Tributaries

On the name of the journal:

Alabama's waterways intersect its folkways at every level. Early settlement and cultural diffusion conformed to drainage patterns. The Coastal Plain, the Black Belt, the Foothills, and the Tennessee Valley remain distinct traditional as well as economic regions today. The state's cultural landscape, like its physical one, features a network of "tributaries" rather than a single dominant mainstream.

—Jim Carnes, from the Premiere Issue

Tributaries

Journal of the Alabama Folklife Association

Joey Brackner
EDITOR

2003

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Editor's Note

For Volume 6 of *Tributaries*, we return to the non-thematic, diverse content of years past. I want to thank everyone for their kind comments concerning Volume 5, an issue devoted to African-American vernacular music. I am sure that future issues of *Tributaries* will have themes, but it is beyond the abilities of our current administrative structure to develop one for every year. The board and membership of the Alabama Folklife Association have expressed an interest in moving *Tributaries* in the direction of an academic journal. This implies refereeing as an important part of the process. For right now, with the limitations of budget and staff, we hope to be a hybrid, offering a juried process for those who desire it (for academic advancement) and, at the same time, accepting articles written for the more general public. Please feel free to contact me if you are interested in having a peer-reviewed article appear in *Tributaries.*

I would like to thank Dr. Jim Brown, the incoming president of the Alabama Folklife Association, for his profile of one of the first publicly funded folklife events held in Alabama. Folkcenter South was a pioneering effort that provided fieldwork leads for many subsequent folklorists. The accomplished photographer Mark Gooch, then a student of Brown's, has let us publish some of his photographs from that period. For their article contrasting family reunions in the black and white communities of Lower Alabama, Stephen Criswell and Samantha Criswell drew on fieldwork they conducted while they lived in Monroeville, Alabama, working on the University of Southern Mississippi's multi-state Piney Woods folklife survey. Lamar Marshall, a dedicated environmentalist and student of American Indian culture, shares his experiences finding the traces of Alabama's first highways in what are some of Alabama's most treasured wilderness areas. Joyce Cauthen and Anne Kimzey provide background information on Mozell Benson, a great Alabama artist. Our reviewers provide in-depth descriptions of several new documentary products relating to Alabama folk culture including four byproducts of the much-publicized exhibition, *The Quilts of Gee's Bend.*

I hope that you will visit the Alabama Folklife Association website— Alabamafolklife.org. At this site you can order this and past issues of *Tributaries*, most of the documentary items that have been reviewed by us, and other products that will enhance your understanding of Alabama folk culture. For your convenience, we have also included information about the Alabama Folklife Association and their documentary products at the back of the issue.

I appreciate the many suggestions by AFA members and others. I also wish to acknowledge the annual copyediting efforts of Randall Williams. He provides valued continuity for the journal. Vinnie Watson, the administrative assistant at the Alabama State Council on the Arts, has also assisted in the production of this issue. We welcome your suggestions, comments, and contributions for future issues.

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Alabama's First Folklife Celebration: The Brief, Mostly Happy Life of FolkcenterSouth

Jim Brown

November 20, 1976, was a cold and sometimes rainy Saturday at Tannehill State Park's pioneer farm. Somewhere between two hundred and three hundred people came despite the weather to watch ten carefully chosen traditional craftspeople work their trades. Though the crowd was thin, most came away fascinated by the experience. Spectators were introduced to craftspeople generally through a booklet and then individually by student "cultural interpreters" assigned to the craftspeople. An apprenticeship program in place for the day enabled many onlookers and a few more serious students to try their hand under the tutelage of de facto masters of country crafts. Sparks flew at the forge all day, for example, and a blacksmith urged an arm-weary apprentice to hammer faster while the iron was still hot: "Blacksmiths only go to hell for two reasons, son: charging too little and whipping cold iron!" It may have been Alabama's first real folklife celebration.

This was almost all the work of a handful of college students who won a $7,500 Youthgrant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to study folkcraft survival in ten counties around and east of Birmingham—Jefferson, Blount, Calhoun, Chilton, Clay, Coosa, Cullman, Shelby, St. Clair, and Talladega. This late November Saturday was the last phase of their really ambitious four-step plan: a) do a comprehensive survey of surviving folk crafts in the ten counties; b) identify the superior or unusual craftspersons; c) do oral histories and photographic essays on these; and d) assemble them for a final folk craft celebration featuring the ten best.

I was one faculty sponsor for the Youthgrant; Wayne Flynt was the other. We both were then teaching in Samford University's history department where we

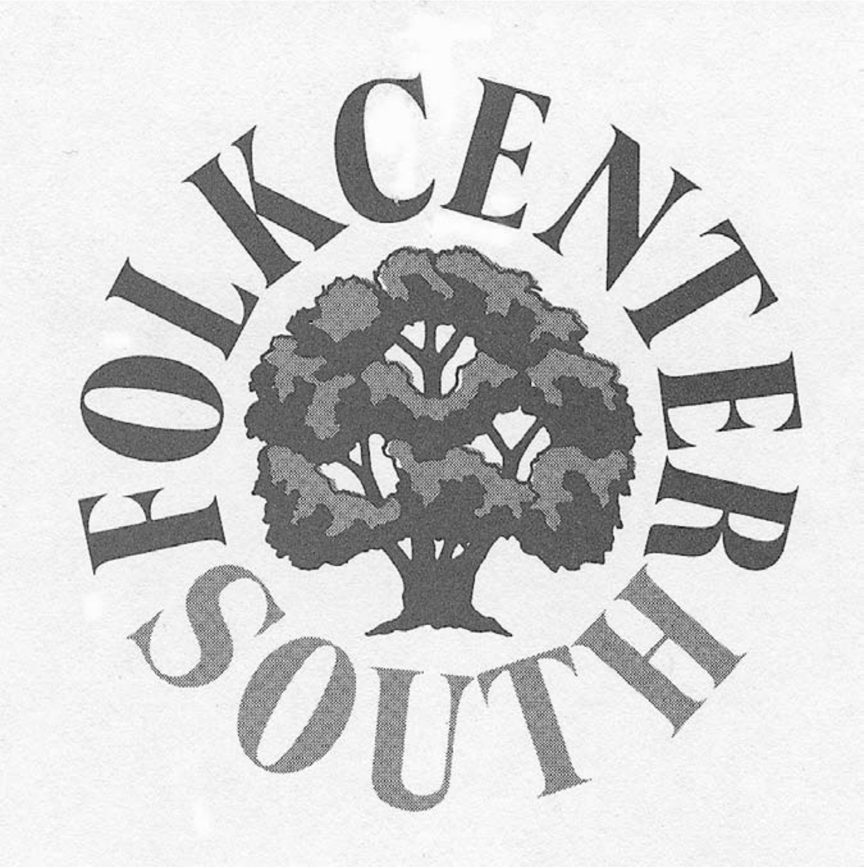


FIGURE 1
The FolkcenterSouth logo.

had recently cobbled together a folklore minor (drawing from Wayne's longtime interests in oral history and grassroots culture in the South, from my newer interests in the European folk consciousness behind nationalism, and from both our interests in traditional crafts, music, and even fishing techniques). The real key, however, was a particular group of students in our classes in 1975. Every teacher knows that individual classes and years of students have their own personalities. The personality of this one at Samford, looking back, was some special interface between the Spirit of the Times and a handful of really interesting students. The Zeitgeist was that by the mid-1970s some of the late

1960s ferment and questioning abroad in the country at large had percolated even into this conservative Baptist school in the Heart of Dixie.

The two key student personalities were Mark Gooch and Cathy Hanby. Mark's interests were in the social sciences generally (he eventually transferred to UAB to major in anthropology) but preeminently in photography. Even in his student years at Samford his photography was unusual and insightful, already elevated to a sort of Walker Evans social science, as you can see from the photos accompanying this article. Cathy was a history major with great energy and enough interest in folklore to propel her to eventual graduate degrees in it.

As I remember, I suggested to Mark and Cathy the possibility of such a grant. They commandeered my living room as a place in which to write it, despite the wanderings-through of small children. They then recruited a dozen or more enthusiastic fellow students and began serious self-preparation for the grant even before knowing one was awarded. They engaged Professor Flynt to instruct them in the practicalities of oral history. Mark had occasion to travel through Bloomington, Indiana, and took advantage of it to ask the advice of Professor Richard Dorson, noted historian and folklorist at IU's doctoral folklore program. Mark and Cathy together visited the Folklore archives at Western Kentucky University, and interviewed Professor Lynwood Montell, chair of the Center for Intercultural and Folk Studies there. They corresponded with Jane Rozier of the Tennessee Arts Council, and spoke with publishing experts at Oxmoor House and exhibition experts at the Birmingham Museum of Art. By the time they won the grant in January 1976, they had developed a thoughtful strategy for combing the ten-county area.

Then came major setbacks. First the actual grant money was slow to come in. Then a few key members of the student team graduated in May, and one very active member of the group had a personal tragedy that took her away from the project. Membership dwindled until by summertime there were fewer active students than counties to be covered. Mark Gooch took on three counties, and I was promoted from faculty sponsor to honorary-student-for-Blount County. In my old manila folder on the project, on top of the pile is a much-worn Blount County road map. All the tactics we had thought of to pursue folkcraft survivals—using the public schools, the retirement homes, the local newspaper columnists, etc.—turned out to be less effective than simple driving and asking, which we shortened to D&A. I drove every paved road in Blount County at least once, and a lot that weren't paved. I worked Blount County from Rosa to Royal, and was intrigued by its beauty—the parts that hadn't been strip-mined, at any rate. I got to know highways 75 and 79, the two main arteries leading from Birmingham into the heart of the county, like old friends. I still remember highlights of the year, such as when student William Whitten and I got leads on and then found eighty-five-year-old Homer Rigsby on the porch of his house, a new white oak basket in his hands. And I'm sure more miles were driven and more questions were asked in almost all other counties than in "mine."

Meanwhile, Mark and Cathy and a few others kept it all organized. They incorporated and logoed as FolkcenterSouth, thinking this might become a permanent enterprise. Although that was not to be, Samford provided a spare office for the year, telephone included, and Mark held weekly progress meetings there. Every newspaper in the ten-county area got news releases from FolkcenterSouth, and a large ad was placed in the biggest daily paper in the area, the *Birmingham News*. Mark and Cathy were regular guests on talk shows and service clubs lunches, and occasionally appeared on the Country Boy Eddy early-morning TV show.

Results of the survey, in brief? Too many quilters to get a handle on (although by deciding to drop this craft from our search, traditionally male crafts predominated in the final list). Forty traditional white oak basketmakers still active, an average of four a county. A dozen blacksmiths who, if not still all practicing, at least still had shops and tools. Five woodworkers of various traditional sorts; four makers of fishnets of various sorts, including hoopnets; one true folk potter; one corn-shuck chair bottomer; two folk musical instrument makers. No household in the ten-county area, as far as we could tell, had both a working spinning wheel and a working loom, all having perished in house fires over the years and no new ones made in replacement. We found no cooperage of any kind.

By fall Mark and Cathy and others were keeping work focused on the November Saturday celebration. Some three hundred offset-printed color posters were made and posted, and a huge private correspondence was kept up with interested individuals who'd been met throughout the year. Then there was the flurry of organizing the pioneer farm at Tannehill for the crafts celebration day, the arranging for transport (rental van) and materials for the artists (setting up the potter's wheel, firing up the forge), setting up the information booth, hosting the few press representatives and the NEH representative, lunch for participants, raffling off a quilt and basket that were door prizes for the day, transportation home for those who required it, ending well after midnight for some . . . a long but really satisfying day.

At the end of the final report to NEH on FolkcenterSouth, written in August of 1977, Mark Gooch added a personal note:

> Looking back over the past two years and my work with this grant, I see a period of my life which I will always remember with fondest memories. Too many times we rush through life overlooking much of the world around us. Youthgrants has given me the opportunity to step back and focus. During the grant period I had the pleasure of talking with hundreds of people throughout the state. Being able to talk with so many different people has had a great impact on me. Each person revealed in a different way what was important in his or her life. Drawing from this experience I am able to weigh the values I have placed on my life and translate this in my daily living. People taught me many new ways of looking at life's situations. I found myself listening, letting everyone teach me. Most of the people I encountered were travelers of another time. They carried with them a wealth of experience. I could see it in their hands as they worked and in the words of wisdom which they spoke. Worries about a life in the world of tomorrow were comforted by caring eyes which looked at me and said, "Live a good life; there's so much to be experienced."

I called Mark recently at his photography business in Birmingham and read him his words of a quarter-century and more ago. He responded that never in any of the talks he had with any of those folk crafts people he got to know best, did they ever break off a conversation because they had to go do something else.

In general, I have the same fond memories of the year, along with some wishful thinking about how nice it would be now if we had been able to finish oral histories and photographic essays on all these people. Looking back, the sort of survival definition we had of folk crafts was a bit old-fashioned and romantic, but there was a power to it nonetheless. We experienced the same sort of magic that ballad hunters in the high Appalachians did in the 1920s, or that central European folktale collectors did in the nineteenth century. Specialized craft research opened out into dramatic stories and broader life patterns in a rural culture largely unknown to students (and then-young professors).

On a D&A tour in one corner of Blount County, for example, I was directed to one Marvin Ogletree, seventy-six years of age, who lived in the same square mile as the Enterprise Church. I've still got the yellowed field notes I took, including the fact that my four-year-old son was with me for the day. Mr. Ogletree allowed that he indeed used to make a lot of baskets, but hadn't made a basket since one for his own son, and then it had taken him two weeks to make it, he was so rusty. He had thought that when he retired he'd pick it up again, but never really got able—which was a shame because he really liked to do that kind of work. He had been a cabinet and furniture maker; in the Depression he'd sold two rockers for five dollars. He had a rocker on his porch fifty-three years old, he reckoned, and it was bottomed with oak splits that really needed replacing. He had made white oak split fish baskets a foot and a half across the mouth, six feet long and tapering to a five-inch round solid block. Those were "less tedious" to make than oak split cotton baskets, he said; his daddy had taught him to make them so that you only needed ten or twelve ribs.

He reminisced about fishing such white oak catfish baskets as a youngster. He was picking cotton, which he hated, one hot summer day with his two older brothers, and to get out of it said he believed he'd go check the three baskets they had out in the river. They usually baited with "soured old corn bread" tied up in a tow sack and put inside the fish basket; a rope was tied to the tapered end and the current held the wide end downstream, and catfish presumably would follow the soured cornbread scent up to and then into the basket. A heavy rain had raised the river about three feet and muddied it up. When he tugged on the plow line rope tied to the first basket he had trouble lifting it off the bottom, and figured it had silted in. But even after it broke loose from the bottom it was heavy. Lodged in the mouth of that first basket, dead, was a catfish longer than he was. Inside were two more live ones each three feet long. In a sack he brought back a hundred pounds of thrashing catfish from the three baskets, and he remembered bumping it across the fields, grinning, heading toward his brothers. That had been more than sixty years before the day I spoke with him, but he could still see it in living color, and I have kept my own copy of it in memory from his telling since that day.

In Rosa, about halfway between Cleveland and Oneonta, I spent most of a day with L. G. (Gordon) and Flora Ballew as a result of more D&A. He had grown up in a basket-making family in Cullman County, moved to Rosa about 1925, and worked in poultry operations most of his life while piddling with baskets on the side. The Ballews had moved into their trailer when they had married thirty-three years ago, and Mrs. Ballew volunteered that she had been at this basket making ever since. Since retirement Mr. Ballew had gone back to full-time basket-making. The Ballews together had averaged making some 350 baskets each year for the past few years—cotton baskets for eighteen dollars; "oval" ones, really nice, with square bottoms and double-rimmed oval tops, for ten dollars; on down to very small and rough square-bottom, round-top, strap-handled ones for two dollars and a half. They also made fish baskets that separated in the middle for easy emptying, latching back again for use.

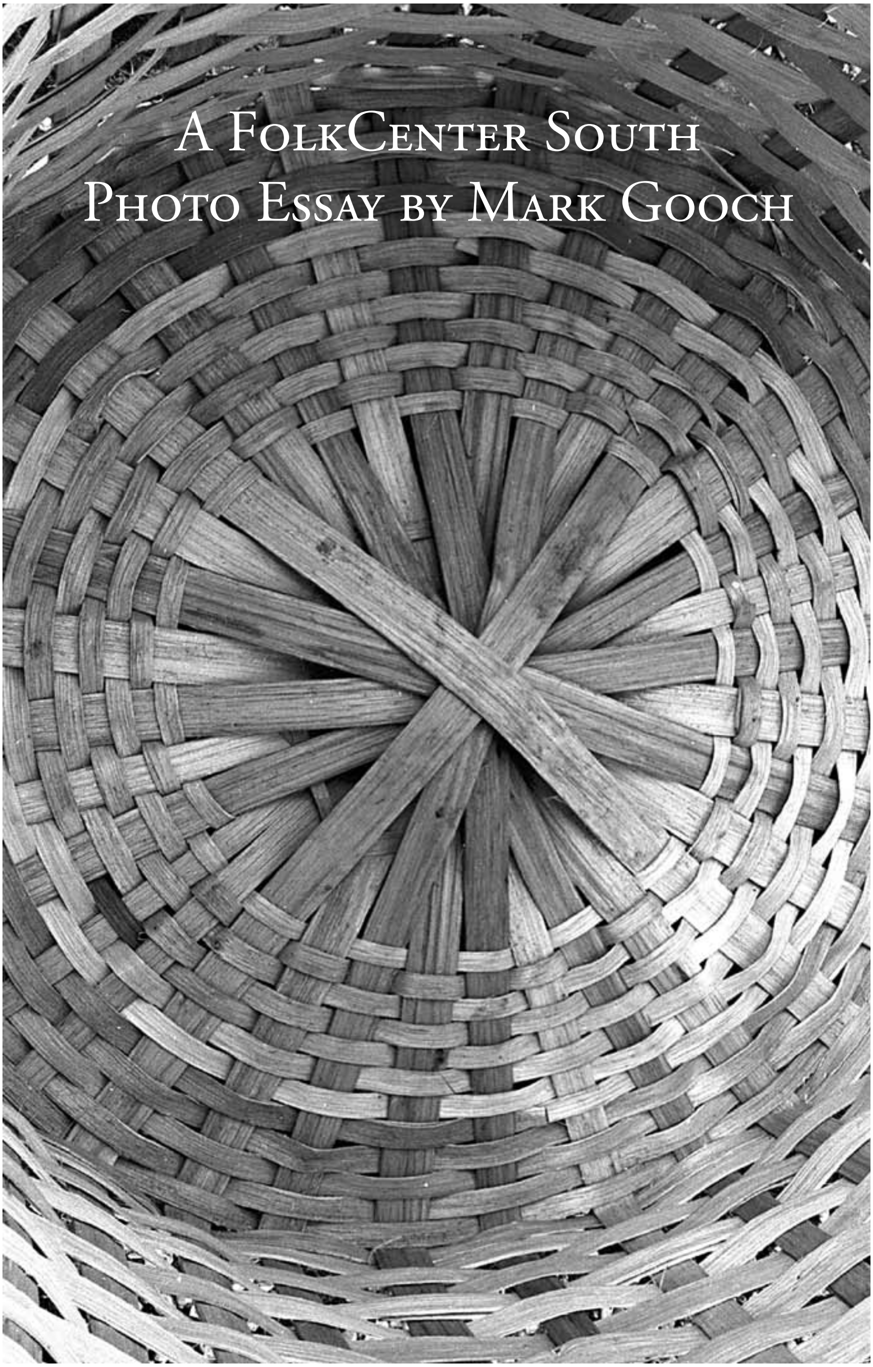
Mr. Ballew said his daddy had made baskets all his life. Many a time, Mr. Ballew said, he had seen his daddy dump the cotton he was picking out of his cotton basket and sell the basket to a drop-by customer. "A basket maker never has a basket," he moralized, "and a chair-bottomer never has a chair fit to sit in." He had stories to tell of sisters back in the Depression. Once they had no food and lots of mouths to feed, so they took an axe and some butcher knives into the woods and made some oak baskets. Now the baskets were rough, Mr. Ballew said, but the local general store took them in trade and they got themselves something to eat.

I still can't put my finger on all the parts of this that made for improved mental health among the collectors. There were lessons in human resilience from times harder than we had ever known. There was country humor and wisdom woven into turns of phrase in the language. There was being around age-old, close-to-the-earth crafts still very much alive and flourishing in forgotten corners of the region. Mark Gooch probably had it right in his final report: it was fascination with “travelers of another time,” and my time machine for this the Bicentennial year was a blue 1965 Chevy II with a four-year-old son sometimes riding shotgun. ■

Bibliographic note:

“Folk Craft Survival in Central Alabama,” Youthgrant in the Humanities
Project Director: J. Mark Gooch
Institution: Samford University
Grant Number: AY-24426-76-542
Grant Period: February 1, 1976 through May 31, 1977

A FolkCenter South
Photo Essay by Mark Gooch



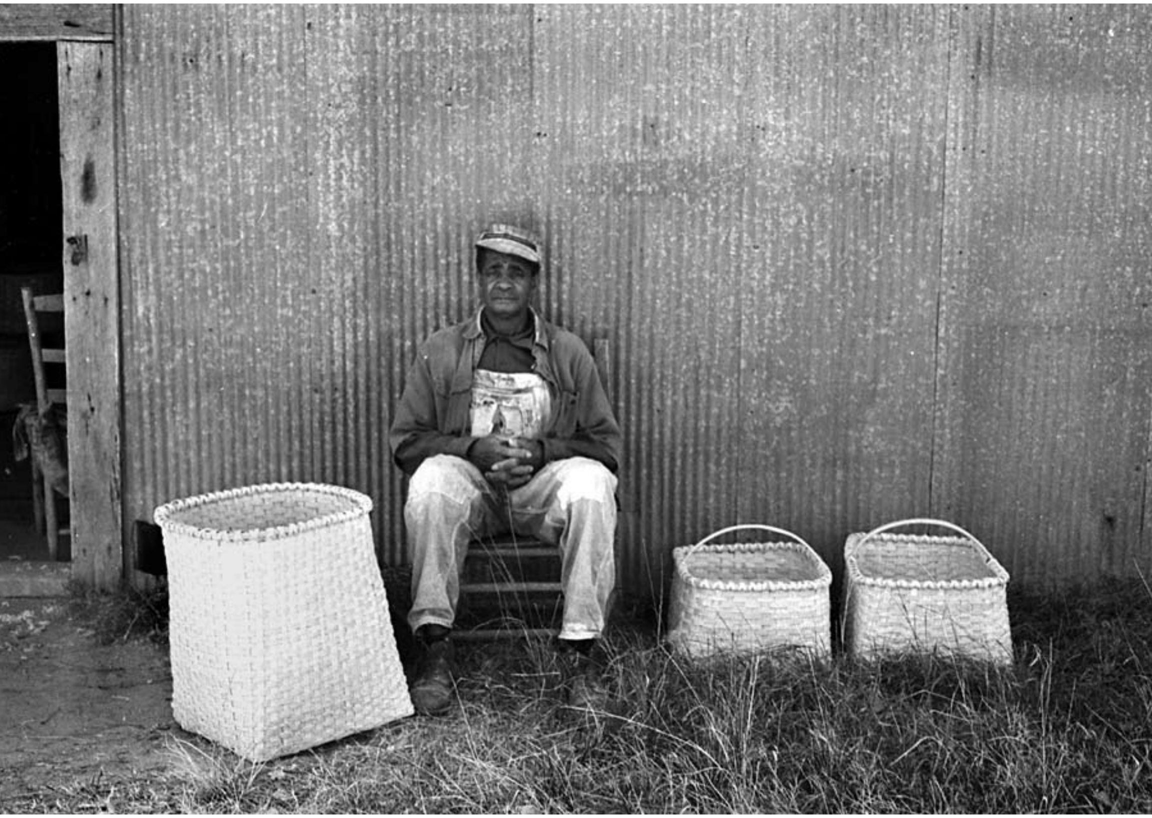
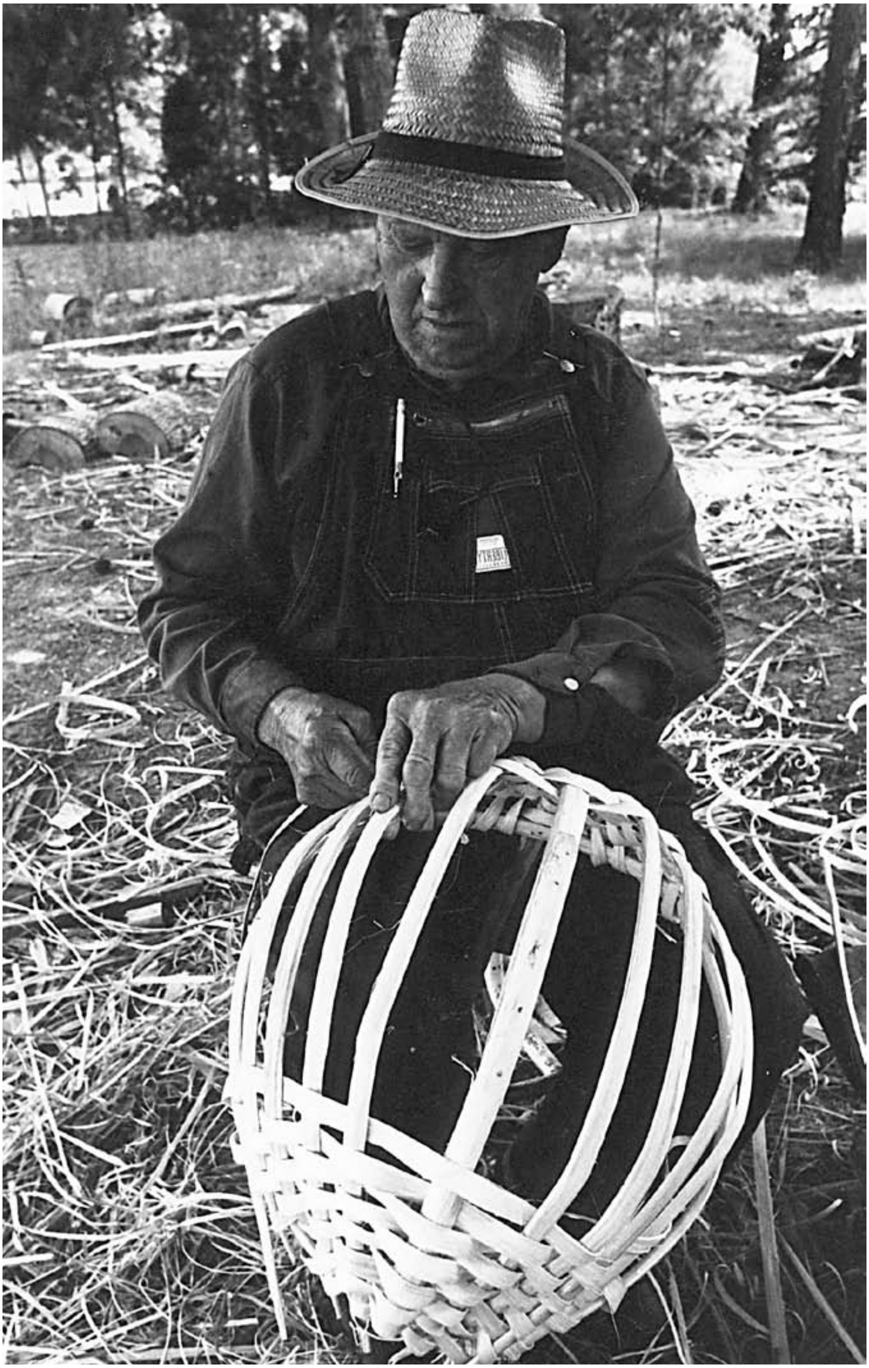


Figure 1 (previous page)
Basket by Jack Vice.

Figure 2 (above)
Eddie Campbell and his baskets, Maplesville, 1976.

Figure 3 (opposite page)
Henry Upchurch, White Plains, 1976.



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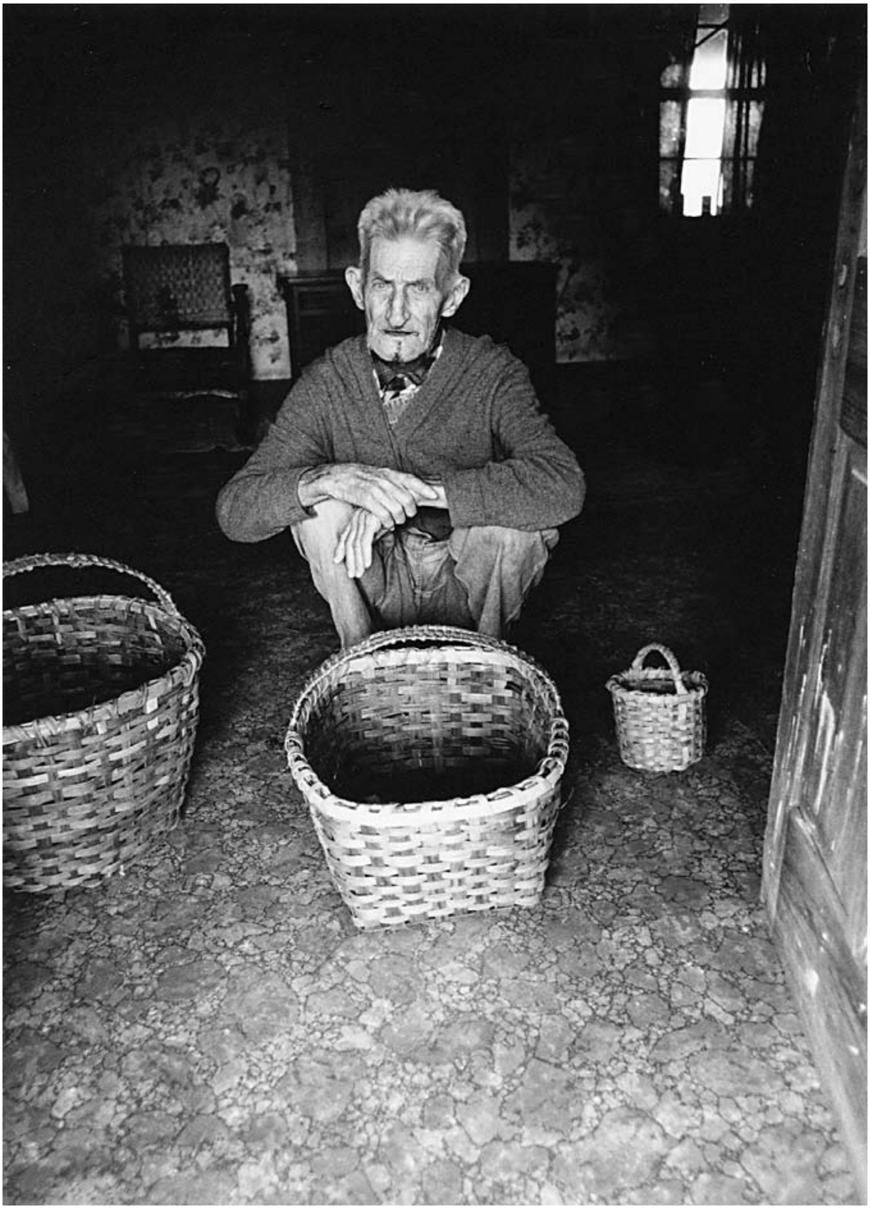


FIGURE 4

Homer Rigsby with baskets, near Wynnville, 1976.

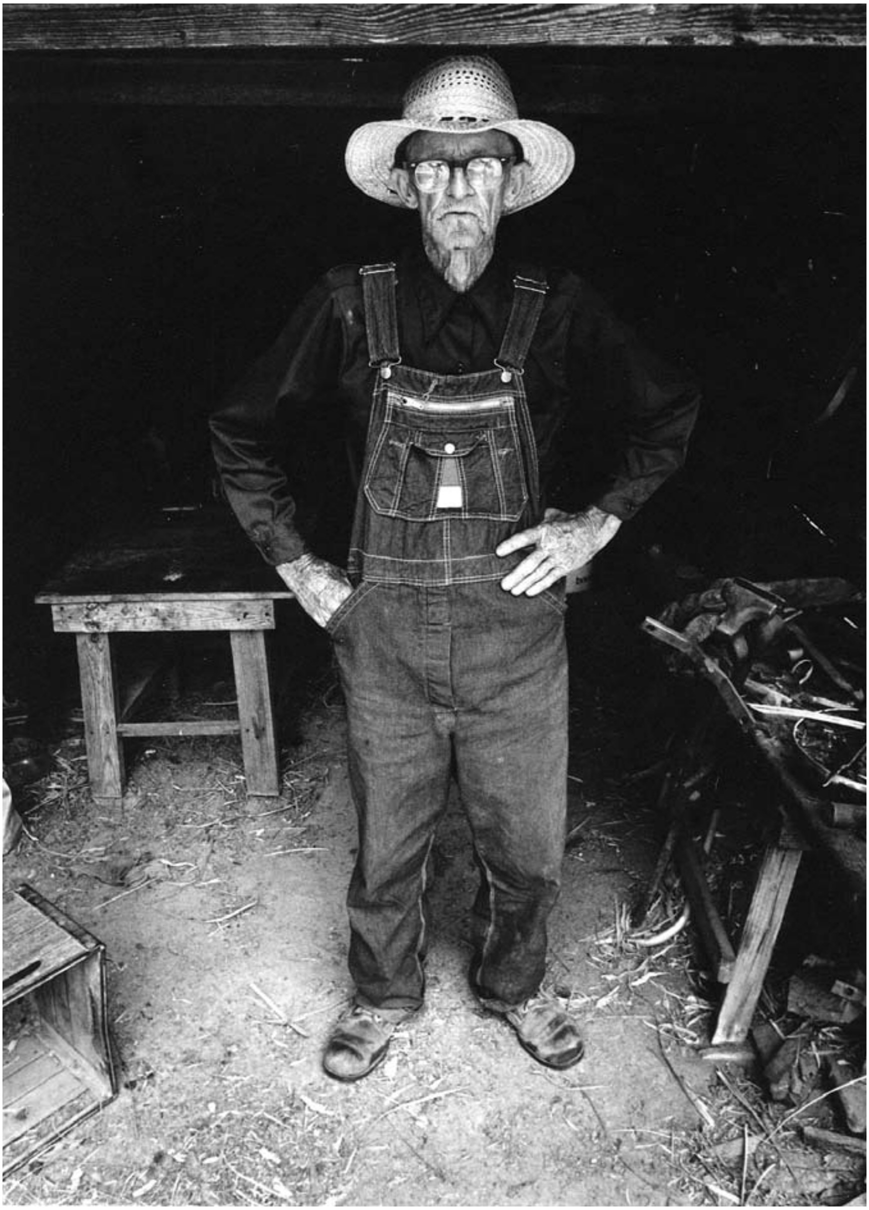


FIGURE 5

Jack Vice, basketmaker and blacksmith, Calhoun County, 1976.

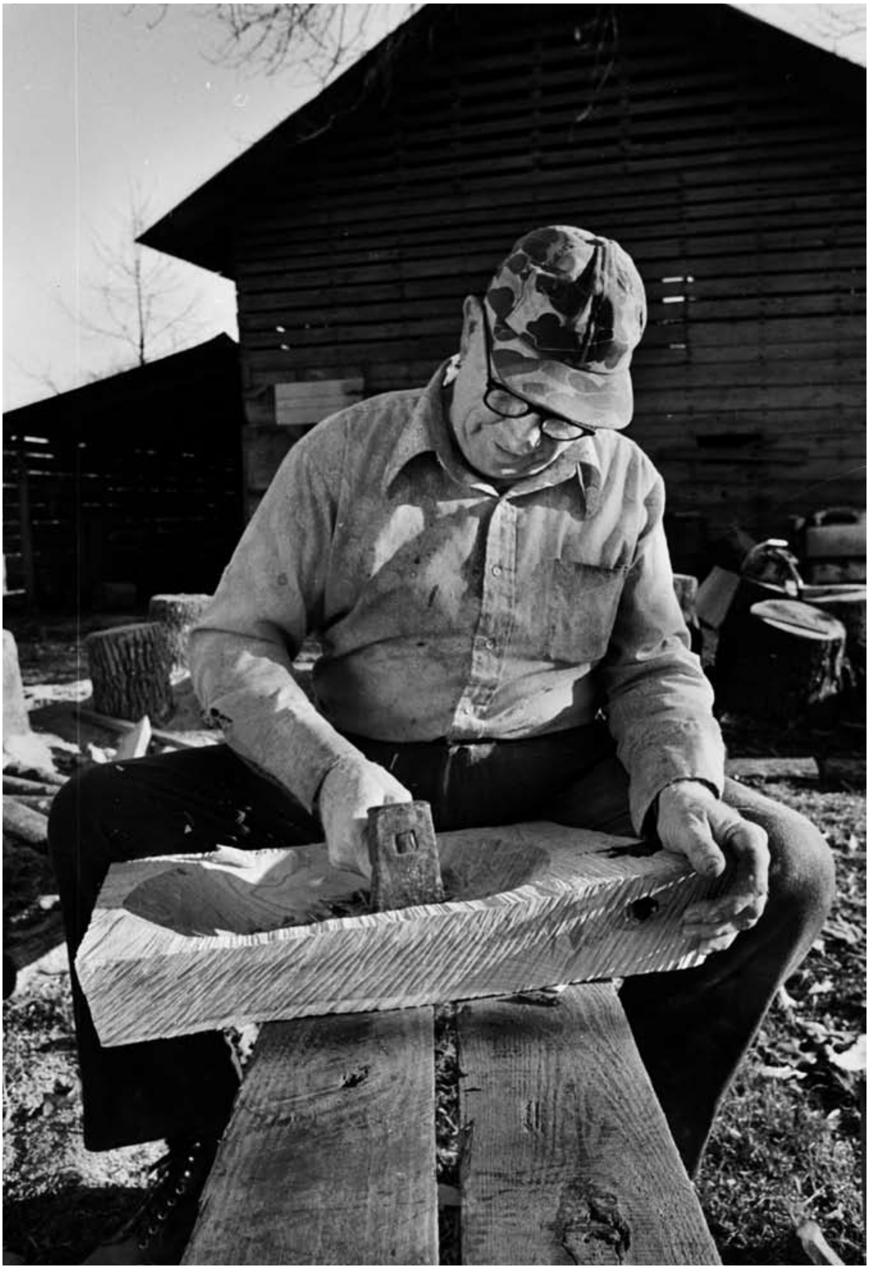


Figure 6

Jess Willett making a dough bowl, 1976.

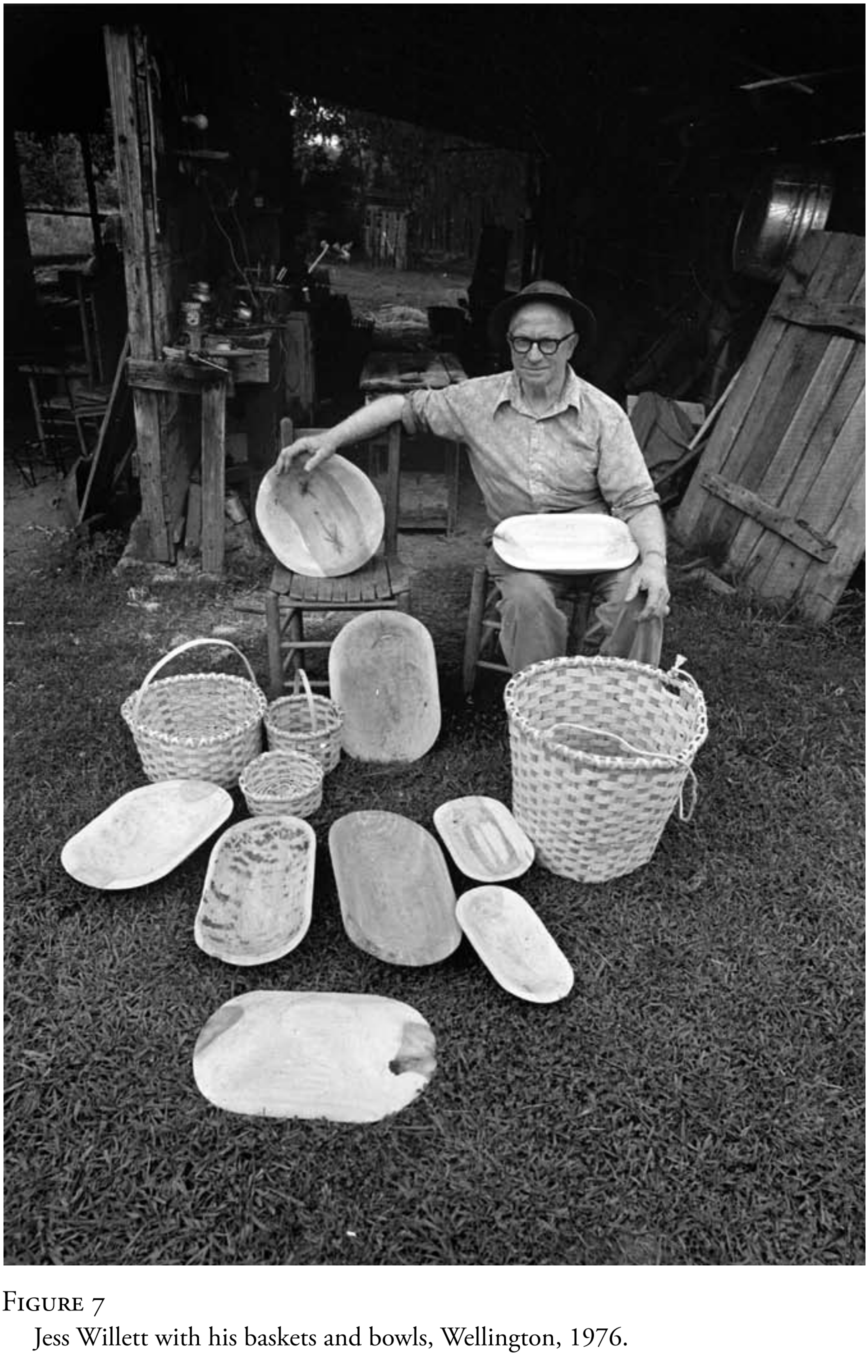


Figure 7
Jess Willett with his baskets and bowls, Wellington, 1976.

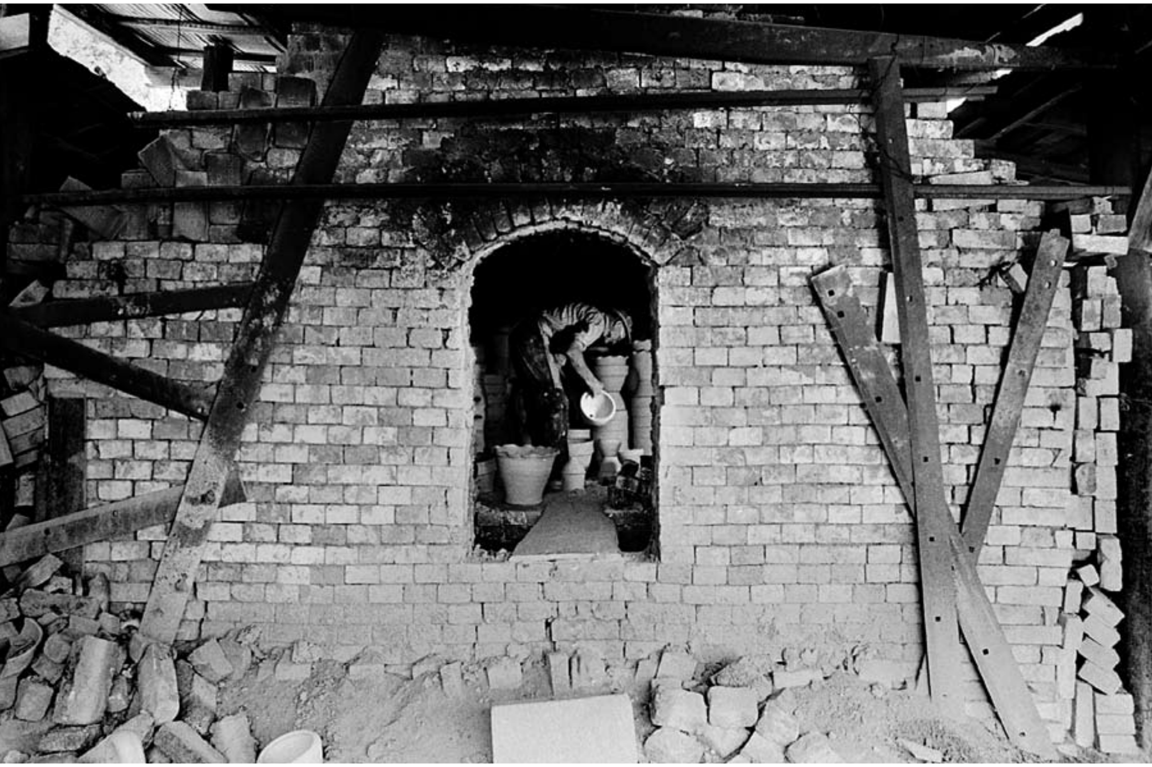
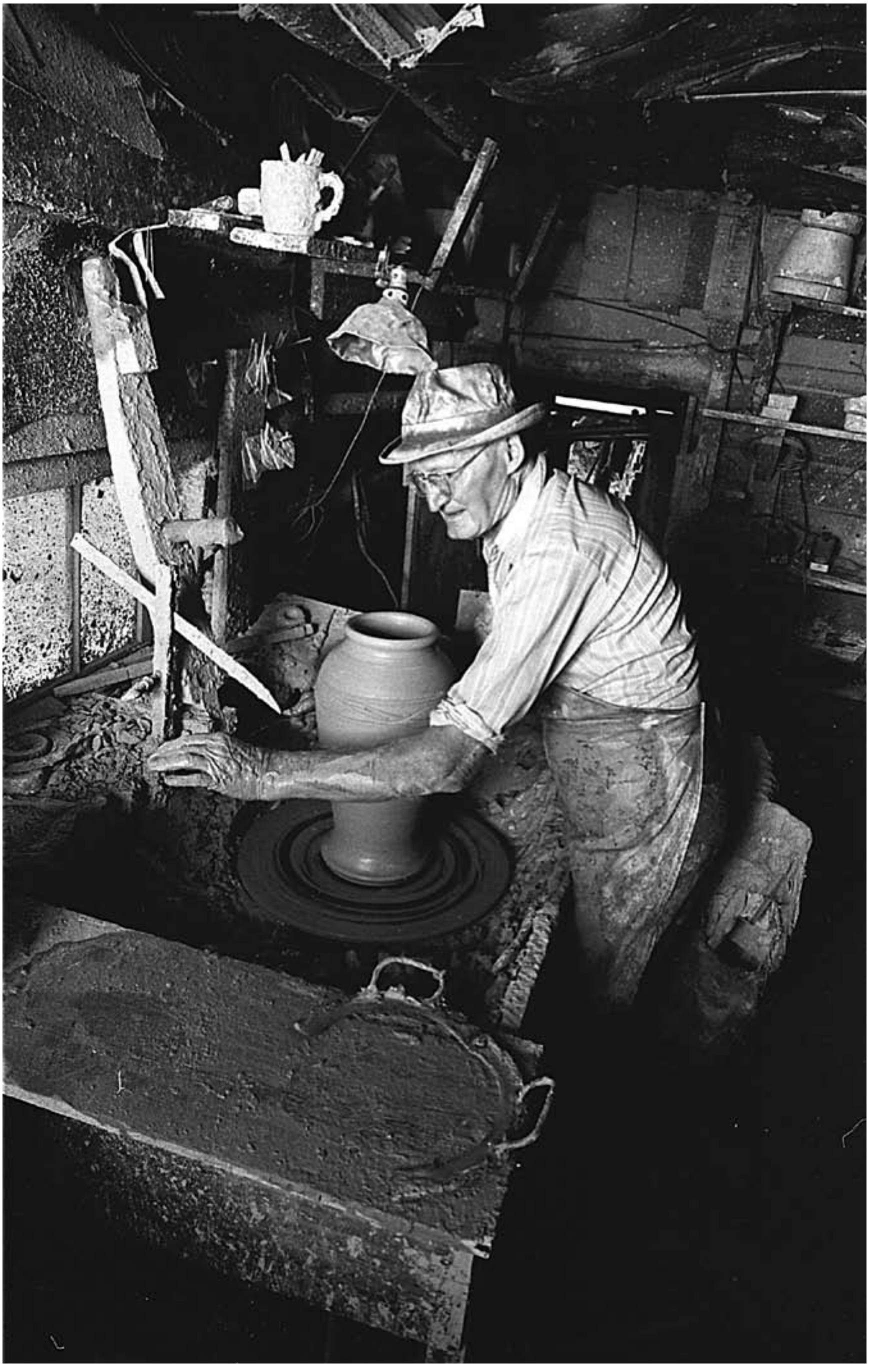


Figure 8
“Jug” Smith in his kiln, 1976.

Figure 9 (opposite)
Norman “Jug” Smith, Lawley, 1976.



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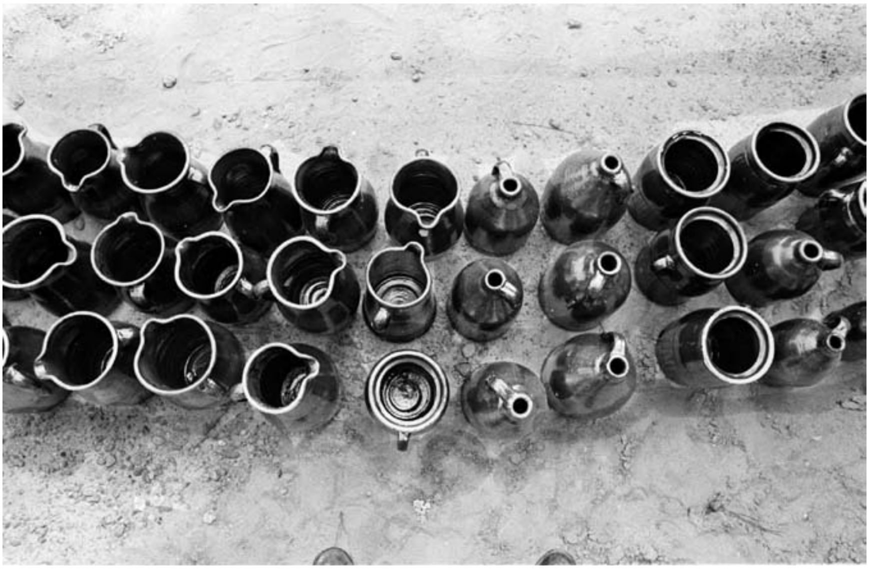
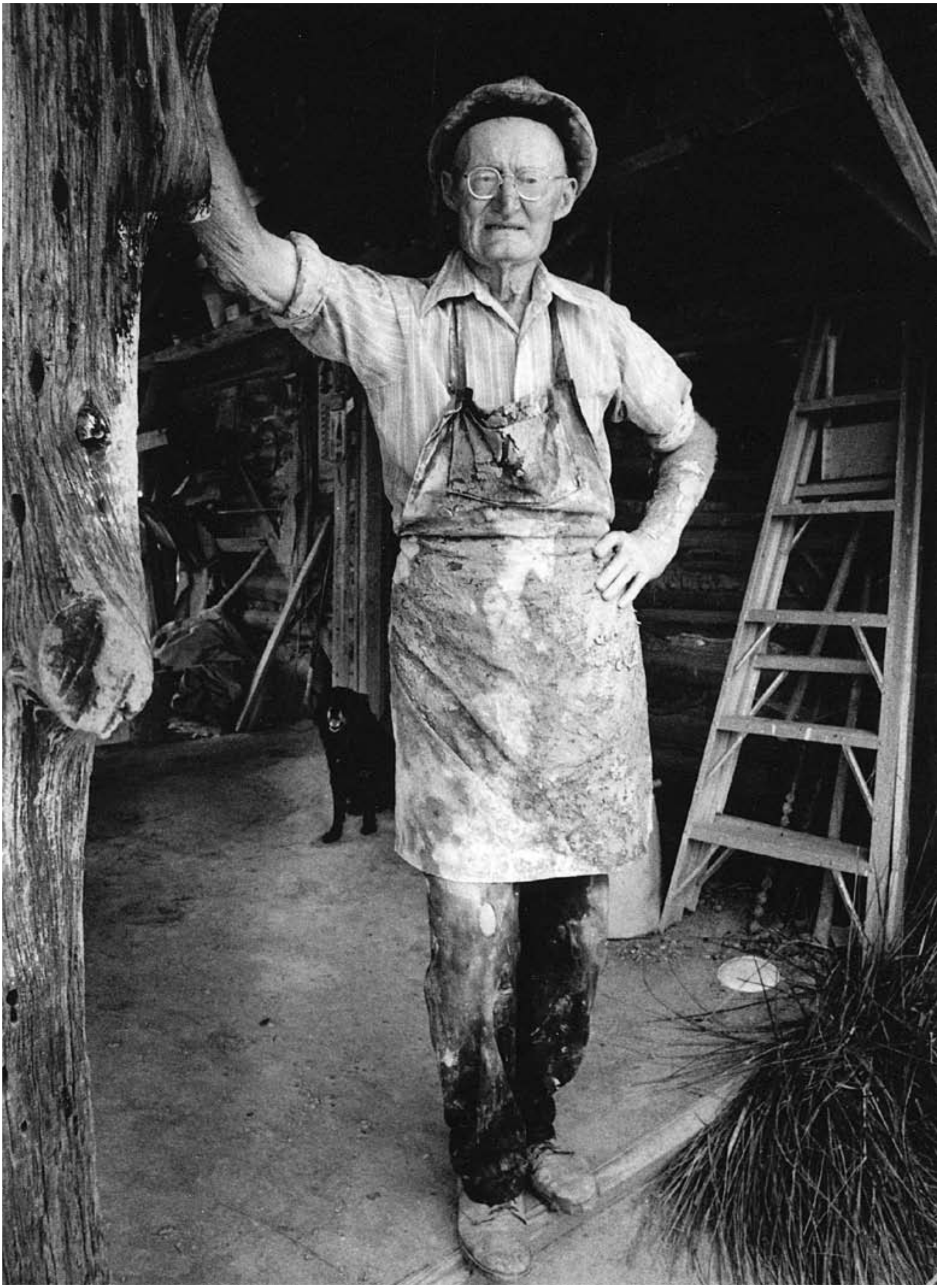


Figure 10

Albany-slipped wares by “Jug” Smith.

Figure 11 (opposite)

Norman “Jug” Smith, Lawley, 1976.



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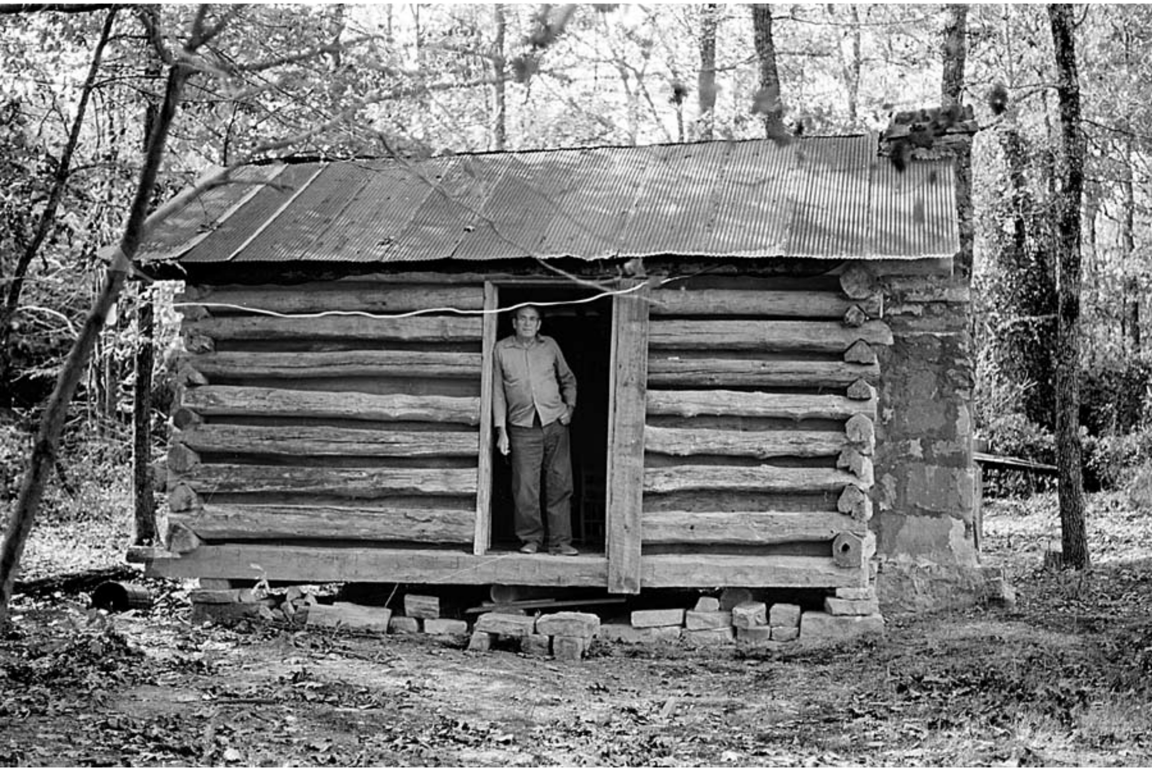

Figure 12 (opposite)
Arlin Moon in his shop, Holly Pond, 1976.

Figure 13 (above)
Arlin Moon in his family's ancestral log cabin, 1976.

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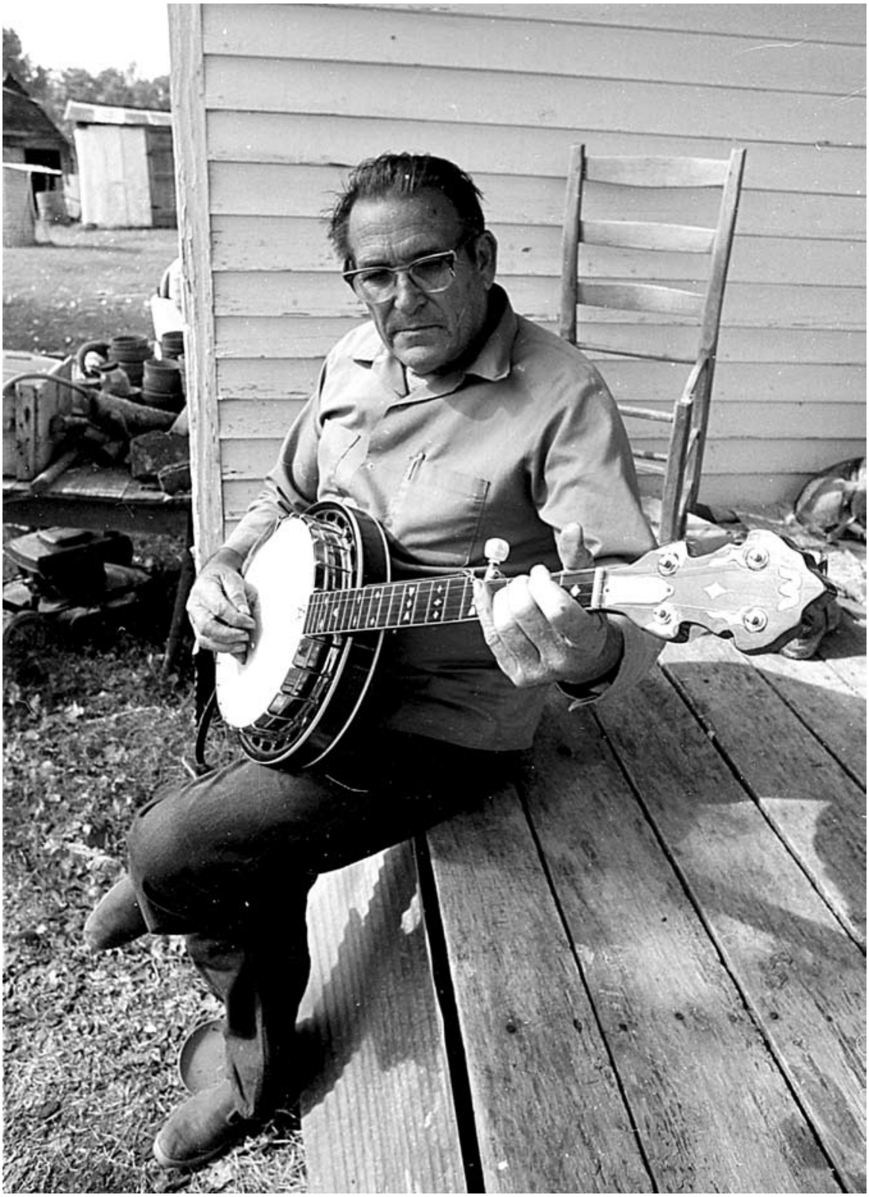

Figure 14 (opposite)
Arlin Moon finishing inlay, 1976.

Figure 15 (above)
Arlin Moon playing one of his banjos on his shop porch, 1976.

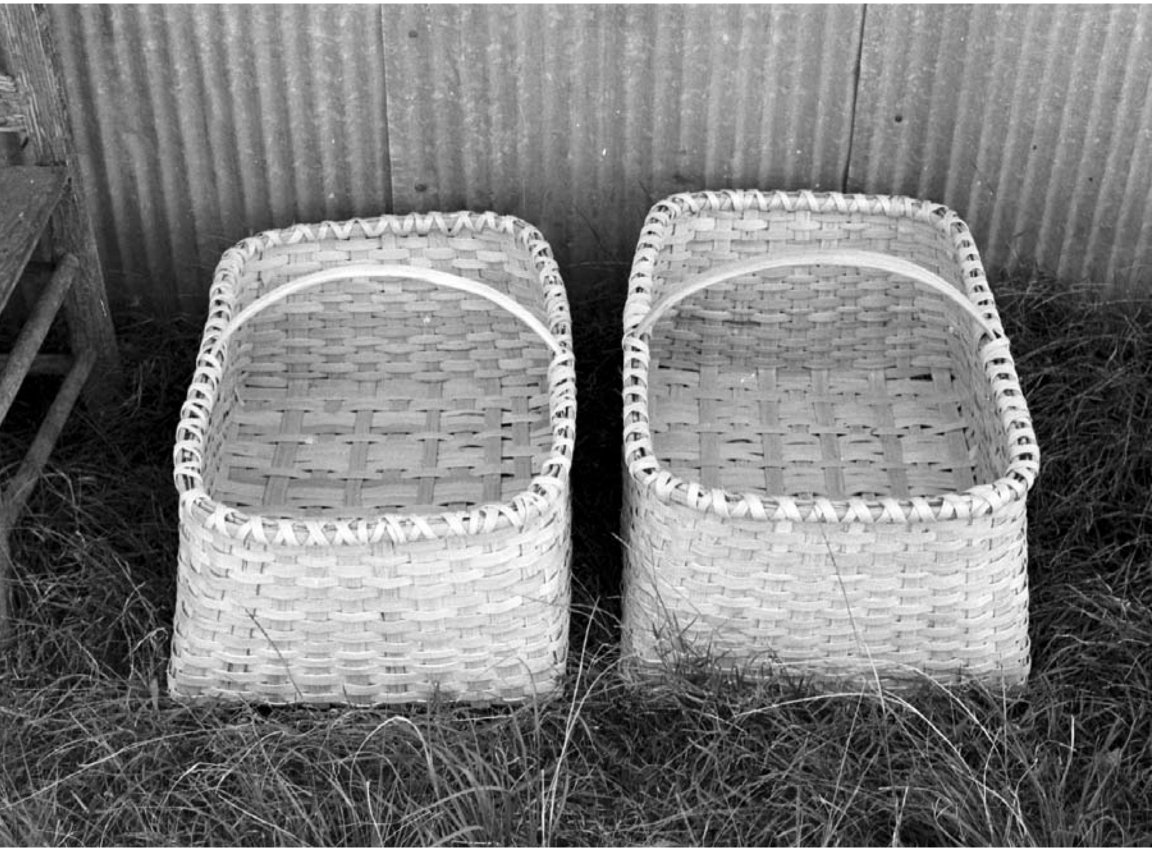

FIGURE 17

Two baskets by Eddie Campbell, 1976.

"You Got Family Here": Family Reunions in Lower Alabama

Stephen E. Criswell and Samantha McCluney Criswell

> "See everybody, see what's been going on, to eat, to carry on, to have a good time with your family and just see everybody you grew up with and to get to know everybody. And to see how life has been treating everybody."—Lyle Bell, Evergreen, Alabama

It is difficult to overstate the importance of family in the lives of Southerners. From the ancestor worship of some Southerners, particularly old-moneyed families with Confederate forefathers, to the emphasis placed on knowing one's people or kinfolk, Southerners white and black have long used family to determine their social interactions and personal identity. Second only perhaps to religious affiliation, family relationships are one of the key features Southerners use to classify and define themselves and others. Despite the abuse and overuse of the term in the political arena, "family values"—that is, putting value on one's family relations—are Southern values.

Traditionally, Southern culture has emphasized the importance of maintaining family ties through a variety of activities. John M. Coggeshall has noted that, for most Southerners, "The foundation of all other family-related activities is Sunday afternoon dinner at an older relative's home" (105). From the food that is prepared and consumed to the stories that are told over and over again, this once-a-week family gathering highlights Southern values and traditions, particularly the importance of family solidarity. For many Southerners the Sunday family dinner is expanded once a year to include the extended family, to create the annual family reunion. These reunions are an important part of Southern folklife, as William Ferris describes in the *Encyclopedia of Southern*

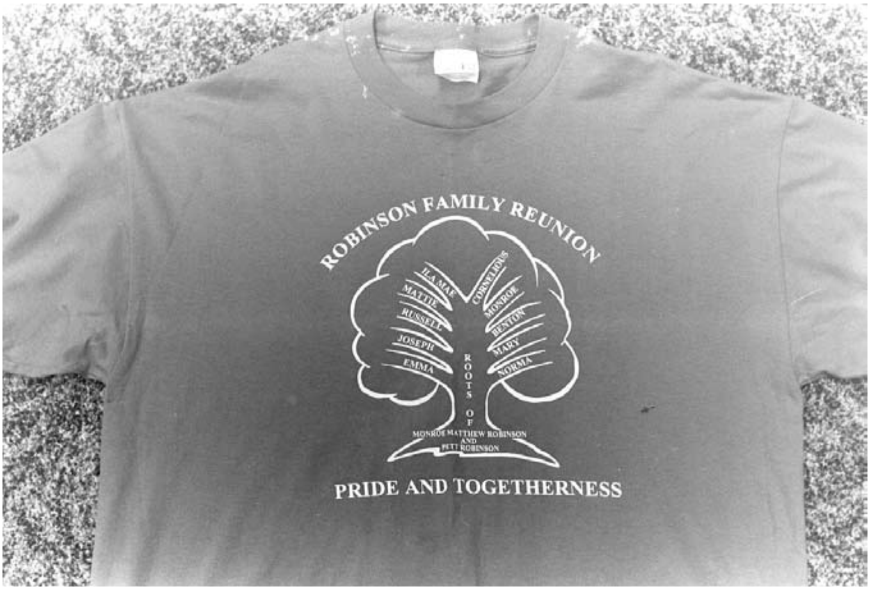
ROBINSON FAMILY REUNION
ILA MAE
MATTIE
RUSSELL
JOSEPH
EMMA
CORNELIOUS
MONROE
BENTON
MARY
NORMA
ROOTS OF
MONROE MATTHEW ROBINSON
AND
PETT ROBINSON
PRIDE AND TOGETHERNESS

FIGURE 1
Custom T-shirts are common at today's large family reunions.

Culture:

> Southerners have valued family and kin, and the family reunion remains a popular regional custom. Families often develop their own unique traditions, sometimes drawing on regional foodways, recreational activities, and religious commitments. (456)

Family reunions are the type of family celebrations described by Amy J. Kotkin and Steven J. Zeitlin (1983) as "patterned, recurring activities" that "symbolically re-create" past celebrations (qtd. in Frederick 172), and generally family reunions celebrate, sustain, and strengthen family ties. In a region such as the South, where family relationships play an essential role in the culture, these events take on greater significance as multifaceted, multi-genre celebrations of group values and identity, as Gayle Graham Yates has pointed out:

> Southern family reunions are characteristic of extended and elaborated

> families, who plan the occasions around celebration, abundant good food, shared reunion responsibilities, simple recreational activities, and, above all, talk. (1576)

In southern Alabama, the family reunion tradition is alive and well. Reunions in this region of the Deep South epitomize the more general Southern values of family unity, identity, and cohesiveness. Family reunions are of course not limited to Alabama, or the South in general, but family reunions in the southern U.S. are unique in their prevalence and importance. White and black families throughout the South feel the need to gather annually or semi-annually, usually in July or August, with siblings, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins to renew kinship bonds, to introduce new members of the family, to reminisce about lost members, and to retell the family's history. Reunion participants can range in number from a few branches of one family with three to five members in each family unit to extended family gatherings that bring together hundreds of family members. Jessica Stuckey of Beatrice, Alabama, for example, describes her reunion as including fewer than fifty family members. In contrast, the family reunion of Chris Tompkins of St. Stephens, Alabama, usually has one hundred fifty to two hundred members in attendance. "There's so many people you just spend most of your time just making rounds," he notes. The families enjoy traditional Southern cuisine, sing folk songs and hymns, play games, and catch up on local and family gossip. One Alabama resident describes his family reunion as a yearly opportunity to see all of his family in one place, saying, "I go mainly to see all my aunts and uncles in the same room at the same time—that's about the only time of the year you can see everybody together."

Despite the often intense heat and humidity, reunions in Alabama are usually held in the summer months. Gayle Yates has noted that the Fourth of July is "a popular date for both black and white Southern families" to hold reunions for the obvious reason that most family members have this day off (Yates 1577). Anthropologist Mike Coggeshall has pointed out that in cotton-producing regions of the South, the late summer months were once "lay-by time," "a period when little agricultural work was necessary, leaving farmers free to socialize. Today, Coggeshall points out, even though "lay-by time as

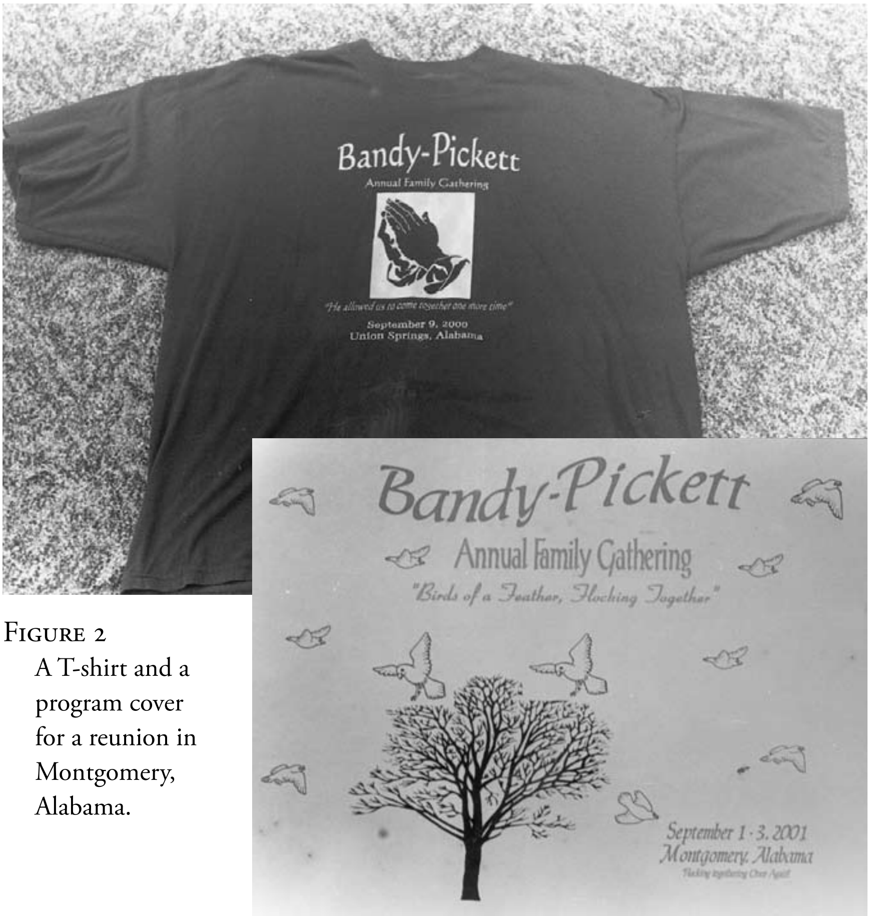
Bandy-Pickett
Annual Family Gathering
"He allowed us to come together one more time"
September 9, 2000
Union Springs, Alabama
Bandy-Pickett
Annual Family Gathering
"Birds of a Feather, Flocking Together"
September 1-3, 2001
Montgomery, Alabama

FIGURE 2
A T-shirt and a program cover for a reunion in Montgomery, Alabama.

an agricultural holiday no longer exists, [the] vast majority of family reunions and church revivals . . . are held . . . between the Fourth of July and Labor Day" (123).

Reunions are held at the home of a family member—often the matriarch, even if she is no longer living—in a church or community hall, or at a park. For example, the family of Brandon Cline of Thomasville, Alabama, gathers yearly at his great-grandmother's home, while Kerry Salter travels from her home in Monroeville to join her family once a year at the beach resort of Gulf Shores. Whether the reunion lasts for only a few hours or is spread out over a three-day weekend, the central activity of family reunions is a meal or meals, consisting of traditional Southern dishes, such as fried chicken, collards, potato salad, biscuits, a variety of casseroles, and occasionally wild game or even, as Dawn Stephens of Mobile so poetically describes, "roadkill":

> They cook snake, they cook armadillo . . . with some of the food you don't know what it is! . . . All the old people eat, I call it, "road-kill."

Another informant, Gary Phillips of Vineland, recalls a relative—his "weird" uncle—who has a penchant for barbecued goat, "the whole goat," that, alas, no one else in the family shares a passion for. And Jackson resident Chris Tompkins notes,

> Every year my grandmother cooks something that nobody but the old people will eat, like tripe. I don't . . . I'm not even sure what that is!

Barbecue, fried fish, or hamburgers are the usual offerings and are cooked outdoors by male reunion participants, usually brothers or husbands of the reunion organizers. The other dishes are brought by different family members, and though no one assigns a certain dish to a certain family member, the same dishes are prepared year after year by the same family member. The person quickly becomes associated with the dish, and in the case of the family member who brings Kentucky Fried Chicken every year—there appears to be one at nearly every reunion in south Alabama—he or she, usually she, becomes the butt of jokes: ". . . *home-made* fried chicken. We don't believe in Kentucky Fried Chicken," says Steven McNider of Monroeville, a sentiment shared by most reunion-goers. Obviously emphasis is placed on preparing dishes from scratch.

In addition to the meals and the dinner-table conversations, reunion participants also often engage in group singing, usually gospel songs or hymns, games (particularly for the children), and gossiping. If the reunion is held around a holiday (though most seem to be held in August), holiday activities, such as Easter egg hunts or fireworks, are incorporated into the reunion activities. And if the reunion takes place on a Sunday, church services often become part of the day's events. Alcohol consumption is also often part of the reunion, but

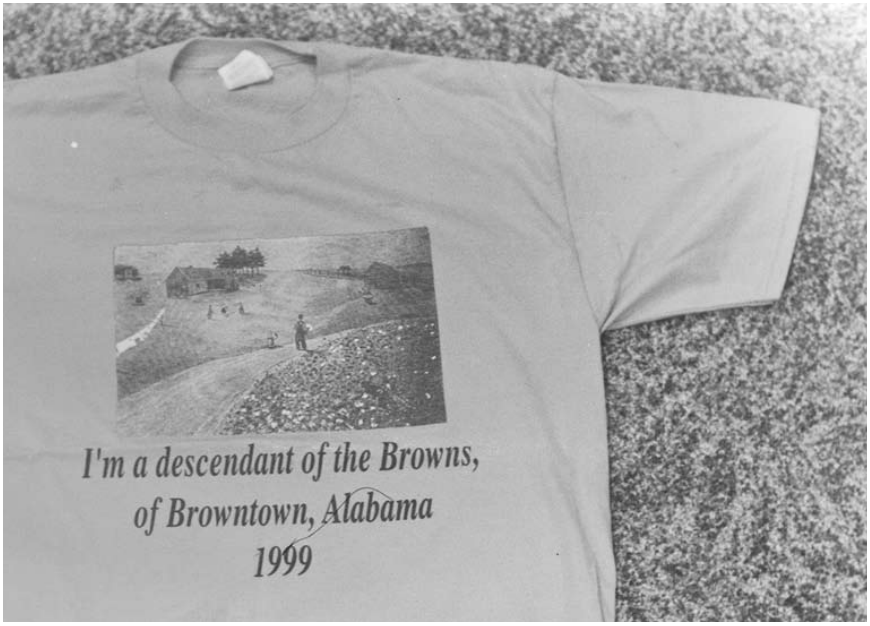

FIGURE 3
Another custom T-shirt.

it is usually limited to the males and most drinking takes place outside of the house, out of respect for the matriarch and her home. And as Tamara Dunning notes, "There may be drinking, but never on Sunday."

Foodways traditions are at the heart of family reunions in Alabama. The preparation and consumption of food serves as the central activity of the reunion and is the most common activity among the reunions my interviewees discussed. Food and feasting are used to maintain family bonds. This feasting, whether it is part of a single-day event or spread out over three days, provides the family members with the opportunity to have fellowship, to catch-up, to meet new family members, to reminisce, and to honor ancestors. Chris Gardner of Monroeville, Alabama, recalls that "everybody just gets together and eats"; and Lyle Bell of Evergreen echoes this statement, saying, "everybody brings something to eat, and talks." Formal and informal communal meals, as Tony L. Whitehead has observed, "meet communicative needs by providing the opportunity to share information and communicate to members the structure of their group realities" ("Soul Food" 108). They also "provide an opportunity for group members to congregate and reconfirm their sense of corporateness and their bonds of rights and obligations" (108), while at the same time meeting the need of the individual to belong to a group or larger whole, thereby confirming his/her own identity.

The maintenance, organization, and continuation of the reunion seem to be the responsibility of female family members, particularly older women. But as folklorist Karen Baldwin notes:

> No one person in the family is the ultimate source of the group's oral history . . . Many people must be heard to tell their "two bits" before the whole begins to make sense. And the performance of this whole body of narratives has as many social centers as there are kitchens and parlors, sideyards, and front stoops for hearing out the family yarn spinners and oral historians (Baldwin 150).

Nevertheless, the female family members, usually the daughters of a single matriarch, are generally responsible for the reunion and its activities. They often establish formal or informal committees to organize their tasks, which include contacting other family members, decorating, setting dates when necessary, and in some cases collecting money for supplies. They also are responsible for, formally or informally, keeping the family history (though the documentation of the reunion on videotape or film is left up to the males). Collectively, according to Charles R. Frederick, each of these individual family members "serves as a vast repository of knowledge, some of it widely held and some of it intensely private. Amidst this knowledge, most of which is unrecorded and passed on informally, are various items that serve to provide the family with a singular sense of identity (171).

The most obvious identity item is the reunion site itself, often the old family homeplace, such as Lyle Bell's grandmother's house in Evergreen, Alabama, or the home of Brandon Cline's great-grandmother in Thomasville, Alabama. For other families, returning to the family church, particularly for "homecoming," confirms the family member's sense of identity. Other families develop more formal methods of keeping the family's history. Jessica Stuckey's family members sign the reunion guestbook each year at the reunion, and Chris

Tompkins has an aunt "who has a degree in history; she's the family historian." Formally and informally, the reunion's events—from the stories that are told to the dishes that are prepared and consumed, to the games played and the songs sung—all serve to remind the family members where they are from and to whom they belong.

White Family Reunions

While they share many key features, particularly in regard to cuisine and foodways, marked differences exist between reunions of white families and those of African-Americans. White family reunions are typically one-day events held at the family's "old home place," a park, or a community or church hall. For example, Greg Phillips of Dickson, Alabama, joins his relatives once a year in Vineland at the house that originally belonged to his great-great-great grandfather to "play horseshoes, tell stories . . . the kids play on the trampoline and the adults talk and catch up." And Jessica Stuckey's family gathers at her paternal grandmother's home for lunch and a day-long visit that often includes a trip to a nearby Confederate soldier graveyard: "Some years they go to a cemetery and they have a little Confederate gun shoot . . . They just all dress up [in Civil War re-enactment attire] and shoot the guns."

The central activity of all white family reunions my interviewees discussed is a potluck luncheon or picnic consisting of traditional Southern dishes. These reunions usually are held on a Sunday and begin just before or just after noon and conclude before nightfall. In its organization the white family reunion most closely resembles the "name reunion" described by Millicent R. Ayoub in her classification of family reunions as "a meeting of persons (and their spouses) who have an ancestor in common . . . the emphasis is placed . . . on the family name" (419-20). This situation is illustrated in the remarks of one resident of Monroeville, Alabama, as she explains her distaste for her family reunions:

> We're still close to our immediate family. But my grandmother has twelve brothers and sisters at the big family reunion. So most of the time it's just people we don't even know we're related to. I don't want to be rude, but we don't care. It's just people we're not interested in . . . I just don't see any point in going . . . The people I would care to see I

> would see at Christmas or Thanksgiving.

While most reunion goers do not necessarily share these views, family members at white reunions do seem to have a tendency to congregate in small groups consisting of family members more closely related—groups of siblings or first cousins, for example. This phenomenon is particularly common among younger participants. Twenty-year-old Lyle Bell describes the extent of his social interaction at his reunion:

> Really I sort of hang around my cousins . . . we all go to school together . . . We have more things to talk about. Like a lot of us hunt, and fish, and play golf, and stuff like that. You know, more things that you do the same as the other; you can talk a little bit more with him because you have some more to talk about and more interesting conversations.

Furthermore, the reunion participants tend to separate themselves by age and gender. One of these groupings, usually the older female members of the family, tends to be the organizers of the reunion. In Chris Tompkins's family, a loose organization of female cousins maintains contact throughout the year to plan the annual gathering:

> Everybody has a little, a relative they keep up with. My mother and my mother's cousin, Christine, are real close and they talk to each other, and some of my mother's sisters are close to some of their cousins on that side of the family, so they all kind of have people to talk to back and forth. I guess they're kind of organized.

However, Tompkins notes that the reunion's most important participant is his grandmother, and says, "I don't even think we'll keep having it after my grandmother passes away 'cause she's the one that kind of holds it together."

If the Tompkins family reunion ceased to exist, it would not be alone among white family reunions. Quite a few in lower Alabama have ended or have been indefinitely postponed due to the death of key organizers and a lack of interest on the part of the survivors. However, one white family reunion that has thrived is that of the Harrisons of Chilton, Alabama. This reunion, described by twenty-year-old family member Dawn Stephens of Grove Hill, is typical of the white family reunions that have thrived. It originally took place every year on Labor Day at "Aunt Martha's House" in Chilton, Alabama. After the death of Stephen's aunt, the reunion continued and relocated to the family church in Chilton. The reunion lasts from around 10:30 A.M. until about 7:00 P.M. Family members prepare food prior to the reunion and serve lunch buffet style, and "everybody brings their favorite food." The children—"the grandkids, the great grandchildren, and the great-great grandkids"—play games and explore the countryside, while older family members catch up or "gossip" and meet "all the little bitty babies," and the family history is recounted among a group of older female family members, led by Stephens's eighty-four-year-old "Mammaw," who can trace the family history back to her great-great-great-grandfather. (During our discussion of her reunion, Stephens recounted for me her family history, including the story of Levi Harrison and the twenty-two children he fathered with his first and second wives. Stephen's grandmother is the youngest of these children.) The highlight of the reunion comes near the end of the day when the family comes together in song:

> The Harrison family has always been extremely musical, they always sang and stuff, so right before you leave, everybody, whether you want to or not, everybody gets around the piano, and they'll have two pianos and two of the sisters'll be playing piano, and everybody sings songs . . . I remember most "Amazing Grace" and "Rock of Ages." And then, the sisters always made up songs when they were little, and they always sang the little songs that they made up.

Though these sisters, the surviving daughters of Levi Harrison's twenty-two children, organize the reunion, Stephens argues that very little effort is necessary because "everybody knows when Labor Day comes around you *will* be there." She adds that the sisters all live within a few minutes of one another and do not need the occasion of the reunion to keep in touch. In the view of the sisters, Stephens suggests, the reunion is for their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, because "the sisters can see each other anytime; this is to bring the others back." Unlike the less successful reunions of other white families, the Harrison reunion, Stephens believes, will continue. As she herself put it, "you don't go from having this many people and just stop."

African-American Reunions

While white family reunions seem to exist primarily as "name reunions," African-American family reunions typically fall into Ayoub's category of "cognate reunion," a celebration that commonly includes from seventy-five to two hundred participants. "Its core consists of consanguines, but some of those who attend are the spouses of these kinsmen, and some are the spouses of consanguines who are deceased or not present. Even friends and neighbors, who look upon the event as a picnic, may occasionally attend" (421-422).

The inclusiveness of such reunions reflects the history of African-American family structure, with a core family consisting not only of parents and children, but grandparents and aunts and uncles, as well as family friends, as Tony L. Whitehead has described:

> The southern black family includes more than a household of primary relatives. A history of economic and political marginality has made it necessary for southern blacks to depend on support systems beyond the household for their survival . . . Thus, early in their history, the concept of family for southern blacks began to extend beyond the residential unit to include not only parents, siblings, and children, but also biologically related kinsmen such as parents' parents and siblings, siblings' children, and children's children, as well as people who are not related at all. Such extension has facilitated survival for blacks in the South by increasing the size and range (including people of different social, ethnic, and racial categories) of the family ("Family" 153).

The gatherings of these extended families follow a common pattern, one missing from those of the white families. Most African-American family reunions are, like white reunions, held in the late summer, but African-American reunions are less likely to take place at the same family home every year; some do, but others move each year from one female family member's home to another or they may be held at a nearby beach one year and other years near an amusement park. For example, Tamara Dunning's family reunions move around the country; each year a different family member in a different state hosts the reunion. And unlike white reunions, which typically last one afternoon, African-American reunions usually take place over a three-day weekend. They begin on Friday afternoon with an outdoor meal, usually a fish fry, that inaugurates the reunion and allows out-of-town participants to arrive, get settled, visit, and rest before Saturday's activities. As Arkesia Bettis of Whatley, Alabama, describes:

> On Friday . . . we have a cook out. And that's when all the families sit around and talk about things that went on in the past . . . This year on Friday we had a fish fry, and we had fish and shrimp and bread and salad.

On Saturday's the Bettis family "cooks out" and sets off fireworks, which seems to follow the common pattern. For most African-American families Saturdays' reunion activities include a barbecue in the early afternoon, afternoon activities, such as games, and a dance or a visit to the local nightclubs in the evening. The family of Rodney Rocker, a twenty-year-old resident of Jackson, Alabama, spends Saturday putting on a family fashion and talent show. For others, such as Janine Minniefield, Saturday is "just another day of getting to know each other better," and "figuring out who didn't come home, and calling them and asking them why didn't they come home." Sunday is, as Minniefield describes, "basically a church thing." Sunday generally begins with a family breakfast and morning church services. Often the reunion takes place at the same time as the family church's homecoming or revival. Tamara Dunning described the weekend events of her family reunion this way:

> Everybody comes in on Friday and they have a barbecue and everything . . . Mainly everybody gets in on that Friday . . . and they have a barbecue on Saturday. What do they do Saturday night? Par-*tee.* And Sunday everybody gets up and goes to church. There's a saying—if you can party on Saturday night, you can get up and go to church on Sunday.

Sunday afternoon lunch caps off the reunion. The foods at this lunch are the same as those at the white family reunions, traditional Southern dishes. As one Monroeville, Alabama resident puts it:

> [F]ried chicken, your barbecue chicken, macaroni and cheese—homemade always—ribs, everything. Anything messy, and they'll give it to you on a small paper plate.

The African-American family reunions also seem to be more formally structured; often there is an official reunion committee. The committee is usually made up of women, typically a group of older female family members, usually the daughters of a single matriarch, who are responsible for the reunion and its activities. They contact other family members, decorate, and set dates when necessary. They are also responsible for, formally or informally, keeping the family history. The committee is responsible for selecting a reunion site, hiring entertainment for the Saturday dance, and collecting money to cover costs, such as portable toilet rentals, and in some cases, catering for the Saturday night dinner. The typical costs seem to be around fifty dollars per person. Some of these costs are also met through T-shirt sales. Many African-American families have commemorative T-shirts printed. These shirts usually include a "family-tree" motif, the family name and the names of affiliated families, and a family slogan. These shirts are usually ordered in advance and each member has his or her name on the front of the shirt. (Interestingly, one of our white interviewees who had stopped attending his own family reunion had just begun a business printing up T-shirts for reunions; he noted that his clientele was exclusively African-American.)

One aspect of the family reunion that kept appearing in our dialogues with African-American informants, but that was not even considered in dialogues with white informants, was the importance of knowing one's family in order to avoid embarrassing situations or even incestuous relationships. One young woman explained how the elder women in the families would keep a close watch on the activities of the younger men and women: "Gramma come along and tell you 'This is so-and-so's child'. . . Gramma says everybody is related in some kind of way, and she's gonna mention it, you know it too." This same concern was raised by Arkesia Bettis, twenty-one, of Clarke County, when she commented, "It's good for you to know [your relatives]. . . What if you meet them someday and that's your cousin or something!" Though these concerns were often expressed with a tongue-in-cheek tone (the Southern white comedian Jeff Foxworthy's joke that "you might be a redneck" if you go to your family reunion to find a date came up more than once in our discussions), most of the African-American reunion-goers interviewed live in small towns where family connections are many and available young men and women are few. Moreover, concern with the necessity of discovering one's family relations is another sad legacy of slavery, when it was common practice for slave families to be separated and scattered so that immediate family members might grow up never having seen one another. In other instances, such as the one Tamara Dunning relates, certain slaves were used as "breeders:"

> My great-great grandfather was a slave and he was used as a breeder . . . My mom said it's in Wilcox County on record that he had about a hundred kids, or over, so we have, like, a really, *really* big, big [reunion].

With the possibility of so many individuals in so small an area sharing a common ancestor, it is no wonder that her family is strict about when young people can start dating, and cautious about who is dating whom. And with family connections historically assaulted by outside forces, it is not surprising that African-American family reunions are marked by an emphasis on knowing one's people, both living and dead. Nor is it surprising that African-Americans in the South seem to devote more time and energy to their family reunions than their white counterparts do.

In discussing her family's reunion, Christal Chapman, an African-American resident of Grove Hill, Alabama, illustrates the significance of the African-American family reunion while describing the structure and features that typify these gatherings:

> Thursday night and Friday, that's when everybody starts getting in, and we mostly just greet each other. And somebody usually has been preparing a barbecue or something that Friday night. And Saturday

> we have a picnic at the theme park, and that's when you get T-shirts and stuff like that. And then Saturday night we have, kind of like, a semi-formal dance, and we usually have a steak dinner that night . . . Sunday, that's when we have Homecoming services and everybody's there, all the family is invited there, and after the first service, we just call it morning service, there are usually several tents set up and each family sits under their tent and eats their dinner, and then gets back in for the Homecoming services, that's when you recognize your family . . . your ancestors, who they are, stuff like that. And then, whenever that's over you stand around, if you want to, you stand around and talk about the plans for next year. . . . You want to make sure that you have spoken to everybody before they leave.

Unlike white family reunions where family members tend to cluster in small groups with little interaction between them, African-American family members seem to make a point of talking to reunion participants with whom they are unfamiliar. This includes not only meeting the infants who have just joined the family or new spouses, but even more importantly, becoming reacquainted with family members with whom one has lost touch. As Brian Salisbury of Lincoln describes, the reunion is his time and place to reconnect with his family because "we don't ever get a chance to see each other," but at the reunion "they get to see you and you get to see them . . . I get to know my family." Economics, geography, and other factors, such as limited vacation time for many workers, decrease family members' opportunities to see one another. The annual or semi-annual reunion insures that the family will have at least one regular opportunity to reconnect, as Christal Chapman explains:

> We do it just so we can keep in touch with each other, you know. . . . Nobody ever, you know, just takes time and comes home just to come home. . . . They have to set their vacation time, like, six months ahead of time, they have to put in for it.

Given the popularity of family reunions among Alabama African-Americans, most seem happy to use their vacation time to attend the family gatherings.

And such devotion should insure the continued success of the African-American family reunion.

Conclusion

Alabamians who participate in their family's reunions all seem to regard the function of the reunions in the same way: they keep family history alive and familiar—both the oral and documented history, for together they help participants to remember past family members and ancestors, and they bring the family together. As one informant put it:

> you want to make [everyone] know that, hey, this is something we do every year and y'all need to be a part of it. We don't want this to stop . . . you want [the children] to grow up knowing even though you may live in this part of the world you got family here, and, you know, if anything happens you can always call these people and they'll be there for you.

These functions are especially important for the African-American families in the region whose members were separated by slavery and the later exodus to Northern cities. But to many white families the reunions are equally important, particularly given contemporary economic and social circumstances that tend to spread families across greater distances. As Ayoub has observed, "The family reunion has been called a rural phenomenon, but an argument can be made that it should more rightly be termed an urban phenomenon" (428); for those who have left their rural homelands to live in larger urban centers, the reunion provides an opportunity to return to one's roots, in this case, southern Alabama. Moreover, the bonds of family remain especially important to folks in this region, even if they have moved beyond. On nearly every level, the culture of the region reflects the importance of family. In these reunions the family and family ties are celebrated, sustained, and strengthened. ■

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Tracking Down Alabama Indian Trails: Our Elders and the History of the Land

Lamar Marshall

Many historical landmarks of our ancestors are being eradicated before they can be identified. It has become the mission of a team of American Indian descendants to identify, and, where possible, to preserve the last remnants of the trail system of frontier Alabama. By using empirical data such as the original 1818 survey of Alabama, early maps, existing historical research, field surveys and oral traditions, a more complete understanding of the importance of the original transportation and travel system of Alabama may be gained.

Some of the trails not only connected most parts of Alabama, but extended into Tennessee, Florida, Georgia, and Mississippi where they made connection with trails leading into states and territories in the far North and West. The main trails were so frequently intersected by hunting paths that it was difficult for any but experienced woodsmen to follow them. In many instances the trails were widened into roads by white settlers, or later marked the course of railroads [Moore 1927: 352].

The Indian Trail System in place around 1800 in Alabama was the result of thousands of years of man's interaction with animals, tribal migration and relocations, population changes, and lifestyle changes due to European contact and trade. It was an evolutionary process that involved the geographical, geological and ecological processes. The resulting trail system was a product of human interaction with the natural world and became a permanent human imprint in a living landscape. It formed the basic circuitry of our modern road and interstate system. The early routes were logical and inevitable. They evolved within a landscape of obstacles and destinations and followed corridors that compromised efficiency with the path of least resistance.

The last remnants of these early trails and roads remind us of a time when society was intimately connected with the earth. There will always be those who remain individualists and adventurers; who love history and who long to see and feel what our ancestors saw and felt; who would walk where they walked. It is a worthy pursuit to find and to preserve the last remnants of our frontier trails. The historical landmarks of our ancestors are priceless and they are being eradicated even before we can identify them.

My grandmother told me from the time that I was a little boy that her parents were of Indian blood. The knowledge that I had the blood of my Indian ancestors coursing through my veins intensified my thirst to search for an ancient, lost freedom that existed in the greener pastures of a lost world. I felt as if something lost came welling back into my heart and I spent my childhood walking the woods and streams, searching for my roots in the past and the land.

I eventually became a student of American Indian history. I searched for the old village sites and the trails that connected them. Sometimes I would stand in plowed fields and see the dark circles and squares where Indian houses once stood. I studied the Indian trails and wondered what influencing factors caused the trails and roads to be where they were. One thing was clear. The paths of the Indians evolved into a great network of corridors that are the foundation of our road systems today.

To find links to the past I was always on the lookout for the living testimonials of old-timers who could tell me what the land and life was like half a century or more ago. Sometimes an old-timer would relate that which was related to him by the elders of his day. I could get first-hand information about the 1900s and second-hand information from as far back as the 1840s. Over the years I met individuals who became my teachers. I call them my elders.

When I was eighteen years old I worked in a grocery store in Birmingham, with a butcher who grew up near Little River Canyon in north Alabama. The canyon was one of my favorite stomping grounds and one of Alabama's wildest, natural wonders. The old-timers called it "May's Gulf." Harry Campbell told me tales about an old man who was part Cherokee and who knew that canyon better than any living person. His name was John Garvin Sanford. I immediately knew that Garvin would become my teacher, one who knew the

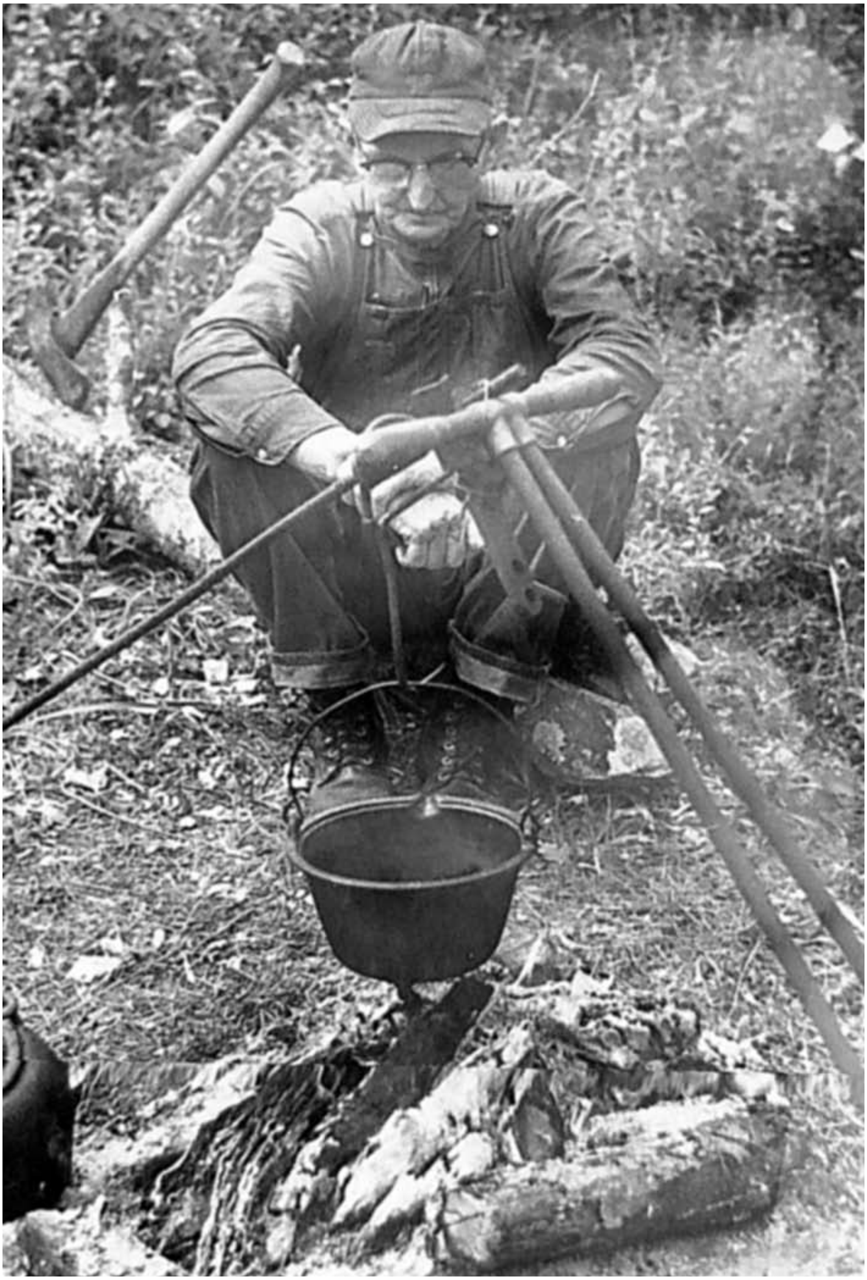

FIGURE 1

John Garvin Sanford at his campfire in 1973.

old ways and the secret places.

At first I had a stand-offish fear of this old mountain man of Alabama, especially after Harry told me that Garvin once had killed a man. An armed, drunken man rode up on a mule into Garvin's yard and challenged him. Garvin slipped around his house and shot him off his mule.

I was pretty nervous about approaching Garvin with no introduction, but one day I drove up to his house in Blanche, Alabama. He lived at the foot of Lookout Mountain near Little River Falls. Garvin was tall, lean and different. He was in his sixties when I met him. He never told me his age. I found out recently that he was born in 1903.

He lived alone. When he found out that I wanted to learn about the Indian trails and camps of the area, he became an instant friend.

He took me to the mountains on "pig trails" that followed ridges and hollows. He showed me the oldest roads he knew. He pointed out the old roads where the Yankees came through, where Civil war troops camped, hideouts, and the "mystery hole" (a cavern that had filled with water and supposedly had no bottom). Some of the roads led to the former sites of Indian camps. Garvin took me into mountains where the most isolated families in north Alabama and south Tennessee lived. We hunted ginseng and goldenseal and all manner of wild plants that he knew in the woods.

When I called, he'd say, "When are we going to get together and go prowling?" He always called it "prowling." He was truly one of the last of Alabama's mountain men. I gleaned everything I could from him about the Cherokee territory where he grew up. Once he dug the fire pit in an Indian camp and recovered a pile of charred, tiny corn cobs. He explained that in the old days, before being bred for size, ears of corn were very small.

I met my next mentor as I was running my trap line on a winter day along Shades Creek in Jefferson County. In the 1960s, I ran a trap line for mink, muskrat, coon, and fox. I came across an older trapper named Bobby Curren. Like Garvin, he lived alone. His lineage was Choctaw and he knew the Indian history of this part of the state. He had trade beads that he had picked up from Indian towns along the Cahaba River and the claws from the last black bear killed there in the early 1900s. He had learned much of his Indian history from his grandparents.

He too, showed me the old roads. One major Indian trail became the stagecoach road that led from present-day Birmingham to Montevallo. It crossed Shades Mountain at Brock's Gap and forded the Cahaba River. He told me about three Indian mounds near Bessemer, and how it was a major intersection of Indian trade paths.

I learned from many other elders over the years. Events in 1991 led to the coming together of a team of trail sleuths that today are working to piece together the puzzle of the past. An ancient path followed the Tennessee Divide east to west across Alabama. It connected to the High Town (or Hightower) Path that crossed Georgia and Alabama on its way to the Mississippi River. Well-preserved portions of this path exist on public land in the Bankhead National Forest in Lawrence County.

Unrecognized, these historical treasures were being destroyed by timber operations on public properties. A team effort comprising archaeologists, local citizens, and Native American descendants successfully nominated and obtained state recognition for the path. Today it is known as the High Town Path Historic District. This success led to the forming of the Warrior Mountains Historical and Cultural Society and its team of volunteers, who are collecting oral histories to use in conjunction with other research tools. The goal of the society is to produce a composite map that is as complete as possible of the original Native American trail system of Alabama. The National Forests of Alabama stand as reservoirs of our past. They are in fact "time capsules" where modern progress and development basically ended at the turn of the nineteenth century. The Talladega and Bankhead National Forests were remote and rugged holdouts where Indians fled and hid in order to keep from being deported west. The Scotch-Irish pioneers that moved into these places found that the opportunity to make a living farming was limited to family survival. More money could be made by moonshining. Today, some of our best examples of Indian trails and old pioneer home-sites are located on these public lands. Our extensive research has confirmed this.

Beginning in the 1950s, extensive logging operations took place in Alabama's national forests under the Multiple Use Act. In 1985, U.S. Forest Plans were released that emphasized timber production over recreation and historical preservation. Bulldozing, clear cutting, log skidding, and erosion have taken a toll on our cultural and historical resources. Our citizens' effort sprang up to demand protection of this heritage. Since public properties are subject to the National Historic Preservation Act, all historical and archaeological resources, including Indian trails and pioneer roads, should have been protected. Indians and preservationists from all over the Southeast rallied in September 1996 to protest U.S. Forest Service activities that had negative impacts on historic districts, sacred sites, cultural traditional properties and ancient Indian paths. The protest paid off. In January 2003, the Alabama Historical Commission, in conjunction with the U.S. Forest Service, finalized a management plan for cultural resources found on national forests in Alabama. Recommendations include nominations for the National Register of Historic Places, designation of traditional cultural properties and complete surveys of the national forests for unknown historical treasures that might otherwise be lost.

An expert on gathering information from people is Dan Fulenwider. Dan has been tracking down little-known historical stories and places for thirty-five years. He is fifty-six years old and has a knack for getting folks to volunteer information about the old roads that they remember from their youth and also stories handed down from parents and grandparents. Dan has spent many years studying Alabama's old roads. These range from Indian trails to roads used by troops during the Civil War. He has knowledge of where most of the major routes or corridors for the roads were. When he works on a specific segment of a historical path, he first assimilates his known information about an old road or path and lays it out on a map. These he calls his clues. Then he drives to the area and looks for evidence of the old roadbed or sections of old roadbeds that have not been obliterated by grading and paving. When he gets close, he looks for people working outside. If there is no one around, he knocks on doors. Introducing himself as the historical columnist for a local newspaper, Dan explains his mission and what he is looking for. He usually asks where the oldest roads are or if anyone knows where any old abandoned roadbeds are with trees growing up in them. Dan doesn't look like a government investigator or an outsider snooping around. His trustworthy appearance, gentle manner, and genuine interest in the history of the area immediately take away suspicion. And because he knows how to relate to everyday folks, he never gets sent away without learning something new. Almost always, a

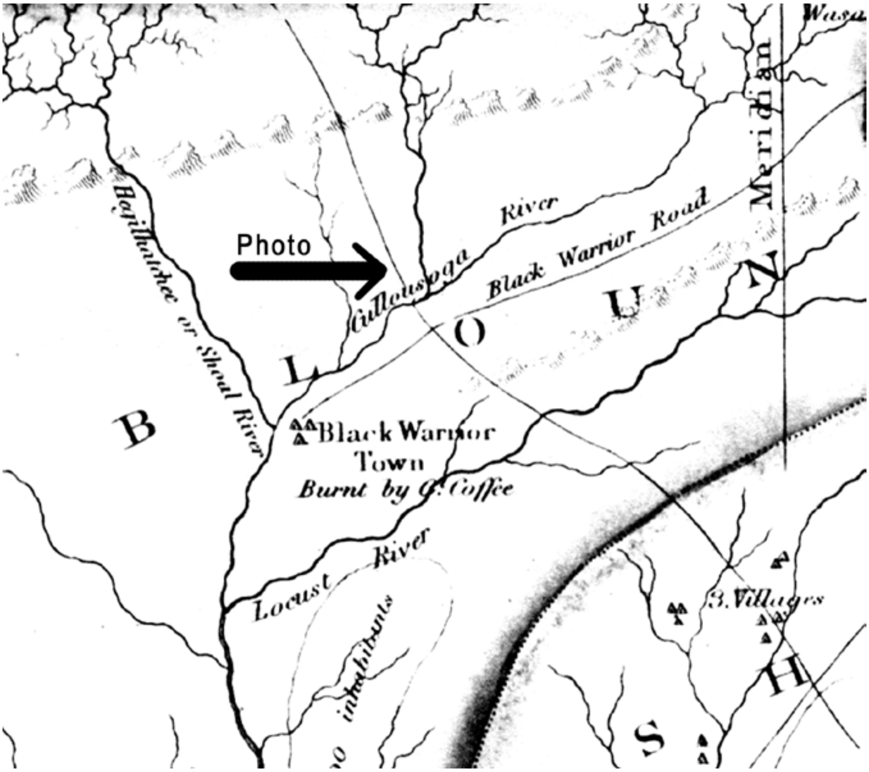
Photo
Hopilthlotchee or Shoal River
Culloosoga River
Black Warrior Road
Meridian
Black Warrior Town
Burnt by G. Coffee
Locust River
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FIGURE 2

Section of 1819 Melish map showing the Black Warrior's Path just north of crossing on the Mulberry River. Arrow added to denote location of photo.

farmer or landowner will take Dan back into a field or woods to show him abandoned segments of genuine historical paths and trails. He always honors people's requests for privacy, and because of this he gets to see places that the general public will never be allowed to visit.

This is how we collect our oral testimony. We integrate this into the collective body of data that includes written accounts by early settlers and traders, survey notes from the original 1818 to1830s surveys, existing research by professionals and copies of early maps dating from the 1600s.

The following system is a general method of categorizing and differentiating routes of early roads and Indian trails. We begin by finding evidence that a trail or road existed between two or more known places. We then know we have a general corridor. At this stage we don't know exactly where the original road or trail bed is. A corridor might be several miles wide. In the case of historic roads, the first step is to narrow down the possibilities by eliminating modern roads. We do this by examining maps published since 1818. Highway Department records are also helpful. Beginning in the late nineteenth century and working our way back, we begin to see the evolution and development of the modern state road system.

Early communities sprang up along pioneer roads and trails. The founding dates and histories of these communities help to date the roads that led to and from them. Railroads were built along the major corridors where roads and trails were there first. Two examples are the railroad from Haleyville west on the Tennessee Divide (which was called the Ridge Path or the Hightown Path) and the railroad from Attalla north through Sheffield Gap to Guntersville which also follows the Tennessee Divide. Sheffield Gap is the route of a historical Indian trail called the Creek Path that ascended to the top of Raccoon Mountain and the Tennessee Divide. During the Creek War of 1813 to 1814, General Andrew Jackson cut out and widened this trail and made it his Army Road that led to Ten Islands and Fort Strother on the Coosa River.

Secondly, we can find trails and early roads that were improved and paved,

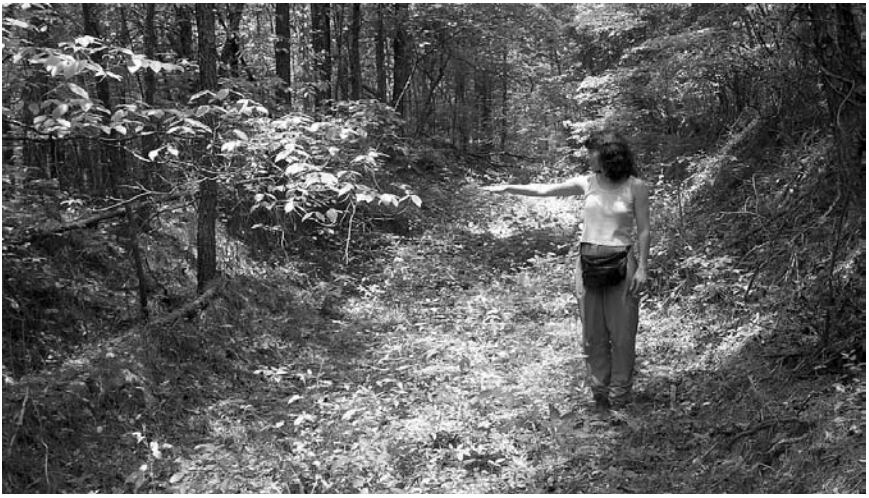

FIGURE 3

Photo of the Black Warrior's Path today. See location on 1819 map.

or improved and rocked. History has recorded some of these and some are recognized by historic markers and some still carry the original name. Early county records have recorded many original decrees to build or improve roads. Records of early postal routes are another good research tool. Some examples of established historical roads are the Byler Road, the Federal Road, the Cheatham Road and the Natchez Trace.

While a lot of work goes into researching historical archives and records and piecing the puzzle of lost roads together on maps, it is exciting to find the abandoned segments that meander though fields and forests. Even where established and identified roads exist, most were straightened out over the years and small loops that followed the natural contours of the land can be found veering off of paved highways.

Some of these segments are deep and well-defined. It is not uncommon to find road banks that are ten or fifteen feet deep, worn by centuries of moccasins, wild animal hooves, the pack horses of the early traders, and finally wagons. Sometimes roads were moved over several times because they became muddy and worn down too deep in the earth. We found seven parallel sections of the original Byler Road on a mountainside where it ascended to the Tennessee Divide.

Geological features were the key factors that led to the establishment and development of village sites and trail locations. Dividing ridges, passes and gaps, springs, river shoals, shallows, waterfalls, fords, and valleys all determined ultimately where trails and sometimes even tribal boundaries were established. Just as animals followed the path of least resistance, so did man. Watersheds played an important role in the thinking of early people. Ridges divided watersheds and sometimes were used as tribal boundaries. The ridges were used as trail routes to avoid crossing streams in the valleys. Valleys were a common location for villages as well as trails and roads. Long flat valleys usually had fewer vertical obstacles but more feeder streams to cross if the route paralleled a river. The Cahaba Valley and Coosa Valley were major north-south valley routes that filled with settlers in the early 1800s.

Most of our major waterfalls are now inundated under lakes in Alabama. The Falls of the Warrior at Tuscaloosa, Shoals of the Coosa, Falls of the Cahaba, Falls of the Tallapoosa, and Clear Creek Falls were well known landmarks among the Indians and early traders. The first surveyors called them *cataracts* and noted them as potential mill sites.

Most early historic settlements in Alabama grew up on the sites of Indian villages. Geography played a distinct role in where settlement occurred. The majority of Indian towns were found along major rivers and streams where fish and mussels were gathered for food. The navigable streams were used as highways by canoes and dugouts. These were the river towns. Examples of the river towns were locations that now are the modern cities of Mobile, Decatur, Florence, Demopolis, Montgomery, Selma, Phenix City, Tuscaloosa, Montevallo and Guntersville. Tuckabatchee, the capital of the Creek Nation, was located at the Shoals of the Coosa River. Directly across on the east side of the river was Tallassee. Sometimes river towns were located near fords, shoals, ports, and landings.

In addition, there were valley towns, towns on dividing ridges, and towns at major trail junctions. All of these were connected with a domestic trail system. Some were on major trade routes. Henry Woodward, an Englishman, was on the Chattahoochee River trading with the Creek Indians by 1685 or earlier. By 1688 he had established a relationship with the Chickasaws west of the Tombigbee River near what is now northeast Mississippi. He established trade with the Alibamos in the fork of the Alabama River about 1690. A letter from John Stewart to William Dunlop of London, dated June 23, 1690, stated that Woodward was outfitting a pack train for a trading trip to the "Chikesas" and that he was the first "Briton" to do so.

From that time on there was fierce competition between the French and the English to monopolize the trade of the Native Americans in Alabama. The demand for deerskins would seduce the Indian tribes of Alabama and the Southeast into a dependency on manufactured European trade goods. The deerskins became the material of choice for the "designer jeans" of the day. Fad and fashion in the streets of London was the beginning of the end of the American frontier in Alabama and the Native Americans from which we inherited our first road system.

The guidebook "Alabama Indian Trails and Frontier Roads" will be available from Wild Alabama in late 2003. The book began in 1991, when a team comprised of several members of the Echota Cherokee Tribe of Alabama and a local conservation organization pooled their talents of researching, writing, and surveying to identify and catalog the major Indian trails and early pioneer roads of Alabama. Using the original survey records of Alabama, they spent a decade walking the forests, fields and mountains searching for the abandoned depressions of the old trails. This book will be a field guide that will invite future generations of Alabamans to step back into time and to experience our state's little-known Indian trails that actually connected to the great Natchez Trace. The old roads that cross our historical landscape clearly connect people of today with their past cultures. In time, we can begin to read this landscape the way others read a book.

Charles Borden is a seventh-generation Cherokee descendent who lives in the Bankhead National Forest. To quote him: "We grew up rambling through the woods and hunting and fishing and finding all the best places to hunt and the best places to fish and those types of things. Our granddad and dad always tried to show us the old trails through the forest that they knew of that they had learned in their youth. Oral tradition describes an ancient Indian path crossing the northern Bankhead . . . this path may have been an important route for travel for hunting and commerce for thousands of years. Perhaps it [the High Town Path] was this path taken by the Bordens to this area. On a more poignant and personal note I have often reflected upon the plight of the men, women and children of my Indian ancestors who tread this path for the last time as they were rounded up for removal. The High Town Path is significant to me for both cultural and historic reasons."

(Note: For those interested in the Guidebook to Indian Trails, contact Wild Alabama; 11312 Alabama Highway 33; Moulton, AL 35650; www.wildalabama.org)

Acknowledgments

A great many people have contributed time and effort to this project over the years, particularly Billy (Gray Fox) Shaw, Dan Fulenwider, Jim Manasco, Rickey Butch Walker, and many others of the Echota Cherokee tribe of Alabama. The Linn-Henley Research Library at the main branch of the Birmingham Public Library was a starting point for me and is still a valuable resource for historical accounts. The on-line historical maps collection of the University of Alabama

is priceless. I am indebted to archeologist Charles Hubbert for providing me with a copy of the original 1818 survey notes in Alabama. Other authors of the subject, particularly Charlotte Adams Hood, have also provided valuable information. To these and many others, I am grateful. ■

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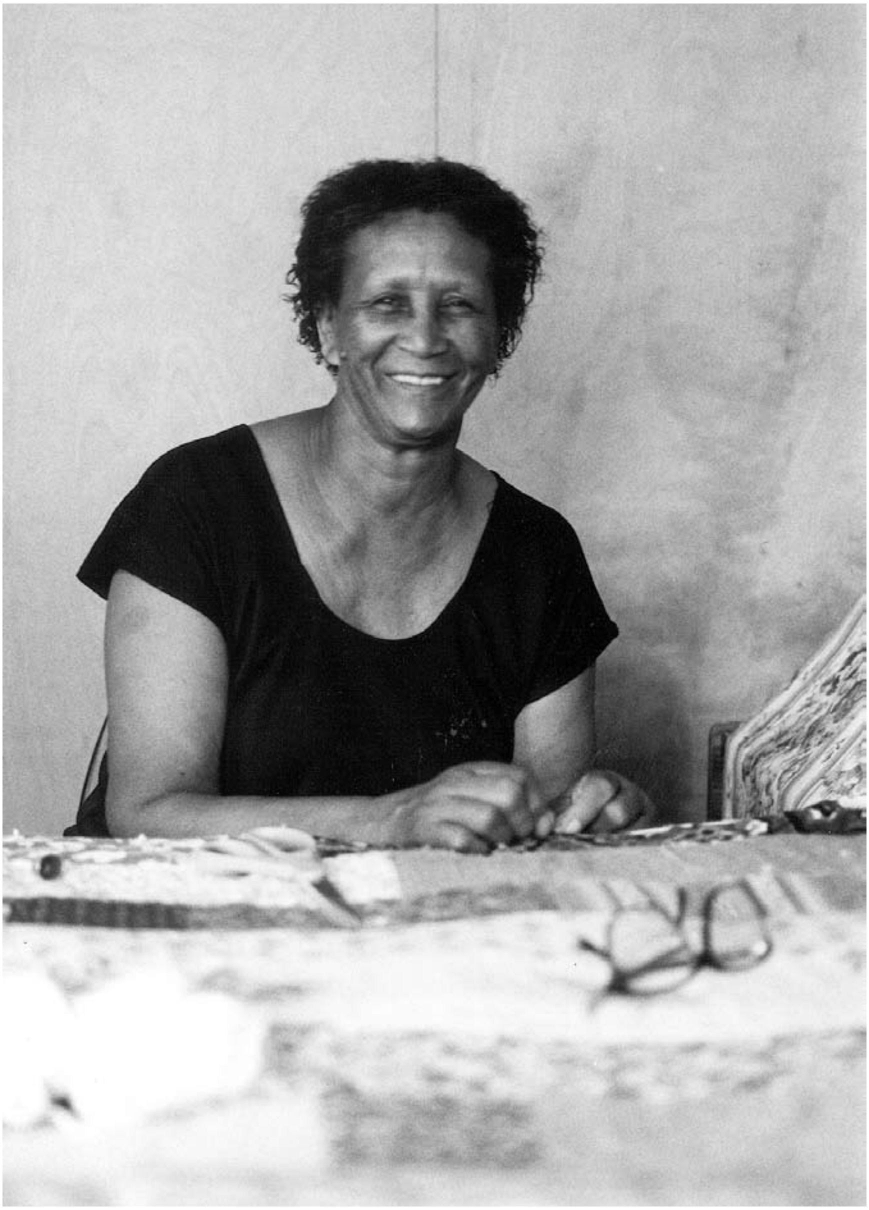

Figure 1

Mozell Benson working on a quilt.

Mozell Benson

Anne Kimzey and Joyce Cauthen

Mozell Benson, an African-American quilter from Opelika, Alabama, and 2001 recipient of a National Heritage Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, said she was shocked when she heard she was to be honored with the nation's most prestigious award for the folk and traditional arts. She considers herself a "country quilter" rather than an artist. But her creativity and eye for color and design is as evident as the practical use she intends for the quilts she makes. When considering her style of quilting, she commented, "I take other people's patterns and change them around or add something to it, make it different."

Born to Isaiah and Cleo Stephens in 1934, she was the youngest of ten children. The family farmed in rural Lee County near Waverly, Alabama. Quilting was just one of the many activities necessary to sustain the household. She wasn't very interested in quilting back then, but her mother didn't give her a choice, Mrs. Benson explained; it had to be done. She and her three sisters learned to quilt by watching and helping their mother make the bed coverings they needed to stay warm on cold winter nights. By the time she was twelve or thirteen, she could make quilts on her own.

They pieced together simple block or strip patterned quilt tops on a pedal sewing machine. "My mother just made regular quilts. She could get a little extravagant every once in a while, but material back then was so limited 'til she didn't have a whole lot of stuff to make with," she said. Cloth was hard to come by when she was growing up in the 1930s and '40s. The Stephens family "lived from the farm" making and growing almost everything needed. There wasn't much cash to buy the few things they had to purchase. So they salvaged whatever scraps of cloth they had—"backs of pants legs, shirt backs,

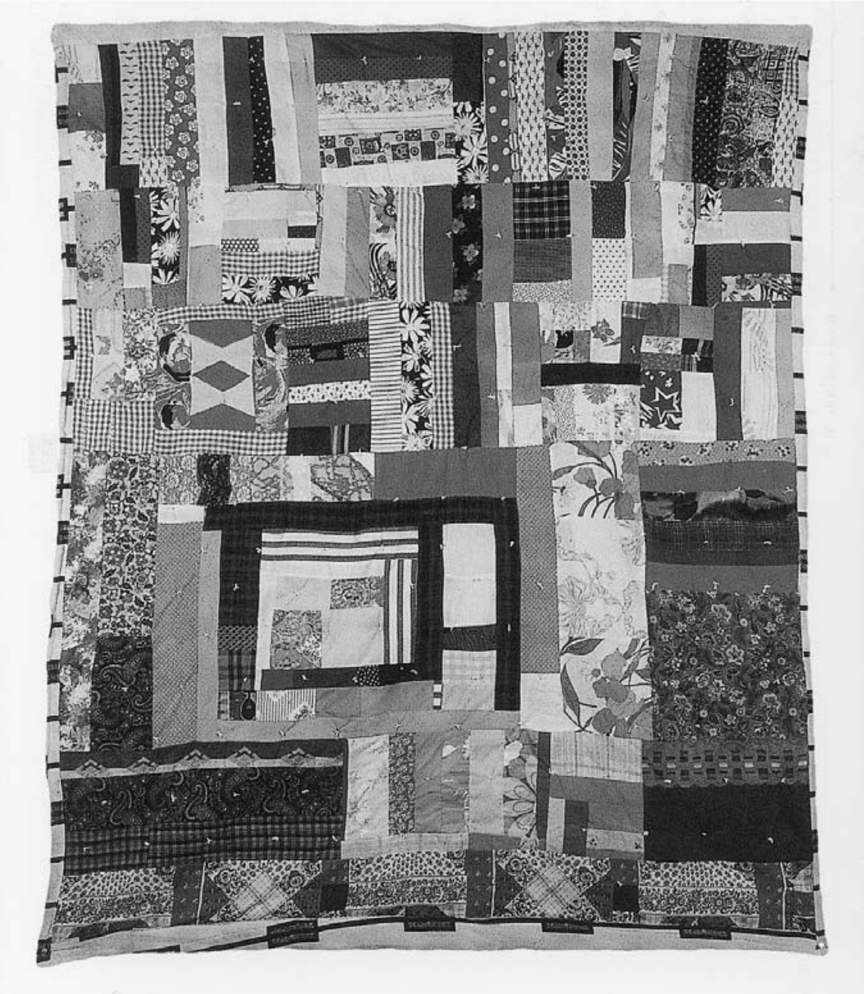

FIGURE 2
One of Mozell Benson's distinctive quilts.

feed sacks and whatever anyone else would give us." The feed for farm animals came in cloth sacks and the women would take them apart and use the fabric to make skirts, shirts, and whatever the children needed. Then the leftover scraps went into quilts. The family also bleached fertilizer sacks and used them for the linings.

To fill the quilts, the children gleaned cotton left in the fields after the crop had been harvested. They picked out the seeds and used the cotton as batting, the stuffing between the top and bottom layers of a quilt. They quilted the three layers together using the traditional shell pattern. If they didn't have scrap cotton, which was much of the time, they used a worn out quilt or blanket for filler. In that case, they simply tacked the quilt together with evenly spaced knots.

Mozell Benson married at age seventeen and raised ten children. She drives a school bus, an occupation she began in 1969. Even though her children have grown, and quilt-making is no longer a necessity, Mrs. Benson still makes quilts to give away to family and friends. "That's the only reason I make them—to give them away," she said. But she doesn't make quilts to others' specifications. "I don't ask them what they want. I make them what I want them to have." She usually takes a break from quilting in the summertime because she is too busy tending her large vegetable garden. In a typical year she makes about twenty quilts, but in a particularly busy recent year she made about a hundred to give away at a family reunion.

Although Mozell Benson essentially makes her quilts today the same way she always has, she has much more freedom in the choice of materials. She buys old blankets at yard sales to use as batting. Friends and family supply her with an abundance of fabrics. "People give me stuff, too much stuff, but I share it with other quilters in the area," she said. She also shares her talents with aspiring quilters, teaching workshops to senior citizens through the local Housing Authority and to schoolchildren in Opelika and Loachapoka.

While she has long been respected for her quilting within her community, Mrs. Benson first caught the attention of scholars and art collectors in the mid-1970s. "There was a young man here in 1976 in Auburn who was a VISTA volunteer," she said. "He was from Connecticut. He lived in the community with the families and he was always cold. So I gave him one of those old tacked up quilts that I had made, and he introduced me and my quilts to Maude Wahlman. She did a book on Afro-American quilters."

Quilt scholar Maude S. Wahlman, who nominated Mozell Benson for the National Heritage Award, considers her a master at visual improvisation, "the two-dimensional equivalent of jazz or blues, with many variations on a theme."

Professor Wahlman writes in *Signs and Symbols: African Images in African-American Quilts* (1993), "The use of the strip and the powerful movement of her quilts place them within the African-American quilting tradition, clearly associated with African textile design. Mozell is aware of the probable African origins of her quilt making. She comments, 'Black families inherited this tradition. We forget where it came from because nobody continues to teach us. I think we hold on to that even though we're not aware of it.'"

Mozell Benson's quilts toured as part of the *Signs and Symbols* exhibition. In 1985, she had the opportunity to go to Nigeria as part of a U.S. State Department program and the Nigerian Council of Women's Studies. She received her National Heritage Fellowship at a gala ceremony in 2001 in Washington, D.C. She was one of only thirteen Americans selected for the honor that year.

"From the time I won the award I started calling my quilts 'prayer covers.' The reason is that I have been so blessed all my life and to win this award was really a special great blessing. I tack most of my quilts and the ones that I tack have a special blessing in them. Each tack in there and there are quite a few—has a little blessing. I can't give you the blessing: I can just ask it for you. You go to God for it. You have to have the faith, which I do." ■

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Book Review

The Quilts of Gee's Bend. Essays by John Beardsley, William Arnett, Paul Arnett and Jane Livingston. Introduction by Alvia Wardlaw. Foreword by Peter Marzio. Atlanta: Tinwood Books, 2002. Hardcover 11.5 x 13.25 inches. 190 pages, 162 color photographs, 33 B/W photographs. Selected bibliography and index, $45.00. *Gee's Bend: The Women and Their Quilts.* Published concurrently by Tinwood Books, with the same essays but with expanded materials presented in 432 pages and 520 illustrations, $75.00.

GEORGINE CLARKE

These two books were published in conjunction with the exhibition *The Quilts of Gee's Bend,* presenting more than sixty quilts by African-American quilters of Alabama and organized with the Tinwood Alliance and the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston. Publication was made possible with the support of Jane Fonda. These are handsome volumes, with richly printed color photographs and solid essays explaining the history, significance, and artistic power of the quilts. The combination of scholarship and thoughtful visual impact creates publications important for art lovers as well as students of traditional culture.

The exhibition and publication project is described as having three themes: "quilts as sophisticated art design, quilts as vessels of cultural survival and continuity, and quilts as portraits of women's identities." John Beardsley provides an important history of Gee's Bend, the slice of land five miles long and eight miles wide in a bend of the Alabama River in southwest Alabama. He tells the background of land ownership, slavery, geographic isolation, economic difficulties—and also deep faith and family heritage which begin the stories of these quilters.

Co-editors William and Paul Arnett, also listed respectively as director and production chief, write about the found-object assemblages and quilts which they believe "became the basis of southern African-American art and aesthetics, evolving into a highly sophisticated visual language." As in their previous book, *Souls Grown Deep: African-American Vernacular Art of the South,* the Arnetts find this art to be "deeply rooted in the philosophy of improvisation"—shown also in such cultural elements as music, cooking, dance and speech. They indicate that this "is an entire way of life in which predictability has been systematically and purposefully altered."

Peter Marzio, Director of the Houston Museum of Fine Arts, describes these as "the most beautiful quilts in the world" and calls them products of "both tradition and innovation." He says, "By lifting the curtain on the quiltmakers of Gee's Bend and presenting in a broad public forum the products of these artists, we welcome the opportunity yet again to examine and debate the meaning of beauty." Jane Livingston talks about the aesthetic of these works, indicating a reverberation with rhythms and patterns of other twentieth-century art but also discussing the cultural environment in which they were created.

A significant part of the publications is devoted to the "portraits of women's identities," with lengthy interviews, family photographs and magnificent photographs of their quilts. One hundred and thirty-five quiltmakers are referenced in the longer publication; one hundred and one in the "condensed companion volume." This focus on each individual is a great strength of the project. It is indeed the individual women who make the objects and statements later interpreted by the art historians and folklore specialists. Most catalogues and exhibitions in the mainstream of fine art making do not do as well in presenting their subjects. ■

Video Review

The Quilts of Gee's Bend. Produced and directed by Matt Arnett and Vanessa Vadim. A video documenting the lives and work of the quiltmakers of Gee's Bend, Alabama. Color, 28 min. (Atlanta: Tinwood Media, 2002), $19.95.

Debra Eatman

The Quilts of Gee's Bend is a passionate look at the love of quilting of several women of Boykin, Alabama, also known as Gee's Bend. Arlonzia Pettway, Leola Pettway, Georgiana B. Pettway, Creola B. Pettway, Loretta Pettway, Mary Lee Bendolph, Essie Lee Bendolph, Annie Lee Young, and Nettie Young all have a love for the art of quilting. Each woman explains the difficult times they suffered growing up but explained how quilting eased away the tiredness of the day when they gathered around the quilting frame to sing, pray, and piece quilts. The Pettway sisters found joy in singing and quilting after a day of gathering crops, feeding animals and caring for their families. Mary Lee Bendolph taught her daughter Essie Lee to quilt. Mary Lee found Essie to be a quick study. Annie Lee and Nettie Young's mother taught them at an early age. They learned to piece rags together first and from there to quilting.

Quilts during those times were used to keep the family warm because money was sparse and there was very little heat to keep the family warm. Quilts were made from whatever the women could find to piece together. Mostly, quilts were made from old dress tails, skirts, worn-out pants with a few good places, shirt sleeves, and even rags found on the road. All of the women agree that times were hard but people seemed happier. There was nothing to waste. Everyone was in the same shape. They lived a hard life. Sometimes on the brink of starvation but, people helped each other back then. Linings for quilts were made from fertilizer sacks. They were washed and bleached white. If the quilters could not get sacks they would use old sheets that were not too thin. During the early years the women created patterns. They would just think of how they wanted the quilt to look and they would go from there.

All of the women of Gee's Bend found it a pleasure to quilt then and they still do now. ■

Recording Review

How We Got Over: Sacred Songs of Gee's Bend. Tinwood Media, Atlanta, Georgia. www.tinwoodmedia.com. 2 CDs with liner notes. $19.98.

Kevin Nutt

The two compact discs in this collection were produced to accompany *The Quilts of Gee's Bend* exhibition organized by the Houston Museum of Fine Arts and taken from the collection of Tinwood Alliance. As astonishing as the Gee's Bend quilts are, this CD reveals a comparably rich singing tradition. Indeed, the CD can stand on its own as a unique musical document.

The first disc consists of 18 recordings made by Robert Sonkin in Gee's Bend in 1941. Sonkin is better known as one of the collectors of what has become "Voices from the Dust Bowl: The Charles L. Todd and Robert Sonkin Migrant Worker Collection." What is not as well known is that Sonkin, working with the Archive of American Folk Song, journeyed to Gee's Bend in 1941 and over the course of several weeks recorded spirituals, hymns, conversations and even the activities of a Fourth of July picnic. All the 18 selections presented here are hymns and spirituals and were apparently chosen because the performers were relatives of the contemporary quilter/singers featured on the second disc or quilters themselves.

Despite the reputation of Gee's Bend as being isolated and uninfluenced by outside forces, several of the songs reflect a probable awareness of some of the then-contemporary gospel recordings. "He's All" has an arrangement very similar to a 1937 commercial recording by Alabama's Ravizee Singers, while "Here Am I (Send Me)" is almost identical to North Carolina's Mitchell's Christian

Singers 1934 recording. Besides the fine performances captured by Sonkin, the significance of the first disc is that the Sonkin Gee's Bend recordings, at least to the knowledge of this reviewer, have never previously been collected and released in this manner. Steve Grauberger of the Alabama Center for Traditional Culture has done a fine job editing and remastering the tape sources. These are all nice performances capturing a community performing a repertoire of songs ranging from nineteenth century spirituals, to hymns and contemporary gospel songs, and it is such a treat to have them collected on CD.

The second CD features recordings made in July and August of 2002 by Matt Arnett and Steve Grauberger. All of the singers are themselves quilters. The performances are all a cappella, casual, unrehearsed, and strikingly fine. Like the Sonkin recordings, the performances are a mixture of spirituals, traditional songs, hymns and gospel songs. The songs consist of solos, duos, trios, and a quartet, the White Rose. Many of the songs benefit from unique arrangements. The title song, "How We Got Over," ignores the ubiquitous arrangement of W. H. Brewster, made popular by the Ward Singers and Mahalia Jackson in the early 1950s, and instead accumulates power simply by repeating the familiar refrain only changing a few words each time. There is a beautiful, understated tentativeness to the performances often highlighted by the singers' reedy tenors. Many of the songs are delivered in voices barely above a whisper. Indeed, the CD concludes with a barely audible "thank you Jesus."

In the shout or improvisatory section of "Power of God," the White Rose opt to eschew the practice often used by male quartets of using this section to increase the tempo, punctuate with energetic hand-clapping, and increasing the volume and intensity of the singing. Rather, the White Rose lower the volume to an almost inaudible hum with the lead singer's improvised exhortations barely audible above the repeated phrase "I'm moving by the power." Extemporaneous hand clapping and shouts at the beginnings and ending of several songs are wisely left in. Mary Lee Bendolph, singing the eighteenth century hymn "The Day is Passed and Gone" a favorite of her mother's, ends the song prematurely, overcome with emotion, weeping over the memory of her mother. The final selection is another performance by Mary Lee Bendolph and Essie B. Pettway, "Oh, Please Lord, Have Mercy" that approaches the power and beauty of Rich Amerson's and Price and Earthy Ann Coleman's 1950 Harold Courlander field recording "Rock Chariot, I Told You to Rock." Such a cappella singing as a whole is becoming rarer and difficult to find and this CD should also be valued for documenting this disappearing tradition and practice.

The CDs themselves are packaged in an attractive cardboard double foldout and the enclosed liner notes by Matt Arnett are succinct and informative. In keeping with the comparative historical presentation of the two discs of music, the liner notes and package feature several of Arthur Rothstein's familiar 1937 Gee's Bend photographs coupled with several excellent contemporary portraits of the quilter/singers. ■

Recording Review

Traditional Musics of Alabama: A Compilation, Volume II: African American Seven Shapenote Singing. Alabama Traditions 202. Produced and digitally mastered by Steve Grauberger at the Alabama Center for Traditional Culture, 2002. CD Recording with liner notes, available from the Alabama Folklife Association, $12.50.

Chiquita Walls

For someone who has been singing shapenote songs my entire life, it's sometimes hard for me to comprehend there are people who have never heard the singing tradition and others who have heard it but swear it makes no sense and they can't understand it. In my household, singing shapenote songs was just like drinking water. Almost everybody in my family sang from *The Sacred Harp,* including my grandmother who was in her eighties. We sang all the time. Sometimes it was whole songs (notes and all) and other times it was just a chorus. Sometimes it was with a book – but most of the time from memory. We sang everywhere, in the house, in the car, while working in my father's truck patches and of course every Sunday at church singings. For us, shapenote singing was a very integral part of our home and community. I was a teenager before I understood, we were an anomaly. Shapenote singing was, and unfortunately remains, a veiled society. Those on the inside understood it and loved it passionately. Those on the outside could not understand it and had no convenient means to become familiar with it.

Fortunately, that paradox is solved with Stephen Grauberger's documentary project, *Traditional Musics of Alabama: A Compilation, Volume II, African Ameri-*

can Shapenote Singing. This is a wonderful introduction to the seven shapenote singing tradition for those outside the singing tradition and a welcome refresher for those with ties to the tradition. The project features seventeen recordings. Many are old time favorites including "Getting Ready to Leave This World," "Just A Little Talk With Jesus," "Victory in Jesus," "Where the Soul of Man Never Dies," and "Farther Along." The recordings took place between 1969 and 2002 throughout the state of Alabama.

To those who are unfamiliar with the tradition of singing by shapes, this volume including its liner notes is awesome. The extensive liner notes trace the history of shapenote music going back to the early British singing schools in colonial America through the Great Awakening Movements and the itinerant singing schoolmasters who brought the four-shape fa-so-la-mi tradition south before the Civil War to popularization of the seven-shape tradition in the 1870s. The contributions of A. J. Showalter, James Vaughan, V. O. Stamps, and James Baxter and their songbook publishing companies would have a great influence on the introduction of shapenote singing in the white communities as well as in the African American community.

Not only does Grauberger spend time covering the historical origins and methodology of the shapenote tradition, the project gives a very detailed description of how the tradition evolved in the African American communities of Alabama. Grauberger documents five separate regional conventions established between 1887 and 1967. He also covers every aspect of the singing tradition from dinner on the grounds, singing schools and basic rudiments, buying new song books, choosing new songs, pitching the songs, to walking the floor and seating arrangements. These trademarks of the shapenote singing tradition are presented from the singers' perspectives. There is also a brief history of the separate conventions in the liner notes along with information on its current status, meeting times, and major officers.

Unfortunately, the African American shapenote singing tradition is declining everywhere and singers throughout Alabama bemoan this poignant reality. Bernice Harvey's passionate plea for continuance expressing singers' feelings about preserving the music and its current state is both personal and touching. In the past, the tradition was rooted in the family and church communities and passed down from one generation to the next. However, the decline began when the present generation of singers' children did not take an interest in perpetuating the tradition on the same level as did their parents. Although the singers kept on singing, they were unable to attract new singers. In the 1970s the attempts to set up singing schools in Alabama and Mississippi met with little success.

Today, singers realize the tradition is on the verge of extinction and are frustrated. Newcomers to the tradition find it interesting but aren't always presented with the resources to develop their singing skills. Singers' children express familiarity with the tradition but often don't have the support system to learn the singing rudiments. Often I hear the remarks from current singers' descendants who remember going to conventions and song practices. Sadly they will recall, "my grandmother used to sing *do ri me*, but I never learned," or "my father sang notes, but I never picked it up."

The hope for reviving the shapenote tradition lies in bringing the current singers and new singers together. The time has come where all of us inside the tradition (singers and folklorists) must expose shapenote singing to those on the outside. I believe that once people understand its basic theories and cultural significance, newcomers and singers' descendents alike will become attracted to the tradition. Grauberger's work must be seen not only as a means to preserve the shapenote singing tradition, but also as a means to expose the tradition to those on the outside, thereby creating an interest and support.

I couldn't decide what I liked the most about this project—the extensive liner notes or the music. They are both extraordinary. Works like this will ultimately create a renewed interest in African American shapenote singing, thereby preserving it and reviving it. Thank you, Mr. Grauberger, for this giant step toward removing the veil and exposing the shapenote singing tradition to the world. ■

Book Review

Kay Norton, *Baptist Offspring, Southern Midwife–Jesse Mercer's Cluster of Spiritual Songs (1810): A Study in American Hymnody* (Detroit Monographs in Musicology/Studies in Music, No. 34 (Warren, Michigan: Harmonie Park Press, 2002), hardcover, $47.50.

Paul A. Richardson

Finding an heirloom crafted by an ancestor and learning about its maker can lead to fascinating discoveries about forebears and the times in which they lived. When the artifact is a hymn book, its creator a leading figure in regional religious development, and the family an intermingling of Baptists and Georgians, the range of insights is extended in many directions.

In this case, the artifact is the "Third Edition Improved" of a text-only collection of hymns, whose publication history extended from about 1800 (the first two editions are not extant) through 1871. Its compiler was Jesse Mercer (1769-1841), a Baptist pastor, newspaper editor, and denominational leader, who is best known today for the university that bears his name.

Kay Norton, a musicologist on the faculty of Arizona State University, is the author of this study. She is a researcher of considerable breadth who has written previously about the *Société Nationale de Musique*, composer Normand Lockwood, and American female choral conductors.

Designer Colleen McRorie's work is commendable. The volume is beautifully laid-out in a format larger than but reminiscent of the "long boy" tune books. This provides for tables containing substantial information, as well as permitting the display of this book's title page alongside that of *The Cluster*.

The drawback is columns of type nearly nine inches wide. Twenty-nine musical examples, twenty-four tables, six figures, and three maps illuminate the narrative.

To establish the broader context in which the hymn book was produced, the work begins with highly condensed surveys of Baptist and Georgia history. These are followed by a more detailed account of Mercer's life and career. Three subsequent chapters explore his relationships with slaves, women, and Native Americans. The metaphors of the title are then explicated as Norton proposes that *The Cluster* is textually an "offspring of Baptist evangelicalism" and musically a "midwife to Southern hymnody." In support of the former role, she traces textual connections to half a dozen sources: Baptist collections from the Northern United States, the Wesleys, George Whitefield and the Countess of Huntingdon, John Newton, John Rippon's *Selection of Hymns*, and Joseph Hart. To argue for the latter relationship, she traces the citations of *The Cluster* as the source of texts included in shape-note tunebooks.

This book has two distinguishing features: the exploration of Mercer's connections with the three non-dominant groups in his society and the proposal of a tune repertory that might have been used in singing from this text-only anthology. In the central chapters on subordinate parts of the population, Norton provides helpful discussions of the culture and of Mercer's place in it. In each of these relationships, he is seen to have held a mediating view for his time. The discussion of tune repertory is, as Norton acknowledges, speculative. Indeed, the question may be raised as to whether this repertory is implied or inferred. Her proposals suggest the various ways in which the texts were brought to life.

Three aspects of the work undermine the author's creative contextual approach and hypotheses. First, there are inconsistencies. Examples of these are the varied perspectives on Baptist origins (pre-Reformation and Anabaptist beginnings are emphasized in chapter 1, while chapter 7 simply states anti-Anglican dissent), the variety of dates presented for Rippon's *Selection of Psalm and Hymn Tunes* (correct on p. 116 as 1791; elsewhere, 1787, 1792, and ca. 1792), and the erroneous citations of Charleston as the place where *Southern Harmony* was compiled (pp. xxiii, 75) and/or published (pp. 52, 139) as compared to the correct information in the bibliography. A second matter is inaccurate classification. This problem arises with both persons (though Morgan Edwards was a trustee of Rhode Island College, he was never a member of its faculty, as stated on pp. 101 and 129) and anthologies (the 1790 collection by Samuel Jones and Burgis Allison cannot be considered "a prototypical camp-meeting songster," as it is labeled on p 129; and neither the 1790 book by Broaddus and Broaddus nor the 1793 collection of Clay–and certainly not the still-in-progress *Dictionary of American Hymnology*–should be grouped with "19th-Century Collections" in Table 10.3). Finally, there are unsubstantiated conclusions that are not germane to the necessary speculations. These include the assertion that "Both [of Mercer's] wives undoubtedly served various roles in the publication of the *Cluster of Spiritual Songs*" (p. 54) and the opinion that "The female vocal attributes of lyricism and flexibility, enlivened by natural invention and expressiveness, shaped the evolving genre of religious song as surely as did the male voice at the head of the congregation" (p. 56). (The latter statement strikes this reviewer as sexual stereotyping.)

Though not entirely satisfactory in its details, this study is a good example of the multiple levels of life and meaning that can be encountered in the examination of a text-only hymnal: histories of church and of state, biography, conditions of subordinate groups in society, and varieties of musical traditions, both folk and cultivated. Norton's work brings together an impressive range of information and perspective. ■

Contributors' Notes

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JOYCE CAUTHEN is Executive Director of the Alabama Folklife Association and one of Alabama's foremost scholars of traditional folk music. Best known for her book, *With Fiddle and Well-Rosined Bow: Old-Time Fiddling in Alabama*, she also produced the documentary CDs *Possum Up A Gum Stump: Home, Field & Commercial Recordings of Alabama Fiddlers*, *John Alexander's Sterling Jubilee Singers of Bessemer, Alabama* and edited the book and CD *Benjamin Lloyd's Hymn Book: A Primitive Baptist Song Tradition*.

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J. MARK GOOCH is a photographer in Birmingham, Ala. He attended the University of Southern Mississippi, Samford University, and University of Alabama at Birmingham. He holds a degree from nowhere. He grew up in Columbus, Mississippi. His extended family in Mississippi thought him to appreciate the art of a well-told story.

ANNE KIMZEY is a folklife specialist at the Alabama Center for Traditional Culture. She received her B.A. in Journalism from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where she also pursued graduate studies in folklore. For the past 14 years she has researched and documented a variety of Alabama's folk traditions. Most recently she produced two traveling exhibitions, *Water Ways: the Traditional Culture of Alabama's River Systems* and *In the Garden: Traditional Culture and Horticulture in Alabama*.

LAMAR MARSHALL is the Executive Director of Wild Alabama. He was Founder & President of The Bankhead Monitor, a non-profit educational Corporation and publication, which became Wild Alabama in 1996. He was raised in central Alabama by parents and grandparents who long had lived rural lifestyles close to the land in the mountains of North Georgia and eventually Alabama. He grew up with conservation ethics and an intense love for forest wilderness. For 24 years he worked in the field of design engineering for major corporations for whom he worked on pulp and paper mills, pollution control equipment, nuclear power plants. Since then, he has dedicated his life to defend the environment and to protect cultural resources on public lands. Through the leadership of Lamar Marshall, Wild Alabama nominated three historic districts for recognition by the State of Alabama: Indian Tomb Hollow, Kinlock Historic District and the High Town Path Historic District. Working with the US Forest Service, Wild Alabama has been instrumental in the development of cultural heritage management prescriptions which will be used to protect cultural areas on National Forests across the Southeast.

Reviewers

GEORGINE CLARKE is Visual Arts Program Manager and Gallery Director for the Alabama State Council on the Arts. She works with individual visual artists and organizations, Council grant programs, exhibition spaces and festivals as well as directing the Council's Alabama Artists Gallery, organizing 6-8 exhibitions a year and performing a wide variety of curatorial and writing assignments. From 1979-1993 she served as founding Director of the Kentuck Festival, Art Center and Museum in Northport, Alabama.

DEBRA S. EATMAN currently serves as the Senior Credit Union Specialist for the Federation of Southern Cooperatives in Epes. She also serves as the co-coordinator of the Black Belt Folk Roots Festival held every year on the fourth weekend of August. Debra has served on several grant review panels for the State Arts Council.

KEVIN NUTT is an independent researcher and writer living in Montgomery, Alabama. He produces a weekly vintage African-American gospel radio program, "Sinner's Crossroads" on WFMU in the New York City area. He contributed an article "Butler County Blues" to *Tributaries*, volume 5. In August, he will reissue Baker, Louisiana's Reverend Charlie Jackson's Booker label gospel material on his CaseQuarter Records label.

PAUL A. RICHARDSON is Professor of Music and Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies in Music in the School of Performing Arts at Samford University. A former president of The Hymn Society in the United States and Canada, he has written numerous articles about hymnody, including several on early American collections and their compilers. Some of these appear in *Singing Baptists: Studies in Baptist Hymnody in America*, which he co-authored with Harry Eskew and David Music.

CHIQUITA WALLS earned an MA in Southern Studies from the University of Mississippi. In 1993, she produced *Songs of Faith, African American Shapenote Music in the Deep South—Volume 1* a documentary recording of African-

American shape note singers in Mississippi, Alabama and Louisiana. Currently, she is working on a project documenting African American shapenote singers in the Deep South. She resides in Oxford, Mississippi.

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☐ ***Tributaries, Journal of the AFA,*** Vol. 5 ($10). This special thematic issue contains essays on Alabama's blues topics such as Butler "String Beans" May, Ed Bell, "Jaybird" Coleman, Willie King, Vera Ward Hall, and "John Henry."

☐ ***The Traditional Musics of Alabama: A Compilation, Volume I*** ($12.50). This CD is the first in the Alabama Center for Traditional Culture's Millennium Series, produced by Steve Grauberger. It presents a delightful and well-recorded variety of children's games, work songs, sacred music, fiddle tunes, blues and other forms of music traditional to Alabama collected by musicologists and folklorists over the last 50 years.

☐ ***The Traditional Musics of Alabama: A Compilation, Volume II, African American Seven Shapenote Singing*** ($12.50). This CD is the second in the Alabama Center for Traditional Culture's Millennium Series, produced by Steve Grauberger. It features African American singing conventions in Alabama that practice a unique form of gospel singing using the repertory of southern gospel music known as"seven shape," "new book," or "little book" singing. Many familiar songs are featured, most sung a cappella.

☐ ***John Alexander's Sterling Jubilee Singers of Bessemer, Alabama,*** ($10).

This cassette recording features Jefferson County's oldest African American a capella gospel group.

☐ ***Jesus Hits like an Atom Bomb,*** ($15). CD version of the Sterling Jubilee cassette described above.

☐ ***Cornbread Crumbled in Gravy: Historical Alabama Field Recordings from the Byron Arnold Collection of Traditional Tunes*** ($12.50). This box set includes a 64-page booklet and a cassette featuring field recordings of folk, gospel, and parlor tunes recorded in 1947.

☐ ***Traditional Music from Alabama's Wiregrass*** ($10). A CD capturing bluegrass, gospel, blues, and Sacred Harp singing as done in Southeast Alabama.

☐ ***The Alabama Sampler*** ($12). A CD featuring live performances at City Stages of Alabama blues, bluegrass, Sacred Harp, Gospel, railroad calls, etc.

☐ ***Benjamin Lloyd's Hymn Book: A Primitive Baptist Song Tradition*** ($18 softcover, $25 hardcover). A book of essays exploring Alabama's oldest hymnal, published in 1841, and enclosed CD with twenty examples of ways in which congregations sing from it.

☐ ***Judge Jackson and the Colored Sacred Harp*** (Book/CD, $25) This 160-page hardbound book and CD by Joe Dan Boyd with an introduction by John Bealle tells the story of Judge Jackson of Ozark, Alabama, who in 1934 published *The Colored Sacred Harp*. It also describes the formation and rise to prominence of the Wiregrass Sacred Harp Singers, led by Dewey Williams and Japheth Jackson. The enclosed CD contains 2 historic recordings in which Judge Jackson participated and 23 others from *The Colored Sacred Harp* as well as the Cooper version of *The Sacred Harp.*

NON-AFA PRODUCTS OF RELATED INTEREST:

☐ ***Rich Amerson*** ($7 for cassette, $10 for CD). Folk tales and songs recorded in Livingston, Alabama, in 1961.

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☐ ***White Spirituals from the Sacred Harp: The Alabama Sacred Harp Convention*** ($10 for cassette, $15 for CD). Alan Lomax recorded these shape-note songs from the Sacred Harp in 1959 in Fyffe, Alabama.

☐ ***The Colored Sacred Harp*** (CD, $15). The Wiregrass Sacred Harp Singers of Ozark, Alabama, sing from Judge Jackson's 1934 compilation of shape-note songs.

☐ ***Desire for Piety (CD, $15). A rare example of black Sacred Harp singing from rural southeast Alabama as sung by the Wiregrass Sacred Harp Singers.***