Lee's army. Other verses she identifies as "'corn-shucking hollow[s]' [hollers], in which the leader walks the corn pile and sings the first line each time, and those who are shucking answer with 'bu-ga-lo.'" Also included are several sentimental songs, close variants of which would soon be popularized by the Carter Family under such familiar titles as "I'm Thinking Tonight of My Blue Eyes," "The Storms Are On the Ocean," and "I Have an Aged Mother."

String band music in the Uwharrie region can be heard at several long-running gatherings and annual events. The Mount Gilead Music Barn in Montgomery County and the Oakboro Music Hall in Stanly County host regular bluegrass concerts. The Denton Civic Center in Davidson County is the site of a monthly old-time square dance.

The Star Fiddlers Convention in Montgomery County is often referred to as the longest-running annual fiddle contest in North Carolina (or perhaps in the United States, others suggest). It was first held in the Star School in 1926. In a 1988 newspaper article, Mary Anderson wrote of the contest's founding.

The late C. V. Richardson of Star, who founded Clayson Kinitting Co., Inc., was instrumental in initiating the fiddlers convention. In an interview with the [Montgomery] *Herald* in 1978, Richardson recalled the first performance in 1926. "When the Saturday arrived for the first convention, Richardson and W. E. Williams, whom Richardson described as a 'corn-cob smoking, liberal principal,' became concerned that there would be so few musicians that he and Williams went to see the Cole Brothers, George, John and Dan, local musicians who lived about six miles east of Biscoe. After much pleading and begging, the Cole Brothers agreed to come. One brother played the fiddle, one the guitar, and one the banjo. He recalls that musicians for the first event came in such numbers that there was some difficulty in allowing the Cole Brothers to fiddle and pick as much as planned."¹⁹

¹⁹ Mary Anderson, "State's Oldest Fiddlers Convention Saturday." *Montgomery Herald*, March 3, 1988, Section 3, Page 1.

The convention has taken place every year since with the exception of 1943, when gas rationing made it impossible to pull off such an event. Always on the first Sunday in March (except for in 1969, when a snowstorm made it necessary to reschedule for April), the convention is now held at East Montgomery High School in Biscoe. Diane Maness has shared historical information about the Star Fiddlers Convention—including a list of its locations every year since 1926, and all the winners since 1982 of the C. V. Richardson Memorial Award—which will be archived at the NCFI.

CRAFT

One of the oldest lifelong craftspeople in the Uwharrie region, Stella Mae Morgan of Montgomery County, born in 1919, has been making quilts since around 1942, when she first asked her mother to teach her. Morgan remembers,

She said, “I’ll give you my strings [long fabric scraps], and you can make a string quilt.” That’s the first quilt I ever made. And honey, it was some kind of quilt! But I kept it until it just fell apart.²⁰

Asked what that quilt looked like, she replies, “You don’t ask!” Rather than using the sewing machine, she hand-stitched it, and today she laughs remembering the size of the stitches.

Haphazard though her first attempt may have been, she became an expert quilter, as her mother was, and has made scores of quilts over the last seventy years.

Morgan keeps a photo album of her work, which contains pictures of more than fifty quilts that she or her mother made, and tops that she has quilted for others. They include notes about when they were made, who was with her when she worked on them, and who owns them now. Some include notes of advice: “Split rail fence . . . not hard but confusing—your mind can’t wander putting this together.” “Don’t ever make a silk quilt! All you have are memories!”²¹

²⁰ Interview with Sarah Bryan for the NCFI, May 15, 2012

²¹ Stella Mae Morgan’s quilt album

Now in her mid-nineties, Stella Mae Morgan says that she can't quilt like she used to, though she still teaches and advises others. Her quilts have been exhibited at the North Carolina Museum of History (in the North Carolina Quilt Project of the mid-1980s), and she displays them every year at Star Heritage Day.

Bertie Hatley (born 1927) of Oakboro, Stanly County, began making quilts with her mother and sister when she was a teenager. Though she says that one of her regrets in life is that she cannot knit, she has done most other kinds of handwork, and made all of her daughters' clothes when they were children. In addition to working with fabric at home, Hatley had a 40-year retail career, most of which she spent working at Belk. Retired now for more than 20 years, she says that working too hard when she was younger has caused her to have arthritis today, and she is currently not up to doing any handwork. She hopes, though, to get back to making quilts when her health improves.²²

Stella Mae Morgan and Bertie Hatley represent a generation of fabric artists who learned to sew at home when they were young, and have continued the craft ever since. Many quilters of the next generation began to sew seriously when they were adults, during the revival of quilting that occurred in the 1970s and '80s. Among this generation is Phyllis Mabry (born 1947) of Troy, Montgomery County. Her father, Paul Charles McIntyre, was a stonemason from Stanly County, and her grandfather was a minister and a mason; the women in her family were skilled at sewing.

I remember my grandmother always sewed clothes. I remember her making quilts, and that always intrigued me. I was only ten years old when she died, so I didn't get lessons from her, except to remember what she did. My mother sewed but she didn't quilt, and I got started about the early '70s.

²² Phone conversation with Sarah Bryan for the NCFI, Winter 2012-2013.

[My grandmother's quilts] would have a pattern to them, some type of block pattern. But they didn't do the real fancy appliqué and stuff that you'll see in some of the fancier quilts [today], which are very, very thin. And I never could understand how the thin quilt would keep you warm.²³

Living in the Greensboro area in the 1970s, Mabry was a member of the Piedmont Quilters Guild. She is now part of the Randolph Quilters Guild, which meets monthly in Asheboro. She has a large sewing room in her house, with a table large enough to lay out a king-sized quilt and shelves holding hundreds of bolts and fat quarters of quilting fabric. Mabry's work has won many first-place ribbons in area shows, and she has taught quilting classes in the region.

In addition to making quilts, Phyllis Mabry weaves rugs, runners, and placemats. She uses an antique Union 36 loom, which she purchased from her friend and weaving teacher Louella Loflin Caison of Denton. Caison (born 1944), whose mother was also a quilter, is a fellow member of the Randolph Quilters Guild. In addition to weaving and quilting, Caison spins her own yarn, which she also dyes herself. Though she knows how to use certain natural dyes, she chooses to color her yarn with chemical dyes, which she says give her more consistent results. Retired after more than 30 years teaching in the Charlotte and Randolph County schools, Caison does her fiber art at her home workshop, and also demonstrates and teaches quilting, spinning, and weaving.²⁴

Hmong immigrants have brought the embroidery tradition of *Paj Ntaub* to the United States, and to North Carolina. According to Xai S. Lor of the Hmong Cultural Center,

It is said the Hmong women hid the ancient Hmong *Paj Ntaub* script in the clothing of the Hmong people . . . From this time forward, the scripts became motifs or symbols of Hmong embroidery . . . Today the motifs in Hmong embroidery are used as decorations in clothing, accessories, and crafts

²³ Interview with Sarah Bryan for the NCFI, January 11, 2013

²⁴ Interview with Sarah Bryan for the NCFI, January 16, 2013 (not recorded)

Hmong embroidery includes bright colors: pinks, reds, greens as well as blues, and these are sometimes used to contrast with the colors of yellow, and brown overlaid with white. From a young age, Hmong girls learn how to sew and copy motifs from their mothers and grandmothers.²⁵

In his directory of Hmong artists in Montgomery County, Touger Vang identifies Blia Lao (Mrs. Chia Ge Yang) of Troy as an expert in sewing *Paj Ntaub*. Vang himself also practices the tradition.²⁶

Basket maker Harry “Chip” Badgett, (born 1946) lives in the same part of Davidson County, near Denton, where he was born and where his ancestors have lived since the early 1800s. Badgett served in the Air Force during the Vietnam War, and worked for 36 years in a Dupont formaldehyde plant, which has since closed. His interest in making baskets dates to 1985 when his wife Paulette (who is the manager of the North Carolina Pottery Center in Seagrove) admired a basket that a craftsman offered for sale. Incredulous at the basket’s price, Badgett says, “I told her, ‘I can make those.’” In January of 1986 he visited his neighbor Cleta Loftin for a basket-making lesson.²⁷

Cleta Loftin Loftin (1915-2009) was also raised in the section of Davidson County where she lived, just down the road from the Badgetts. She had grown up weaving baskets from honeysuckle vines gathered from a nearby creekside. She and her family sold the baskets, or traded them to storekeepers for flour and other staples. In later life she taught basket weaving and doll making locally. In addition to the basket patterns that she had learned traditionally, she created some of her

²⁵ “Words of Acknowledgement for the www.HmongEmbroidery.org Project and a Brief History of the *Paj Ntaub*,” by Xai S. Lor. www.hmongembroidery.org.

²⁶ Touger Vang, “Montgomery County Directory of Southeast Asian Artists and Community Practitioners of Folklife, 2012.”

²⁷ Interview with Sarah Bryan for the NCFI, May 16, 2012.

own, and bought others. Loftin documented her work carefully, keeping detailed patterns and notes, which her family gave to Chip Badgett after her passing.

Badgett primarily works in flat reed, which he purchases from Suzanne Moore's N. C. Basket Works in Vass. He sometimes uses Rit Dye to color the reeds; he also learned from Loftin how to use walnut hulls to create a rich brown tone. He finds that his basket-weaving skills translate to chair seat weaving as well, which he does in reeds and rattan. Badgett shares his mentor's exacting standards. He remembers, "Miss Cleta always told me, 'When you get done with a basket, if there's anything wrong with it, throw it away. Don't try to sell it.'" He also, like Loftin, documents the baskets he makes, many of which are forms that he devises for particular purposes, or that he recreates from memory—for example, a basket that his grandmother owned and used for bringing in food from her garden. "Cleta Loftin," says Badgett, "... was a good teacher."

Woodcarver Larry Mabry is a member of a family lineage of craftsmen from Mount Gilead in Montgomery County, where he grew up, and the Oakboro area of Stanly County that was his father's family home. His grandfather Crowell Daniel "C. D." Mabry (1888-1968) made baskets and chair seats.

... he did quite a lot of that. He made a lot of big baskets. Now, I remember we had one in the granary ... that was sitting by the corn sheller and caught the corncobs. It was a big split white oak basket. I wish I had that thing now ... I remember watching him weave bottoms in old chairs. And he was pretty talented. I remember he and Dad both working at the forge.²⁸

²⁸ Interview with Sarah Bryan for the NCFI, January 11, 2013.

Larry's father, John Purnell Mabry,

... was a whittler who made all kinds of things. He even made bowls, walking canes. He was a gunsmith of sorts, an untrained gunsmith; he learned all on his own. Made gunstocks ... hammer handles, axe handles, a lot of practical things. He was also a pretty decent blacksmith. He knew how to weld metal in a forge ...

... [He learned by] on-the-job training. Usually it was out of necessity. He learned how to make singletrees for plows, and how to make the metal pieces that you needed to make those things. He and my grandfather actually made a complete wagon. I don't have a clue where it is. I'd love to have it.

... Grandpa's family, they'd all come down to their place on Sundays, and all the old men would sit around, whittle on a stick. A lot of times they didn't make anything. My dad actually made some stuff. He used a pocketknife quite a bit in making ax handles, hammer handles—practical things. And I just got interested in that. I first started collecting pocketknives. I just got interested in whittling and doing some of the things that he was doing. That's primarily how I got started.

Interest in whittling led to a desire to learn how to carve bowls. In teaching, Mabry's father tested him early on.

Daddy wanted to make sure I was really interested in doing it, so he gave me a piece of dry white oak—which is about as tough as chopping one out of a piece of steel I guess! He figured if I didn't lose interest with that, I was truly interested in it. I made a bowl. It ain't much to look at, but it's a bowl.

In the years since, Larry Mabry has become an accomplished carver. He hand-carves bowls with traditional tools including scrapers and a curved adze, sands them to a smooth finish, and sometimes adds decorative designs in relief. While bowls are his specialty, he also makes other items including serving utensils, and traditional ball-in-cage and chain designs.

Mabry, a retired naturalist, uses wood from trees that have blown down or been felled by others, rather than cutting trees for his materials. He especially likes the wood from trees that are gnarled or otherwise unprepossessing.

. . . the ugliest old piece of maple tree out there—you see some in the woods that just got all these old knots and stuff on them, and the tree’s absolutely as ugly as it can be, but the wood is absolutely beautiful. It’s the same thing with cherry trees. You see these old knots on cherry trees. Well, the wood in there is beautiful.

Many Uwharries tradition-bearers share a deep interest in the forests of their native region, and in the traditional ways that people have interacted with the environment, including forestry, wildcrafting, and hunting. Davidson and Montgomery Counties, in particular, are home to a small but thriving community of gunsmiths and knife makers.

Ken Fritts (born 1941), a native of Davidson County and resident of Mount Gilead in Montgomery County, has been making rifles since 1970. He specializes in building muzzle-loading longrifles in forms that were made in North Carolina in the first half of the nineteenth century. The self-taught artist has taught gunsmithing to many others (including Larry Mabry, who has built two rifles) through his class at Montgomery County Community College. He also demonstrates regularly.²⁹

In Candor, Montgomery County, musician, musical instrument builder, and machinist Reece Stutts is “a skilled rifle maker. Like [for] his instruments, Stutts has sourced much of the wood [for his rifles] from Montgomery County. He has built a number of beautiful Kentucky rifles with intricate carving on the stocks and beautiful metalwork. He also happens to be a crack shot.”³⁰ Also a Candor resident, Jimmy Freeman is known for his custom knives, which he makes in the off-season from his other work, farming peaches.

²⁹ www.longrifle.com

³⁰ Joseph DeCosimo, “Montgomery County Traditional Musicians and Artists Director, 2011-2012,” p. 27.

In Troy, Montgomery County, Tommy Johnson forges blades of stainless and carbon steel, with which he makes both straight and folding knives in more than a dozen varieties. He makes handles from wood, bone, and synthetic materials, depending on his customers' preferences. For the straight-blade knives, he cuts and sews leather sheaths. Tommy's wife Gail Johnson is an accomplished artisan as well, a second-generation quilter.³¹

William Bishir (born 1943), a Davidson County native, has been interested in frontier weaponry since watching Disney depictions of Davy Crockett and Daniel Boone when he was a child. During the Bicentennial surge of interest in the Revolutionary War, Bishir became involved in "the black powder scene," building muzzle-loading rifles. In the late 1970s, living in Wyoming, he became a certified horse-shoer. Back home in North Carolina, in 1989, he began to translate his metalsmithing skills into forging knives.³²

While working in the telephone industry by day, Bishir says, "I was making knives on the side to support my habit of black powder." This grew into the establishment of Black Turtle Forge, which he operates from his home today, producing custom knives in "primitive or period" styles. On a gas forge he forms blades from high-carbon steel; he also makes fireplace sets and other utensils, for which he uses a coal-fired forge. Bishir's most requested custom pieces are belt knives. He also makes a variety of other forms, including plain daggers, eighteenth-century folding razors, and oyster knives. He hand-tools and sews leather sheaths for the blades, and on occasion makes gun holsters and cartridge belts. Bishir has demonstrated at Western Carolina University's Mountain Heritage Day, and many other events.

³¹ Interview with Sarah Bryan for the NCFI, December 2011.

³² Interview with Sarah Bryan for the NCFI, January 2013.

The North Carolina Custom Knifemakers Guild, of which William Bishir is a past president, is open to membership statewide. The strength of this tradition in the Uwharries is demonstrated by the fact that, of the 71 members of the Guild in 2012, nearly 20% are residents of Montgomery, Davidson, or Randolph Counties.³³

³³ www.ncknifeguild.org/members.html

HEALING

Elderly people in the Uwharries region recall a time when folk healing and clinical medicine coexisted, resources of apparently equal standing in a family's efforts to prevent and cure illness and heal injuries. In some situations, home remedies were the first line of defense. G. T. Haywood (1926-2012) of Mount Gilead said of his childhood that "... it had to be pretty bad if you ever went to the doctor. We'd carry them [to the doctor] for a bad cold, try to keep them from getting pneumonia."³⁴ Folk medicine could also be a last resort in times when conventional medicine had failed. Stella Mae Morgan (born in 1920) remembers an occasion when her grandmother Emily Williamson was summoned to help with a desperate case in Star.

Dr. Shamburger...called my grandmother, he said, "Emily, come over here." And Grandma went over there. And he said, "Emily, I can't do nothing else for this young'un. Now, if you know of anything that you can do for him—because he's going to die—ain't no way in the world he can live with all these burns that he's got." . . . She sent the children out, the two girls, to bring all the plantain leaves that they could see, and she made a poultice, and she cured that child.

Home remedies include medicines made from herbs, roots, household products, and other tangible resources (discussed later in this section). The region also has a strong heritage of faith-based healing, including the talking-out of burns, and curing of thrash [thrush, a *Candida* yeast infection]. East Carolina University folklorist James Kirkland writes that the ability to talk out fire is "...an

³⁴ Interview with Sarah Bryan for the NCFI, September 2012.

ancient art—a form of magico-religious healing that has been traced back at least as far as the Middle Ages...”³⁵

To Stella Mae Morgan, who knows how to treat burns this way, the cure’s efficacy is entirely dependent on the faith of the practitioner. A relative once asked her to teach him, but when he admitted that he didn’t believe it would work, Morgan refused, feeling that without that faith there was no point using the technique. When she herself learned to talk out fire, as a 16-year-old in Mount Gilead, the man who taught her—a neighbor by the name of Williams—emphasized that faith was crucial. “The thing about it is,” she says, “you’ve got to ask, ‘Do you believe it can happen?’”

Morgan did not explain the process, but most regional accounts of talking out fire describe the recitation of a (usually secret) rhyme or Bible verse while blowing on the burn. Like many other documented practitioners Morgan says that the tradition must be taught to a person of the opposite sex.

G. T. Haywood’s mother had healing abilities, and she taught one of her sons to talk out fire, one (G. T.) to cure thrash, and a third to perform another kind of cure that Haywood did not identify during a 2012 interview. As a boy he was the beneficiary of his mother’s knowledge about treating burns, following an accident that he had while planting corn.

I was a little fellow, I don’t know how old I was—old enough to go around by myself . . . That’s back when the stumps was [still] in the field, there; they called it new ground. And my daddy was laying rows off. My sister was covering it up, Clayton was dropping the fertilizer, and I was dropping the corn. I watched mighty close. My daddy said not to drop the corn in

³⁵ James Kirkland, Holly Mathews, C. W. Sullivan III, Karen Baldwin, eds., *Herbal and Magical Medicine: Traditional Healing Today*. 1992, Durham, Duke University Press.

the fertilizer, it'd eat it up. And I was careful, trying to do it right. And that new ground was fully in limbs, brush, and they set all that afire on Friday night, and it burnt 'til Monday morning. Well, them stump holes, a lot of them was lightwood—hot, start fires with them, you know.

And I won't watching close enough. I stepped in that stump hole. It didn't look like there was nothing in there but the ashes but . . . it was full of red-hot fire coals. I stepped down in there bare-footed, I went up along here [showing how much of leg went in], and I hollered and screamed and jumped. And they couldn't get ahold of me. I finally fell out. My daddy sent me to the house, and I walked part of the way, crawled part of the way. I remember when I got out there in the yard I got up and walked on to the house, and you could look back—I didn't wet my britches, but they's water coming out of my feet and legs. You could see the print where I was walking . . . And I walked in the house there. The reason I got up and went to walking, I didn't want to scare my mother.

And I walked on there, and I told her what happened. She set me down there, and she got one of my feet, was talking the fire out. And another man's wife, she come and seen what happened, and she could do it. And she took the other foot. And you may not believe this, but I was tee-total burnt from here down. After I got in the house, water was dripping on the floor out of my feet. And they—them two women, my mother and that woman—talked it for an hour and fifteen minutes. And she stopped long enough to get the food on the table. [The rest of the family] come in and eat, and you may not believe this, I went back to work with them that evening.

There was a blister on this foot where they healed my feet up . . . No scars, no nothing.

Asked if he heard what the women said, Haywood continued,

No, no. It had to be silent. And then they blowed on it as they were saying it. She tried to learn me that. It was too much, I was just a boy. I told her I wanted to learn how to doctor thrash. But she could doctor the thrash, talk out fire, and something else, but I can't think [what it was]. And an old man, they called him Doc—I always have believed that his name was Simmons—and I think she paid him a dollar or two dollars to learn her how, all of it. He was from down in here somewhere. He was just sort of like a cow doctor.

Stella Mae Morgan remembers that when she was a girl, she witnessed a curing of the thrash by a Montgomery County woman.

. . . my sister's first child . . . Jack had thrash—white [mouth], and he couldn't eat—this tiny baby! And Mama said, "Now Velma, come on and get that young one together and we're going to take him over to Star to Sally Hunt's, and let [her] blow in his mouth, and he's going to get well." Velma said—I'll never forget it—"she dips snuff, and she's not going in my baby's mouth!" Mama said, "Did you hear what I said? She's going to blow in that youngun's

mouth.” And we got over to Granny’s and got Jack, and left Velma sitting there, went over to Sally Hunt’s . . . And she blowed in his mouth I don’t know how many times. That was it. [Interviewer asks, “And he was cured?”] Yeah!

While families in the Uwharrie Mountain region have relied upon, and perpetuated, traditions of religious and magical healing, elderly residents of the area talk more often about remedies that drew from the pantry, the fields, and the forest. During his sawmilling career, G. T. Haywood learned about using yellowroot from a man who worked with him in the woods.

You can have a sore mouth, or anything in your mouth, you can take that—it’s good for blood pressure—you can take it, chew that stuff, it’s as yellow as anything you ever seen. Pull it up [at the] bank of the creek, roots, you pull it up and wash it off good, you chew on it and swallow the juice.

I had a bad stomach . . . and I went with this fellow [to work in the woods], he went with me a right smart . . . He says, “Wait, if your stomach’s hurting I’ll fix that.” Heartburn, it was just pretty rough. He went down there and pulled up them roots out of the banks of the creek and washed it. I never seen nothing so yellow in my life. And he told me to chew just the root part, where it were yellow. In an hour I’d forgot about the stomach. He told me, he says, now, “You’ve got high blood pressure”—I was taking pills—says, “it’s good for that.” . . . I toted it for as long as I worked in the woods, I kept it all the time.

On one occasion Haywood joined his friend in gathering yellowroot to fulfill a request from a doctor in New York. They collected a shoebox-full and shipped it north, for which each man received \$25.

Ammie Jenkins of the Sandhills Family Heritage Association compiled a book, *Healing from the Land*, that brings together many home remedies from the Sandhills area just east of the Uwharrie Mountains. (Parts of eastern Montgomery County are considered to be in the Sandhills region, while the Uwharries rise on the western side of the county.) Collected from elder African American residents, the remedies include many of the same ingredients in Uwharries-area cures. Jenkins writes that, of the medicinal plants that grow alongside creeks, “Today the most frequently

mentioned is ‘yellowroot.’” Jenkins quotes Shirley Smith and Rebecca Jones, who both identified yellowroot as a treatment for diabetes. Turpentine is cited as an ingredient in poultices and salves for treating injuries, and as a dewormer for children, in small amounts mixed with sugar. G. T. Haywood remembered that mullein was used in his community, though he didn’t remember its indications; several sources in *Healing from the Land* say that it can help bring down swelling in the legs.³⁶

Montgomery County’s Hmong community includes practitioners of traditional methods of gardening, farming, and cooking. In his 2012 report on Hmong folklife in Montgomery County, Touger Vang identified several bearers of such traditions. They include gardeners Jer Xiong (Mrs. Wa Xao Vang), Moua Chou (Mrs. Ly Chou), Geu Vang (Former Colonel Vang Geu), Nhia Tou Vang, and Xao Vang (Mr. Wa Xao Vang), all of Mount Gilead; and Mrs. Chia Thao, and himself, Touger Vang, both of Troy.

At the 2012 Hmong New Year celebration in Hickory, attended by many Uwharries-area Hmongs, several vendors offered dried herbs, roots, and beans with medicinal properties, indicating North Carolina Hmongs’ ongoing demand for traditional remedies. Chia Ge Yang (Mr. Chia Ge Yang) of Troy is an active Hmong shaman, in a tradition that can include healing both by spiritual means and with herbal remedies.

The authors of “The Hmong: An Introduction to their History and Culture” explain the relationships between spiritual, herbal, and clinical medicine in Hmong culture.

Hmong healing practices are divided into three arts: herbal medicine, spiritual healing, and acupuncture/acupressure. When someone is ill, the family will consult with a diagnostician, who will determine the cause of the illness. If the illness is determined to have been caused

³⁶ Ammie Jenkins, *Healing from the Land*. 2003, Sandhills Family Legacies.

by spirits, a shaman will be consulted. If the cause is food poisoning, indigestion, or energy imbalance, the family will be instructed to consult with the herbalist and/or massager/acupuncturist. Herbal medicine is also used to treat sexually transmitted diseases and broken bones.

In many cases, the treatment involves all three arts. The shaman tends to act as a spiritual healer, social worker, and psychologist. After performing his ceremony and therapy, the shaman often advises the family to consult the herbalist. The shaman deals with spirits and heals souls, while the herbalist helps to restore the patient's energy and speed the recovery process.³⁷

Today, many Hmong in the United States use Western medicine in conjunction with herbal medicine and shamans . . . ³⁸

The oral history and folklife of the Uwharries has been documented by many researchers and observers over the course of several generations; this documentary record places a strong emphasis on the importance of folk medicine. In their 1990 book *Stanly County USA*, Ivey Sharpe and Edgar Pepper III write of Dr. J. A. Allen, who treated residents of Stanly County throughout the first half of the twentieth century. He took an interest in the home remedies that he heard about in the course of his work, and recorded some of them.

For the itch—poke root. Boil and bathe the whole body.
For sore throat—wild cherry bark tea.
For dysentery and flux—blackberry wine.
For high blood pressure—sassafrass root tea.
For a sick stomach—peach tree bark tea
For blood purifier—wild cherry tree bark boiled to a syrup
For earache - pour warm urine in the affected ear
Whooping cough—broomsage roots, honey, alum and onion—boiled to a syrup
For worms—jerusalem oak seed boiled into a syrup
For dyspepsia—sheep manure tea, with whiskey and soda (goat balls not advised.)
Iron for blood - drink water from a can of soaked rusty nails.

³⁷ John Duffy, Roger Harmon, Donald Ranard, Bo Thao, and Kou Yang, with Paul Herr, "The Hmong: An Introduction to their History and Culture," p. 15.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

For a spring tonic—sulpher and molasses, mixed with whiskey
For a spring purgative—one-half pint of castor oil.³⁹

. . . to help maintain a healthy condition throughout the cold winter months, each child was given a cupful of boneset brew once a week for several weeks with the coming of cold weather. It also had other medicinal values. For an emetic, strip the crinkled leaves of boneset “up the stalk” and make a strong tea from them, and drink while very warm. But for a BM, make tea from the leaves, which have been stripped “down the stalk.” For quick results, drink a half cup while hot . . . Too, nothing is finer for a bad cough than “Mullein Tea.” Be sure to sweeten it with pure sourwood honey. No better cough cure . . . For “Poison Oak poisoning,” nothing better than a solution made from mountain laurel bark. Apply to affected parts while warm.⁴⁰

In the mid-1970s, students in the Davidson County school system gathered folklife documentation for the publication *Homespun*. Stories in *Homespun* were largely drawn from interviews with older residents of the region, and multiple issues contain lists of home remedies. The following remedies are a sampling of the larger body of documentation published in *Homespun*.

“When my great-grandfather, R. B. Myers, was in the Civil War, he tried this remedy for the yellow jaundice. Get some brandy and put it in some wild cherry bark, dogwood bark, and water, and mix them all together. Drink it and it will straighten you up.” (Marcie Hutchinson, Reeds School)

For yellow jaundice, make yellowroot tea and drink it. (Vickie Parrish, Denton School)

Take whiskey and pour over yellowroots and take one teaspoonful. (Vickie Parrish, Denton School.)

The root of rhubarb, worn on a string around the neck will keep off the stomach ache. (Cathy Byerly, North Davidson Junior High School)⁴¹

For a sore throat, mop it out with kerosene. (Vickie Parrish, Denton School)

Take a chicken feather and strip all the feathers off except for about an inch at the tip end. Dip the end of the feather in turpentine and coat the inside of the throat. (Corky Sink, Reeds School)

³⁹ Ivey Lawrence Sharpe and Edgar Fletcher Pepper III, *Stanly County USA: The Story of an Area and an Era (1841-1991)*. 1990, Greensboro, Media Press. p. 225.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

⁴¹ *Homespun Sampler*, July 4, 1976.

People used to rub a collard leaf in their hand until it was soft and put it on a person's forehead to calm their fever. (Bill Gobey, Denton School)

[For a cough] Pass the victim under a horse's belly three times. (Mike Boyd, Reeds School)

[For a cough] Mix brown sugar and just a few drops of kerosene. (Lexa Owens, Reeds School)⁴²

[For nosebleeds] Make a pair of red beads that fit close to the neck. Tie them with a square knot and wear them for one week. Kidney beans work also, but you have to wear them for two weeks. The nosebleed will stop almost immediately, but you must wear them for a week to insure [sic] that you don't get it back. (Tim Craven, Hasty School)⁴³

For a nosebleed, put brown paper under the top lip and read Genesis 9:6 and Exodus 15:8. (Joyce Sanders, Denton School)⁴⁴

[For sprains] Soak brown paper in vinegar and wrap on the sprain.

[For a baby cutting teeth] Put bugs in a thimble and put around baby's neck. (Ann Sullivan, collected from her mother) (p. 20 5/1 winter 78)

Randolph County native Joseph T. Moffitt (born 1924), a woodsman and scoutmaster, has had a lifelong interest in the herbal medicine of the region, which he has documented in his books *A Country Boy's Learning* (1999) and *An Afternoon Hike Into the Past* (1975). Like G. T. Haywood's friend in Montgomery County who introduced him to yellowroot, the Moffitt family harvested medicinal plants to sell.

Ginseng, or seng, as the old timers called it, along with stargrass, pennyroyal, snakeroot, elder root, blood root, and wild cherry bark were considered good sources of income to supplement trapping until around the late 1920s. Now you can hardly find enough for a cup of tea in the 1970s.

⁴² *Homespun* Vol. 2, No. 2, December 1974, p. 32.

⁴³ *Homespun* Vol. 1, No. 3, March 1974.

⁴⁴ *Homespun* Vol. 3, No. 3, Spring/Summer 1976, p. 49.

As late as 1929 or 1930, I can remember my family going over on Little Pilot to gather stargrass roots. Little Pilot Mountain is in the eastern part of Randolph County . . . near the Holly Springs community. I was just a little shaver at the time, being 4 or 5 years old. The northwest slope of Pilot was covered in large timber and the woods were very open and free from underbrush, probably due to never having heard the timberman's sawmill.

. . . I would help by getting me a stick and digging stargrass too, until the novelty wore off. Then there would always be a lizard or dry land terrapin to watch.⁴⁵

When the family would pick huckleberries on Little Pilot, Moffitt remembered, "just as often as I went I got loaded with chiggers."

. . . my father would get some comfrey or heal all, and take the leaves, bruise them, and rub me good. This would cure the infection until next time. This was a very good way to cure infection. In the summer we would always go barefoot, running over the stony paths and roads. We would get bruises on our heels that would infect around the bone. This was commonly called stonebruise. Heal all, bruised and put on as a poultice several times a day, would draw the sore place to a head quickly. Then it could be lanced and would get well in about a week.⁴⁶

In *A Country Boy's Learning*, published in 1999, Moffitt wrote that after publishing *An Afternoon Hike Into the Past*, from which the quotes above are drawn, "I have many country folks who read the book and ask me why I didn't include the [remedy] about this or that, which in all too many cases, I knew nothing about." In *A Country Boy's Learning* he shared some of these "remedies of the people of the Uwharrie Mountains." They draw from the same pharmacopeia of herbs, forest products, and household staples: salt, sugar and vinegar; kerosene and turpentine; and barks, leaves, and roots including yellowroot, bloodroot, and stargrass.⁴⁷

In 1982, the Title I classes at Oakboro Elementary School in Stanly County, directed by reading teacher Janice Gibson, conducted an oral history project with longtime area residents. Brady

⁴⁵ Joseph T. Moffitt, *An Afternoon Hike Into the Past*, Eighth Edition, p. 9.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁴⁷ Joseph T. Moffitt, *A Country Boy's Learning*. 1999, Chapel Hill, Professional Press, pp. 277-286.

Kennedy, speaking with student Tony Springer, recalled the use of catnip and rat's vein—both plants that are also mentioned in *Healing from the Land*.

We would have to drink a lot of catnip tea when we'd get sick with a cold. We would go to the woods and pull it up, and parch it over the fireplace. Then, we would put it in the coffee mill and grind it up. To make it, we'd put it in water and put it on the stove and heat it. We took a lot of asiphidity [probably asafetida, a powdered root] and turpentine when we were sick. We used some kind of grease to put on us too. We did not buy nothing. My mother and father raised our stuff, and we had livestock. My daddy had a horse that looked bad. He couldn't get him fat, so he would go to the woods and pull up rasvein [rat's vein] and parch it over the fire. He would grind it up and put it in the horse's feed to get him straightened out.⁴⁸

Dora Howard told student Cary Buckenmeyer,

The old people went out and dug up roots for their medicine. We had catnip tea a lot. They boiled the roots or soaked them in water to make this type of medicine. To make a salve, they would put hog lard with it after they boiled the roots.⁴⁹

Other remedies collected by the Oakboro students include the following.

When you have a cold or sore throat, go to the woods and find some green pine needles. Put them in a pot of water and boil. When cool enough to drink, drink a full cup. (from Rosa Lee Threadgill)

For bee stings, use snuff or tobacco. (from Ester Sturdivant)

For a bee sting, take red mud, make sure that it is smooth and rub it on the bee sting. Leave it there for one hour. (Bessie Whitley)

If you get a cut, put kerosene on it. (from Croppsie Barnhardt; Mary Helsabeck Livingston of Ether also reports soaking her thumb in kerosene after mashing it in a garage door.)

If you have a sore throat that won't heal, take a dirt Dobber's nest, add a little water, and place it on the sore. Then, it will heal. (from Walter Carpenter)

For colds or sickness, use a mustard roll made from boiled mustard leaves found in the woods. (from Ophia Carver)

If you stick a nail in your foot, soak it in hot water and peach leaves. (from Croppsie Barnhardt)⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Oakboro Title I Class, *Times Remembered*. 1982, Oakboro. P. 13.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

Mary Helsabeck Livingston and Wilma Helsabeck of Ether recall that when their sister Edna cut her toe badly, it was successfully treated with the application of brown sugar and turpentine, splinted with kindling, and wrapped in a paper bag. Stella Morgan once stepped on a board with a rusty nail. She says,

. . . I was little, but I remember it. And Mama said, "You sit down here," and she propped my foot up like this over a bucket with a yarn sock or stocking or something burning, and it was smoking. And she put my foot over, and it drew—it drew—I could feel it just pulling . . . the poison. The nail was [already] gone, but when I pulled my foot up, you see, the poison was coming out of that hole.

Speaking about the women in the family and their lay knowledge of medicine, Morgan remembered a time when her grandmother assisted Dr. Shamburger of Star in performing a surgery. "They lived right across the railroad [from each other], and she went with him over there somewhere, and he cut [operated on] a woman. And of course there was no [anesthesia] or nothing but liquor. She went out, and my grandmother helped her. I don't see how she did it."

At this point in the conversation, the interviewer asked, "How did your grandmother know how to do these things? Morgan answered, "Honey, I don't know. I guess the good Lord Just helped her."

RESOURCES

Organizations

Central Park NC
100 Russell Dr.
PO Box 159
Star, NC 27356
(910) 428-9001
centralparknc.org

Central Park NC, the North Carolina Folklife Institute's partner in this research, is a leading innovator in the sustainable promotion of the Uwharries region's cultural and natural heritage. "Our mission is to promote a new economy based on the sustainable use of the natural and cultural resources of the Central Park NC region, encompassing Anson, Davidson, Montgomery, Moore, Randolph, Richmond, Rowan, and Stanly counties."⁵¹

"Central Park NC – originally known as the Yadkin-Pee Dee Lakes Project – was formed in 1993 by a consensus of leaders from the region to develop a strategy to preserve the natural and cultural assets of central North Carolina, using them to create a sustainable local economy. In 2000, Central Park NC published "A Strategy for North Carolina's Central Park" – a blueprint for the development of a new economy for our region based on heritage and cultural tourism development and outdoor recreation opportunities . . .

"The Central Park strategy focuses on small businesses development complementary to heritage and cultural tourism, and also developing the regional infrastructure for increasing overnight tourism . . . In 2005, Central Park NC began STARworks Center for Creative Enterprise in a former hosiery mill in the small town of Star. STARworks is home to several for profit and not for profit businesses, focusing on renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and creative arts-related businesses." ⁵²

Please see the "Venues" section of this report for information about the traditional arts programming at STARworks.

⁵¹ www.centralparknc.org/about-us/mission.html

⁵² www.centralparknc.org/about-us/history.html

Anson County Arts Council
110 S. Rutherford St.
Wadesboro, NC 28170
(704) 694-4950
ansoncountyartscouncil.org

“The mission of the Anson County Arts Council is to enrich the cultural lives of all people in Anson County by nurturing and supporting excellence in the arts; promoting, presenting and encouraging educational activities; and increasing the communities' awareness of and appreciation for the arts.”⁵³

The organization manages the Ansonia Theatre in downtown Wadesboro, and the Olde Mill Gallery at 514 N. Washington Street in Wadesboro.

Anson Art League
ansonartleague.com
(704) 995-5050

The Anson Art League is a membership organization for artists in the county, which promotes their work through the website ansonartleague.com.

Stanly County Arts Council
Stanly County Agri-Civic Center
26032 Newt Rd.
Suite G
Albemarle, NC 28001
(704) 982-8118
www.facebook.com/StanlyCountyArtsCouncil

“The Stanly County Arts Council is a non-profit organization that works with local artists and art-related organizations, groups, and businesses to promote and encourage the arts throughout our community.

“Originally founded in 1974 as part of the Stanly County Chamber of Commerce, the Stanly County Arts Council has grown to be a vital part of the arts community in the area. They gained their non-profit status on October 9th of 1975. Currently, they work in partnership with the North Carolina Arts Council, and strive to provide support for arts education opportunities, local artists, performing arts groups, and arts-related organizations through grants, fundraising, and promotional endeavors.”⁵⁴

⁵³ www.ansoncountyartscouncil.org/aboutacac.html

⁵⁴ www.facebook.com/StanlyCountyArtsCouncil/info

Stanly Arts Guild
Falling Rivers Gallery
119 West Main Street
Albemarle, North Carolina 28001
fallingriversgallery.com
(704) 983-4278

The Stanly Arts Guild's mission is "to introduce the public in Stanly County and surrounding regions to the talented artists in the area; to sponsor educational opportunities for potential artists; to nurture beginning artists with developing skills in how to promote, display, and market their work."⁵⁵ The Guild operates the Falling Rivers Gallery in downtown Albemarle, which displays and sells a variety of work by local artists.

Craft-Specific Guilds

Anson Memory Makers Quilt Guild
Anson County Arts Council
110 S. Rutherford St.
Wadesboro, NC 28170
(704) 694-4950
ansoncountyartscouncil.org

The Anson Memory Makers Quilt Guild is sponsored by, and holds its monthly meetings at, the Anson County Arts Council in Wadesboro.

Mt. Gilead Quilters
joroberta1@netnoir.net

This small membership organization meets on second Saturdays, and second Wednesdays. They offer classes, block-of-the-month challenges, and fabric swaps. Once a year they make a raffle quilt which is auctioned for charity, and in odd years they put on a quilt show.

North Carolina Custom Knifemakers Guild
PO Box 1971
Jamestown, NC 27282
ncknifeguild.org

⁵⁵ www.fallingriversgallery.com/stanlyartsguild.html

Tim Scholl, President
(910) 897-2051
tschollknives@live.com

Though based in Guilford County, the North Carolina Custom Knifemakers Guild has a high concentration of members in the Uwharries counties. Two artists interviewed for this project—Tommy Johnson and William Bishir—are officers of the Guild. Members meet at Montgomery County Community College in Troy, where they also offer several classes every year.

“The North Carolina Knifemakers Guild was founded in June of 1992. Our goals are to: promote the craft of custom knife making; seek to constantly improve the craftsmanship of its members; provide an educational resource to anyone interested in the craft; encourage new makers and provide a forum for their training. Through public knife making and forging demonstrations by a group or individual members, we try to display the craft and to educate the public. It is our intent to raise the general awareness of custom-made knives and the people who create them. That is why there is no cost to attend one of our meetings, and [we] welcome anyone with an interest in knifemaking. Our quarterly meetings are organized around speakers and various demonstrations of activities important to our craft. These speakers and demonstrators are from our membership or experts in the field who come as our guests. As a training resource, our Guild is prepared to present any aspect of our craft to organizations that feel it would be beneficial and informative.”⁵⁶

Randolph Quilters Guild
Neva Newby, President
nanewby@triad.rr.com

The Randolph Quilters Guild’s approximately 50 members meet on first Thursdays at First Presbyterian Church in Asheboro.

Three Rivers Quilt Guild
810 Smith St.
Albemarle, NC 28001
threeriversquiltguild@yahoo.com

Wanda Brooks, President
(704) 463-5923
wbrooks1126@ctc.net

The Three Rivers Quilt Guild, which was established in 1988, meets every fourth Tuesday night at the Christ Episcopal Church Fellowship Hall in Albemarle. They encourage quilters of all levels to visit, as well as non-quilters who are simply interested in the art form. Wanda Brooks, the guild

⁵⁶ www.ncknifeguild.org/about.html

president, is part of a family lineage of quilters that includes her mother, both of her grandmothers, and her granddaughter. Brooks reports that in addition to quilting, various members of the group also do weaving, tatting, and knitting.

Traditional Arts Education

Montgomery County Community College
1011 Page St.
Troy, NC 27371
(910) 576-6222
montgomery.edu

Montgomery County Community College offers, as part of its course catalog for full-time and continuing-education students, several programs that teach traditional skills closely woven with the region's heritage. These programs include forest management, gunsmithing, metal engraving, professional ceramics, and taxidermy. MCCC is also the site of the monthly meetings of the North Carolina Custom Knifemakers Guild, and of the Guild's summer classes in knifemaking.

Stanly Community College
141 College Drive, Albemarle, NC 28001
stanly.edu
(704) 982-0121

Stanly Community College is the home of the Carolina Auction Academy, a certificate program that trains students in all aspects of the auctioneering business, including the chant. "The team of instructors include past champions from both North Carolina and South Carolina, as well as technology specialists, auctioneers, real estate brokers, lawyers, and special topic guests from the local area."⁵⁷

Star Heritage Center
454 S. Main St.
Star, NC 27356
(910) 585-7067
facebook.com/StarHeritageCenter
starheritagecenter@gmail.com

Also known as the Pink House, the Star Heritage Center is a former farmhouse, located on Main Street and owned by the Town of Star. The Center offers "hands-on heritage-based workshop[s] . . .

⁵⁷ www.stanly.edu/continuing-education/carolina-auction-academy/about-us.html

We can teach you how to preserve food, how to garden, plant seeds, make raised beds, sew, knit, crochet, and more.” A small sales area offers “locally-raised meats . . . free-range eggs, pottery, art, naturally- and hand-made soaps,” and other handmade or homegrown local products. The Center encourages the public to request course offerings, and invites practitioners of heritage skills to teach new classes.⁵⁸

STARworks Center for Creative Enterprises
Central Park NC
100 Russell Dr.
PO Box 159
Star, NC 27356
(910) 428-9001
centralparknc.org

An initiative of Central Park NC, STARworks is a sustainable business incubator located in a late-19th century former school and hosiery mill near downtown Star.

“Job creation programming at STARworks is entrepreneurial in nature and designed to serve the creative, agricultural, and alternative energy sectors of our regional economy. The STARworks project advances the Central Park strategy by providing a focused means of growing and developing creative enterprises and individuals for placement in the downtowns of our small communities and to develop agricultural entrepreneurs to replace the farmers that are retiring.”⁵⁹

STARworks Ceramics, one of the programs housed at the center, offers pottery workshops, ceramics supplies, a factory for processing local clay, and kilns and studio space that can be rented by members of the public. STARworks Glass Lab is a partnership between Central Park NC and Wet Dog Glass. The program offers workshops in blowing, fusing, and slumping glass, studio space for rent, and professional gaffing services. STARworks Garden is “a Micro-Eco Farm with a goal to promote environmentally responsible growing methods, spread the habit of local eating, introduce children and adults to the idea of backyard gardening and healthy ecosystems and set an example in recycling.”⁶⁰ Programs include workshops in gardening techniques, and an annual CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) service providing fresh local produce and meat to area residents.

⁵⁸ www.facebook.com/StarHeritageCenter/info

⁵⁹ www.starworksnc.org/about-us.html

⁶⁰ www.starworksnc.org/starworks-garden.html

Folklife-Related Museums and Galleries

Dr. Francis Kron's House
Morrow Mountain State Park
49104 Morrow Mountain Rd.
Albemarle, NC 28001
(704) 982-4402
ncparks.gov/Visit/parks/Momo/main.php

This 4,700-acre state park includes the reconstructed homestead and office of Dr. Francis Kron, a Prussian doctor who came to America in 1823, and “is recognized as the first medical doctor to settle and practice medicine in the southern piedmont of North Carolina. Dr. Kron traveled long distances to care for those in the area, practicing medicine until after the age of 80.”⁶¹

Historic Gold Hill
St. Stephens Church Road between Jenkins Drive and Old Beatty Ford Road, Gold Hill
(704) 267-9438
historicgoldhill.com

A cluster of historic buildings at the site of a mid-nineteenth-century gold mine, Historic Gold Hill is a retail and events venue with a focus on antiques and crafts. Shops include Jane's Thangs, which sells handmade quilts, dolls, and other traditional needlework items; J. J.'s Produce Market, selling local fruits and vegetables in season; a metal worker's studio and shop, a retail art gallery, antique shops, and cafes. Concerts and festivals take place on the park grounds throughout the year. A modern special events center, the Russell-Rufty Memorial Shelter, seats 80 – 100 people and is available for rental.

North Carolina Pottery Center
233 East Ave.
PO Box 531
Seagrove, NC 27341
(336) 873-8430
ncpotterycenter.org

The mission of the North Carolina Pottery Center is:

“... to promote public awareness and appreciation of the history, heritage, and ongoing tradition of pottery making in North Carolina through educational programs, public services, collection and preservation, and research and documentation. To do so, the Center represents all

⁶¹ www.ncparks.gov/Visit/parks/momo/history.php

North Carolina potters, from Native Americans and exemplars of the old utilitarian tradition to the well over 1,000 potters working throughout the state today.

“... the roughly 6,000 square foot main Museum building ... contains the exhibition space, open storage, a gift shop, offices, a kitchen, and rest rooms. ... Nearby is the 1,500 square foot Education Building, with wheels, electric kilns, and other clay-working equipment. And on the hillside just below it are two working, wood-fired kilns: a traditional groundhog and a double catenary arch kiln.

“... Through these facilities the Center provides a broad educational experience for students and teachers, potters and scholars, and pottery collectors and tourists. Central to our mission is our permanent exhibition, which depicts the full history of pottery making in North Carolina, from the earliest Native Americans to contemporary sculptural forms in clay. This includes, along with hundreds of pots, detailed models of a Native American pit firing, an early earthenware kiln, and a groundhog kiln, as well as mock-ups of a potter’s shop and a 19th century farmhouse kitchen. In addition, the Center sponsors five to six changing exhibitions per year, as well as a permanent display of works by local Seagrove potters. Lectures and classes are also important. Children learn to throw pots in our Education Building taught by local potters; teachers’ programs provide course credit; and potters enjoy master classes and the opportunity to learn wood firing with our two kilns.”⁶²

Oakboro Regional Museum of History
231 N. Main St.
Oakboro, NC
(704) 485-4222

Housed in a 1930s storefront building, the Oakboro Regional Museum of History has a large collection of artifacts having to do with life in the small town, especially in the early twentieth century. The collection includes household items, handcrafts, portraits by an early local photographer, a genealogy reading room, and many binders of information about area churches, schools, musicians, and other topics.

Town Creek Indian Mound
509 Town Creek Mound Rd.
Mount Gilead, NC 27306
(910) 439-6802
nchistoricsites.org/town/

The Town Creek Indian Mound is the archaeological site of an 11th-century Pee Dee political and ceremonial center. The park encompassing the site features a reconstructed ceremonial center and mortuary, a visitor center with exhibits about the Pee Dee culture, and trails. Special events and workshops are offered throughout the year.

⁶² www.ncpotterycenter.org/about-us/yesterday-today-tomorrow.html

Annual Events

March

Star Fiddler's Convention

March

East Montgomery High School, Biscoe

Contact: Jean Sullivan, (910) 428-2972

April

Uwharrie Storytelling Festival

Central United Methodist Church Fellowship Center, Albemarle

www.uwharriestorytelling.com/

Contact: Melanie Holles, mholles@stanlycountylibrary.org, (704) 986-3766

May

Gold Rush Days (includes Airing of the Quilts)

Historic Village of Gold Hill

goldhillnc.com

Doyle Lawson and Quicksilver Bluegrass Festival

Denton FarmPark

1072 Cranford Rd.

Denton, NC 27239

Karen Miller, FarmPark Manager: (336) 859-2755, manager@threshers.com

June

Star Heritage Day

Downtown Star

Town Hall: (910) 428-4623

July

Southeast Old Threshers' Reunion

Denton FarmPark

1072 Cranford Rd.

Denton, NC 27239

Karen Miller, FarmPark Manager: (336) 859-2755, manager@threshers.com

August

Ralph Pennington Memorial Bluegrass Reunion

Historic Village of Gold Hill
goldhillnc.com

September

Anson Ag Expo, Fair and Livestock Show (includes South Atlantic Woodsmen's Association Lumberjack Competition)

Lockhart-Taylor Center, South Piedmont Community College
514 N. Washington St., Wadesboro

Dailey Vincent (Bluegrass) Fest

Denton FarmPark
1072 Cranford Rd.
Denton, NC 27239
Karen Miller, FarmPark Manager: (336) 859-2755, manager@threshers.com

Gold Hill Founder's Day

Village of Gold Hill
goldhillnc.com

Stanly County Regional Agricultural Fair

Stanly County Agri-Civic Center
26032 Newt Rd.
Albemarle, NC 28001

Town Creek Indian Mound Heritage Festival

Town Creek Indian Mound Historic Site

October

Latino Festival

Montgomery County Community College

Anson County Highland Games

Little Park, Wadesboro
Contact: Wendell Small, (704) 694-5751

Uwharrie Mountain Festival

King's Mountain Point, Uwharrie National Forest

Marla Coulthard, Chair: (910) 572-2224
uwharriemountainfestival.com

November

Hmong New Year Celebration

Hickory American Legion Fairground, Newon
hmongcarolinas.com

Stanfield Arts and Craft Show

Stanfield Elementary School, Stanfield
(704) 961-5800

Semiannual/Ongoing Events

Bluegrass at Oakboro Music Hall

213 N. Main St.
Oakboro, NC
(704) 485-2221
oakboromusichall.com

Bluegrass at the Music Barn

Main Street, Mount Gilead
(910) 220-6426
Saturdays

Bluegrass in the Village

Historic Village of Gold Hill
goldhillnc.com
Fridays

Denton Old-Time Square Dance

Denton Civic Center
West Salisbury St.
Denton, NC 27239
Third Saturdays yearly through November, second Saturday in December

Second Saturdays at Town Creek (heritage demonstrations)

Town Creek Indian Mound, Mount Gilead

Stanly County ESL student folk dance performances

Various locations, Stanly County

Contact: Elsa Armijos, elsa.armijos@stanlycountyschools.org

Stanly County Farmers Market

100 Railroad St.

Albemarle, NC 28001

(704) 984-9415

albemarledowntown.com

Opening in April

Town of Candor Farmers Market

Farmers Market Rd., off Hwy. 211

Candor, NC 27229

(910) 974-4221

April – December daily

Troy Farmers Market

417 N. Main St., Troy

mcfma.org

Thursdays

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