

Alabama Community Scholars Summit at Cheaha State Park, June 25-27

Graduates of the Alabama Community Scholars Institute (ACSI) and others doing projects in Alabama folk culture have been invited to gather at Cheaha State Park this summer for a weekend reunion and retreat. In Bald Rock Lodge, atop the state's highest mountain, they will be able to renew friendships, gather information and return to their communities energized.

Since 2004, a total of 71 ACSI participants have been taught how to recognize traditions; conduct field surveys, interview, record, photograph and videotape tradition bearers, and log and transcribe interviews. They have also learned ways to present their findings in exhibits, films, CDs, and articles.

The weekend workshops will focus on the topics of food and work. Scholars will discuss foods and occupations that are of special importance in their communities. Lucy Long, a professor of folklore at Bowling Green State University, Ohio, is well known for her work in food studies and culinary tourism and will lead a foodways workshop. Paddy Bowman will lead the occupational folklore workshop. She is director of Local Learning, the National Network for Folk Arts in Education. Based in Alexandria, Virginia, Bowman specializes in training teachers to use folklore in the classroom.

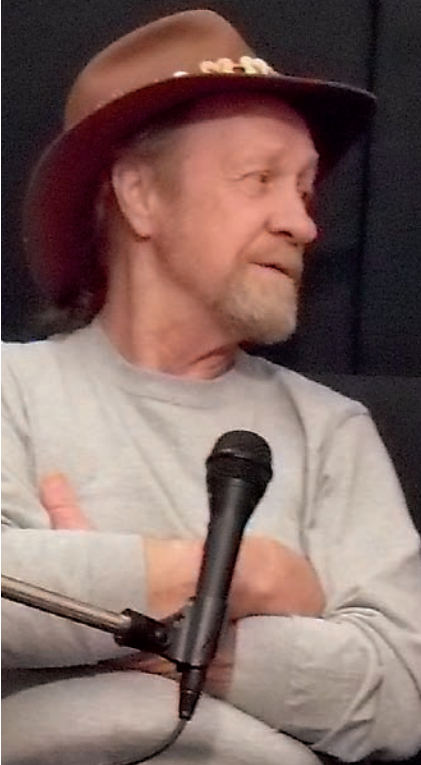
Scholars will also view digital recording equipment and a digital camera purchased by the AFA for loan to fieldworkers. Those wishing to learn how to record interviews and successfully download audio and photo files to computers, CDs and DVDs will have an opportunity for hands-on practice.

The AFA is inviting a few people who have not attended ACSI but are doing folklife-related projects in Alabama. If you have a compelling reason to attend, contact Joyce Cauthen at 205-822-0505 (joycecauthen@bellsouth.com) to see if space is available.



View from atop Mount Cheaha (Photo by Steve Graubeger)

AFA Puts Community Scholars to Work



For several years the Alabama Folklife Association (AFA), in collaboration with the Alabama Center for Traditional Culture (ACTC), has been preparing for Alabama to have a role in the Smithsonian Folklife Festival in 2010. Because of the economic downturn, our participation in the festival has been postponed, but we hope to have a presence at the national festival in the future. Thus the AFA has commissioned fieldwork on topics that we may eventually present on the National Mall. With funding from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Alabama State Council on the Arts, we were able to contract with several graduates of our Community Scholars program to do this work.

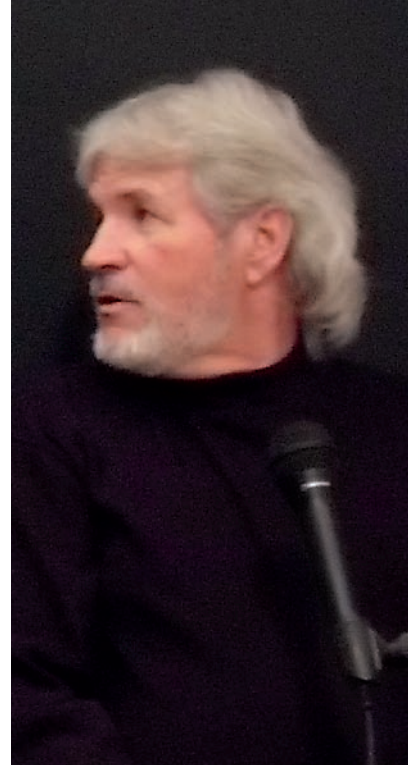
Muscle Shoals, in Northwest Alabama, is famous for hit songs recorded by artists such as the Rolling Stones, Aretha Franklin, Paul Simon, Percy Sledge and others who benefited from the unique sound of the studio musicians there. The "Muscle Shoals sound" is a mix of rhythm and blues, country, and gospel music that enveloped musicians growing up in the area.

To capture the stories behind the recordings and document the occupational folklore of technicians and studio musicians involved behind the scenes, the AFA and ACTC turned to Russell Gulley (ACSI '04) and Jake Fussell (ACSI '06).

Russell Gulley is an active blues musician and was formerly a member of the band, Jackson Highway, based in Muscle Shoals. He is director of the Big Wills Arts Council in Fort Payne. Jake Fussell, also a blues musician, is a student at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi. Both called upon their knowledge of the music as well as the documentation skills they learned at ACSI to do eleven interviews with accompanying photographs.

(Continued on next page)

Junior" Lowe (left) and Travis Wommack (right) were members of the "Fame Gang," the house rhythm section for Fame Studios in Muscle Shoals. They were interviewed and photographed by ACSI scholar Russell Gulley in April 2009.



(Continued from previous page)

To document traditional foods of Alabama, we contracted with Susan Thomas (ACSI '04), William Allen (ACSI '06) and Sylvia Stephens (ACSI '08). All have backgrounds in journalism and live in areas with distinctive food traditions. Susan Thomas of Mobile interviewed five persons who learned gumbo-making skills within their families. William Allen of Decatur interviewed individuals and members of community groups in North Alabama who are known for their skills in making goat and chicken stew. Sylvia Stephens of Opelika traveled to the Wiregrass area to interview and photograph makers of lacy fried cornbread.

This fieldwork, plus interviews done by Pam McAlpine on the barbecue clubs of Sumter County, provided the foundation of our Alabama Foodways Gathering on November 7. McAlpine's work was done under the auspices of the Center for the Study of the Black Belt. Each scholar wrote articles on these topics for the Alabama Foodways booklet that can be downloaded from the Resources page of alabamafolklife.org.

Two community scholars interviewed fiddle makers on Sand Mountain. Randy Arnold (ACSI '04), a banjo maker, and Jim Cauthen (ACSI '08), a fiddler, did interviews and took photos that were used in an exhibit designed by the Big Wills Arts Council to accompany the Smithsonian's traveling exhibition, "New Harmonies."

All of the fieldworkers submitted field reports and logged all interviews and photos on forms developed and taught at the Alabama Community Scholars Institute. These forms are also available in the Resources section of alabamafolklife.org. When the AFA finishes using the photographs and interviews for current projects, they will be housed for preservation and public access in the Archive of Alabama Folk Culture.



Archive of Alabama Folk Culture is Running at Full Speed

— Report from Folklife Archivist, Kevin Nutt



Kevin Nutt in the AFFC studio at the Alabama Department of Archives and History (Photo by Anne Kimzey)

After beginning work on October 1, 2009, my first task was to inspect and assess the audio components at the archive. It was determined that a new analogue-to-digital converter was needed to get the best quality digital transfers especially for the first project at hand. Debbie Pendleton, head of the Public Services Division at the Alabama Department of Archives and History (ADAH,) obtained funds for the AAFCC from the ADAH Friends of the Archives account and purchased a high quality converter, a new digital audio tape player, and several sound cables.

In the middle of October, thanks to a grant from the American Folklife Society, I spent a week at the Vermont Folklife Center in Middlebury, Vermont. There I was able to brainstorm with archivist and folklorist Andy Kovolos about the current issues and situations at the AAFCC. Kovolos, a warm, gregarious and instantly likable fellow, is considered one of the top experts in folklife sound preservation. We recreated the AAFCC studio in Middlebury and I benefited greatly from his tips and insights. After my return to Montgomery, Andy made himself available by phone to answer a number of specific questions that arose as I began digitizing tapes myself.

The initial project I have begun is digitizing and archiving recordings of performances at the Alabama Folklife Festival in Montgomery and the Alabama Sampler Stage at the City Stages Festival in Birmingham. Cassettes and digital audio tapes (DAT) were used to record the performers and musicians. One of the pressing concerns of sound archivists is the preservation of recordings made on DAT. Initially quite popular, DAT unfortunately quickly revealed itself to be an unstable medium and it has been a high priority of sound preservationists to transfer DAT recordings to more stable media. Many of the Alabama Folk Festival and Sampler Stage recordings were on DAT. The good news is that the fidelity of DAT recordings is superb. As of this writing, about a third of the collections' DAT recordings have been successfully transferred. The bad news is that it turns out that the DAT players which are no longer being manufactured, are often even more unstable than the tapes themselves. The AAFCC purchased and then returned two DAT players through eBay before a third

workable player was finally located. (A short, silent prayer follows each successfully transferred tape.)

Daily work at the archive is occupied with transferring the DAT tapes onto a hard drive. Two copies of the sound files are made: the initial, or "master," transferred file, a "use" file and an .mp3 file. The "master" and "use" files will be deposited into the ADAH main archival server system. The "use" file will be the file available for retrieval and use by researchers and the general public. MP3 files are created to facilitate the future task of posting performance clips on the ADAH website. In a more time consuming process, descriptive and identifying data is generated for each performer and each individual song and entered into a searchable database. Already, we have archived some beautiful and note-worthy performances: The Four Eagle Gospel Singers (Birmingham), Wayne Horton and Harmony Ridge (Haleyville), the Whited Old-Time String Band (Oneonta), the Angelic Harmonizing Chorus (Selma), and many others.

Future projects for the AAFCC include archiving the rich fieldwork completed by the staff folklorists at the Alabama Center for Traditional Culture and the Alabama Folklife Association, including many Sacred Harp and seven-shape hymn singing recordings and a collection of African-American Primitive Baptist congregational recordings. Hopefully, too, the AAFCC will begin to attract inquiries and projects from other Alabama based collections. Recently, the AAFCC received a set of previously unknown one-of-a-kind transcription discs from a 1951 program in Livingston, Alabama, honoring the folklorist Ruby Pickens Tartt. The discs were covered in palmitic acid and require careful cleaning and digitizing and could very well contain performances by Vera Hall and Price and Earthy Ann Coleman.

These materials represent the rich musical and folk traditions of Alabama. It will be a great treasure to have these recordings and collections organized, archived and made available to scholars, historians and the general public.



Does Anyone Throw Valentines Anymore?

Recently, Fred Fussell, a Chattahoochee Valley folklorist, posted the following description of a local Valentine's Day custom to an e-mail list and asked if anyone knew of similar traditions. If you know of this custom or others like it, we would love to hear from you by mail or via the "Contact Us" page of alabamafolklife.org

In my hometown of Phenix City, Alabama, there's a long tradition, now sadly dwindling, of "throwing" Valentines. Here's how it worked, way back then in the mid-20th century:

Every Valentine's night, after dusk, neighborhood kids and teenagers from all over town would take to the streets. Each youngster would be loaded down with an ample number of Valentine cards and also armed with a generous supply of hefty throwing-sized rocks. The routine, there in the semi-darkness, was to place a Valentine on the front porch of the house of a friend or sweetheart or anyone who was the object of one's Valentine wishes. Then you'd stand back away from the house and "chunk" a suitably heavy rock onto the porch of the house, creating enough noise to notify the occupants inside that a Valentine had been delivered. The thrower of the Valentine then quickly hid from view of the porch, perhaps behind a nearby hedge or a fence, or at any concealed place that was

situated at a place from which he or she could observe the occupants of the house as they retrieved the Valentine from the porch floor. The occupants of the house would then glance around in the darkness to see if they could spot and identify the concealed thrower. Usually, failing to do so, they'd go right back inside the house to await the next thrower. Typically the retrievers of the "thrown" Valentines were the parents of the friend or of the beloved, because the boy or girl for whom the Valentine was intended was also somewhere out in the neighborhood darkness delivering their own Valentines in just the same way. During the course of the evening, fifteen to thirty such deliveries would be made to every neighborhood house where children or teens lived.

The kids throwing the Valentines were generally very careful to aim their rocks so that they simply tumbled loudly across the wooden porch floor boards and didn't



go crashing into painted front doors or through any nearby window glass. But, of course, occasional accidents did happen - and when they did our parents would threaten to stop the tradition. But they themselves had done the very same thing on Valentine's night in Phenix City when they were youngsters, so their threats were just so much hot air and we kids all knew it.



AFA truly appreciates the following supporters who have joined or renewed their memberships since June 2009:

Auburn: Wayne Flynt; **Birmingham:** Leah Atkins, Brant Beene, Duncan and Marie Blair (Sustaining), Joan Broerman, Phillip Foster, Peggy Hair (Patron), Gregory Jeane, Mrs. Charles Lane, Patricia Martin, Burgin Mathews, Brenda Moore; **Butler:** Connie James; **Chelsea:** Mark Lindsay; **Cullman:** Michael Sanders; **Florence:** Rebecca West; **Fort Payne:** Hank Willett, Russell Gulley, John Hume; **Fort Deposit:** Joseph Cates; **Gaylesville:** Bill and Nancy Martin; **Gulf Shores:** Steven Dark; **Huntsville:** Kay Brotherton (Patron), Bruce Walker; **Leesburg:** Sara and Lowell Hamilton; **Marbury:** Dr. A. Wayne DeLoach; **Millbrook:** William Hogan; **Montgomery:** Jim Carnes and Erin Keller (Patron), Evelyn Early, Clyde Eller, Mr. and Mrs. James Loeb (Patron), Karren Pell, Cheryl Sabel; **Northport:** Karen Gardiner; **Prattville:** Richard Huckaby; **Prichard:** Wanda Johnson; **Scottsboro:** Steve Overby (Patron); **Sheffield:** Kenneth Brooks; **Thomasville:** Linda Vice; **Troy:** John Dew; **Tuscaloosa:** Lydia Atkins, Joy Baklanoff, Elliot Knight, Ana Self Schubert; **Valdosta, GA:** E. Cameron Hickman; **St. Petersburg, FL:** Shawn Williams; **New Orleans, LA:** Anton Haardt (Corporate) -- Contribution was given in loving memory of Alabama folk artists Juanita Rogers, Zora Belle Ellis, Mose Tolliver, and her parents Mabel and John Haardt; **New York, NY:** Dr. Elliott Hurwitz; **Scarsdale, NY:** Adam Boyd; **Gladstone, OR:** Barbara Vaughn; **Normandy, TN:** Roy Turrentine; **Austin, TX:** Charles and Cenda Price (Patron).

Alabama Folklife Association Board of Directors 2009-2010

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We regret the passing of AFA member James Loeb (1922-2010). He founded Montgomery's Landmarks Foundation, and Old Alabama Town, where he was president for many years, and was a long-time supporter of the AFA.

The Alabama Folklife Association is a non-profit statewide organization whose purpose is to promote knowledge and appreciation of Alabama folklife through activities including festivals, conferences, fieldwork, videos, audio recordings and publications. Your membership supports these activities. In return you receive our journal *Tributaries*.

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To join, send this form, with check payable to the AFA, to Alabama Folklife Association, P.O. Box 4697, Montgomery, AL 36103-4697. Your contribution is tax deductible.

AFA Hosts Alabama Foodways Gathering

The Alabama Folklife Association (AFA) held its annual meeting, November 7, 2009, in Old Alabama Town (OAT), a historic neighborhood in downtown Montgomery. Under bright, breezy, sunny skies, AFA members, guests and friends gathered in the OAT church to hear presentations on traditional Alabama foods and, for lunch, sample foods prepared by several Alabama cooks. The gathering showcased traditional foods from four regions across the state: goat and chicken stews from the Tennessee Valley, barbecue sauces from the barbecue clubs of Sumter County, seafood gumbo from the Gulf Coast and fried lacy cornbread from the Wiregrass Region.

During the foodways presentations in the church, Alabama Community Scholars introduced expert cooks who talked about the four traditional foods, how they originated and became traditions in their families and communities. A soft breeze filled the air with aromas from cornbread fried in hot oil and foods still simmering in crock pots and stew pots outside the church near the dining area under the tents.

Before lunch, Bill Allen interviewed Carlos Shannon of Piney Chapel about making and serving goat and chicken stews. Shannon, a colorful storyteller and humorist, said it takes several days to make a good goat stew and expounded on the lengthy process to prepare the stew. He said jokes and stories are the main reasons for goat stew gatherings and noted that this tradition exists mainly in the northwest corner of Alabama. Shannon serves his stews with plain saltine crackers, salt and pepper to taste.

Valerie Burns and Becky Robertson brought five Sumter County barbecue sauces to the Alabama Foodways gathering. (Photo by Sylvia Stephens)

Valerie Pope Burns of the Center for the Study of the Black Belt and Becky Robertson, president of the Epes Barbecue Club, talked about the seven barbecue clubs in the rural communities of Sumter County, discussing what they have in common and what is unique about each club. Burns and Robertson shared anecdotes about the barbecue suppers and showed slides of the historic club buildings, several being historic school houses.

At noon, a crowd of about 75 people sampled Shannon's goat and chicken stews, Judith Adams' gumbo thickened with fresh seafood from Mobile, and shredded pork from the nearby Farmers Market Cafe topped with their choice of barbecue sauces from three Sumter County clubs, Epes, Timilichee, and Emelle. They were delighted with Connie Floyd's fried lacy cornbread and a special apple pie turnover treat fried on the spot by Connie and her two sisters. Slaw from the nearby Farmers Market was also served to round out the meal.

Back in the church after lunch AFA, members held a brief business meeting in which they voted to re-elect the current Board of Directors to another year of service so that they would have an opportunity to start working on the strategic five year plan they devised in July.

Community Scholars rounded out the afternoon with two more traditional foodways presentations on seafood gumbo and fried lacy cornbread. Susan Thomas shared the stage with Judith Adams of Mobile, who learned to make gumbo from her grandmother in Bay Minette. Adams explained the painstaking and tedious process for making the basic gumbo

roux, ingredients that must be used in any gumbo and the optional choices of ingredients that are used by many gumbo cooks. She handed out a copy of a seafood gumbo recipe to be used as a guide, shared a few of her secret ingredients and revealed why her gumbo was so tasty.

Sylvia Stephens interviewed Connie Floyd of Troy on making fried lacy cornbread from three simple ingredients: water, salt and fine cornmeal ground locally in the Wiregrass Region. During the discussion, audience members agreed that fried cornbread seems to be served as a specialty in most restaurants of southeastern Alabama when in other parts of the country cornbread is oven-baked.

The Alabama Foodways Gathering was sponsored by the Alabama Folklife Association and made possible by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Alabama State Council on the Arts. It was co-chaired by Joyce Cauthen and Sylvia Stephens with support by staff members from the Alabama Center for Traditional Culture, Old Alabama Town, and the AFA Board of Directors. A booklet of articles, "Alabama Foodways Gathering, Celebrating Food Traditions from Four Regions of Alabama," was written by Alabama Community Scholars who interviewed the local cooks and presented the four regional food traditions. A .pdf version of the booklet is available online at www.alabamafolklife.org.



Carlos Shannon sampled his own chicken stew. (Photo by Sylvia Stephens)

Coming Soon: CD Featuring “New Book” Singing

In Alabama we have long celebrated the tradition of a capella singing from a book entitled *The Sacred Harp*, published in 1844, which has musical notation in the form of four shapes called *fa* (triangle), *sol* (circle), *la* (rectangle) and *mi* (diamond). A CD produced by Steve Grauberger of the Alabama Center for Traditional Culture will focus on another form of shape-note singing that has a long history in the state.

Originating shortly after the end of the Civil War and called “Southern gospel singing,” “convention singing,” “seven shape-note singing,” or “new book singing,” the CD features recently composed songs published in small paperback songsters using seven shapes for the do-re-mi scale. Piano accompaniment is an important part of the tradition.

Grauberger, over several years, has recorded various Alabama state gospel singing conventions and a few regional county conventions. The CD includes highlights from these recordings, with an emphasis on performances of songs written by living Alabama songwriters as well as famed writers of the past such as G. T. Speer, O. A. Parris and J. R. Baxter. The extended liner notes give a general history of seven-shape singing and its importance in Alabama.

Birmingham artist Bethanne Hill created the cover for the CD, which will be available soon online at alabamafolklife.org and in the AFA booth at several festivals. It also may be ordered by calling Jackie Ely at 334-242-4076, Ext. 234.



The “New Book” CD is the fifth in the Traditional Musics of Alabama Series produced by the Alabama Center for Traditional Culture. The cover was designed by Bethanne Hill.

Report from the Alabama Center for Traditional Culture (ACTC)

- The ACTC manages the grants program of the Alabama State Council on the Arts (ASCA) pertaining to folklife. Our grant deadlines are June 1 and September 1 for project grants and September 1 for folk arts apprenticeship grants. Contact Joey Brackner for questions about project grants and Anne Kimzey for questions about apprenticeships.
- On February 6, 2010, ACTC, along with the AFA and the Alabama Department of Archives and History sponsored the 13th annual Rotunda Singing. The singing in the foyer of the Alabama Department of Archives and History featured singers from all over the state who sang from the four shape-note hymnals used in Alabama. *Sacred Harp* singer Bill Hogan presided.
- The 12th volume of *Tributaries* is being assembled. This issue will contain articles about Alabama’s sacred music traditions. There will be entries on Camp Fasola, the annual Jackson singing of Ozark, Alabama, and the convention-style gospel singing tradition. Issue 13 will be assembled later this year and will be a thematic issue about Alabama foodways. If you are researching Alabama foodways and wish to contribute an article, please contact Joey Brackner.
- Deborah Boykin is continuing her ongoing research on the state’s bluegrass music. In addition, she has been nominating traditional artists from Alabama for the Southern Arts Federation’s Artist Registry website (www.southernartistry.org). She has also been working with Kevin Nutt at ADAH to identify sources of funding to sustain and grow the Archive of Alabama Folk Culture.
- Steve Grauberger produces ASCA’s weekly radio series “Alabama Arts Radio” for the Southeastern Public Radio Network. ASCA staff members conduct the interviews. Recent programs concerning Alabama traditional culture include Gip’s Juke Joint, Herb Trotman, and Henry Glassie. You can listen to past programs at www.alabamaartsradio.com. If you have program ideas for Alabama Arts Radio, please contact Grauberger.

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Meet the AFA at Two Spring Festivals



This piece by Alabama quilter Mozell Benson is part of American Masterpieces of Southern Craft and Traditional Art, an exhibition at the Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art in Auburn. (Photo courtesy of the Southern Arts Federation)

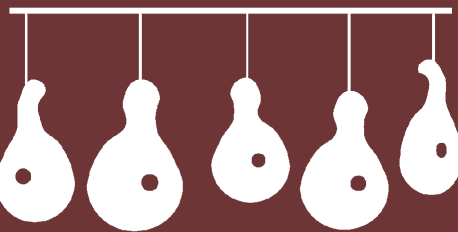
The AFA will take part in the Chicken and Egg Festival in Moulton on April 10-11 and the Arts and Crafts Show and May Day at the Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art in Auburn on May 1.

The Chicken and Egg Festival is a two-day outdoor event with food vendors, live entertainment on the Chicken Stage, educational exhibits, children's activities, a folklife area, and much more. In previous years officials recorded more than 15,000 people in attendance. The event is organized by the Lawrence County Arts Council and made possible through the effort of more than 400 volunteers. For more information, visit www.alabamachickenandeggfestival.com. We hope you'll attend and if you are so inclined, we would love for you to help with the booth for a couple of hours. To volunteer, contact Joyce Cauthen, 205-822-0505, or joycecauthen@bellsouth.net.

On May 1, the AFA will take part in a Craft Show and May Day activities at the Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art in Auburn, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. National Heritage fellows Bettye Kimbrell, quilter, and Jerry Brown, potter, Gene Ivy, fiddle maker, and other craft masters will be present at the craft show and May Day celebration. This event is held in conjunction with a Southern Arts Federation exhibition entitled Tradition/Innovation: American Masterpieces of Southern Craft and Traditional Art which presents fifty-eight of the region's master artists working in ceramics, glass, fiber arts, basketry, woodworking, metal-smithing, book arts, and other traditional "utilitarian" media. For more information, visit www.jcsm.auburn.edu.



Alabama Folklife



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The AFA is supported in part by the Alabama State Council on the Arts and by proceeds from the sale of "Support the Arts" car tags.

You may view the newsletter with color photos, and send it to others by going to www.alabamafolklife.org/resources.

