
Bringing the Crooked Road to Montgomery & Giles

Heather Browning, Rod Rordam, Ginger Wagner, Paul Herling, Jack Hinshelwood presenting the Crooked Road Banner

<http://indianrunstringband.com/temp-home/gallery/blacksburg-farmers-marketcrooked-road-ceremony/>



What is the Crooked Road?

“The Crooked Road, Virginia’s Heritage Music Trail, winds through the mountains of Southwest Virginia. Here, the Bluegrass, Old Time, and Traditional Country music is as beautiful and rugged as the landscape itself. **Our mission: Supporting economic development by promoting Heritage Tourism and Blue Ridge and Appalachian culture.**”

www.crookedroad.org

Click to view each layer:

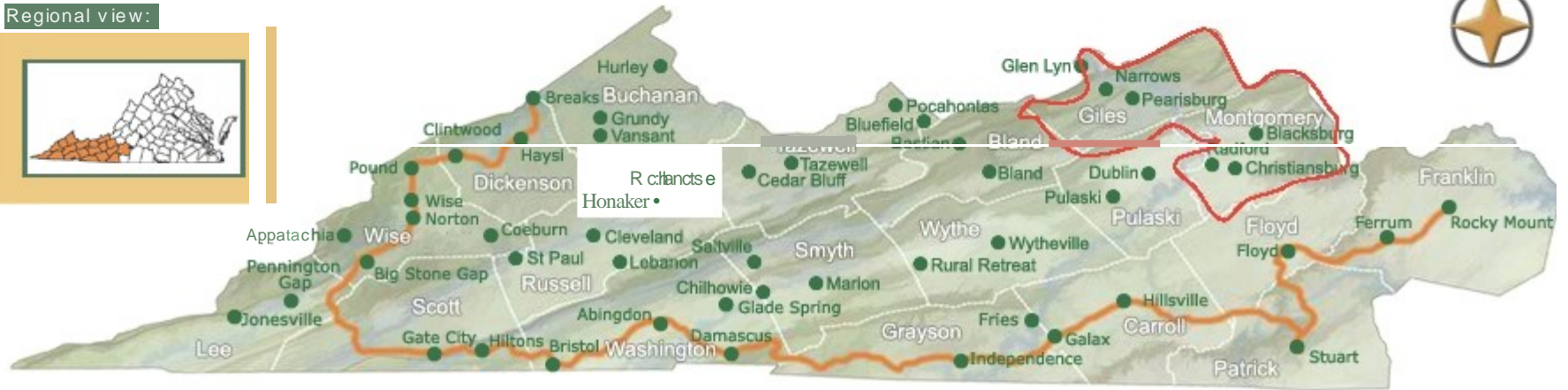
- P: Cities and Towns
- f: Roads
 - Blue Ridge Parkway
- r: Major Venues of the Crooked Road
- r: Wayside Exhibits
- J: Affiliated Venues & Festivals

Map Key:

- The Crooked Road --
- Interstate --
- Secondary Roads
- Blue Ridge Parkway
- Major Venues of Tile Crooked Road • • • • •
- Wayside Exhibits •



Regional view:



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Regional view:



Example of a Crooked Road Kiosk



http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-DNYoHbp9gAc/URQIJWbHwoI/AAAAAAAAJdc/L8u1tChKu3U/s1600/Crooked+Road+Kiosk_Frame1200_Claiborne+House.jpg

What is our project?

- Collect historical and current information on music traditions in Montgomery & Giles
 - Evaluate how the mission of The Crooked Road (TCR) fits into the existing music community in Montgomery & Giles counties
-

Methods

- **Participant observation**
 - Blacksburg farmers market jam dedication
 - Jams at Crooked Road venues in these two counties
 - Ralph Stanley concert
 - Reed family reunion
 - **In person interviews**
 - We conducted 24 interviews with professional performers, crooked road administrators, instrument makers, and others
-

Overarching Questions

- How does The Crooked Road represent itself?
- How is the music scene and history in Montgomery and Giles special?

How does The Crooked Road represent itself as a vehicle for preserving music traditions vs. how does heritage music actually function culturally and socially in Montgomery and Giles counties?

History

Doing stuff for TCR?

Traditional Mountain Music Archived

- Very little information archived within Giles and Montgomery Counties on traditional mountain music within their respective counties
- Montgomery County Museum with nothing from before 1950s—nearly all having to do with Virginia Tech
- The people of Giles much more aware of their music history than Montgomery County, but they still had very little archived
- The “Generation Gap”

Importance to Crooked Road

- We worked to help Jack Hinshelwood and The Crooked Road gather more information within Giles and Montgomery Counties, VA in order to create two kiosks or Wayside stations.
- The Crooked Road is very important in this area because of the lack of history documented and archived on traditional mountain music within the area.



Here is one of the few pictures we could find within the Montgomery County Museum on traditional mountain music within the county.

An Oral Tradition

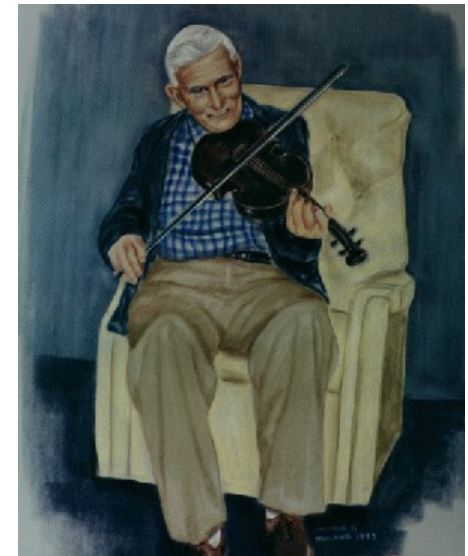
- This type of music is known for being passed down to friends and family members of the next generation
- Songs and big names passed down from others; “Have you heard of Henry Reed?”



Pictured here is a Thursday night jam at Anna's Restaurant located in Giles County, Virginia. Anna's is an official Crooked Road venue, and holds a jam every Thursday night, but some who play here believe Anna's does not get the same recognition from the Crooked as some of the other venues within Montgomery and Giles Counties, VA.

Henry Reed: An example from Giles county

- Showpiece of Crooked Road for Montgomery and Giles counties
- “Kitchen Girl”, “Ducks in a Pond”, and “Forked Deer” bowing styles
- Strong family traditions
- Learned from an African American
- Typically refused monetary compensation
- **A few of his numerous accolades include:**
 - Music stored in Library of Congress
 - <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/reed/>
 - Archiving of music and styling in the Smithsonian
 - Henry Reed Memorial Fiddler’s Convention



[http://www.henryreed.org/
images/hen-paint.gif](http://www.henryreed.org/images/hen-paint.gif)

What is the Crooked Road attempting to do?

Official Mission: **“Supporting economic development by promoting Heritage Tourism and Blue Ridge and Appalachian culture.”**

Secondary mission: Cultural preservation

How is tradition passed on?

In Giles county, tradition is primarily kinship based; musicians learn through family members (like Henry Reed)

In Montgomery, music is passed along from one musician to another (or to new members) through jam sessions and free private lessons.

Virginia Tech is located in Montgomery county, so the population is more fluid.

Cultural Preservation

Participants cited jam sessions and dances as particularly important catalysts for tradition; the Crooked Road promotes concert-style performances.

The Crooked Road is attempting to preserve this music tradition through an imposed, non-traditional system of kiosks and sponsored venues.

Participants said...

“I try to be inclusive ‘nd ya know, if somebody look like they’re going to keep showing up [to the jams] and be persistent about it I’ll try to do my best to make them feel welcome and ya know help them along.” - Richardson

“You put up a sign that says mmkay, lot four, I’m havin’ a bluegrass jam, you have more people here than you can shake a stick at. Not jus’ playing, just to come listen” -Elbertson

“When I was a kid we played square dances in barns, ya know at people’s houses. And uh that brought people together.” -Gardner

The next generation...

Interviewees consistently cited children as important heralds of tradition

Olin Gardner cited a local band composed of middle school students as being important for the continuation of music

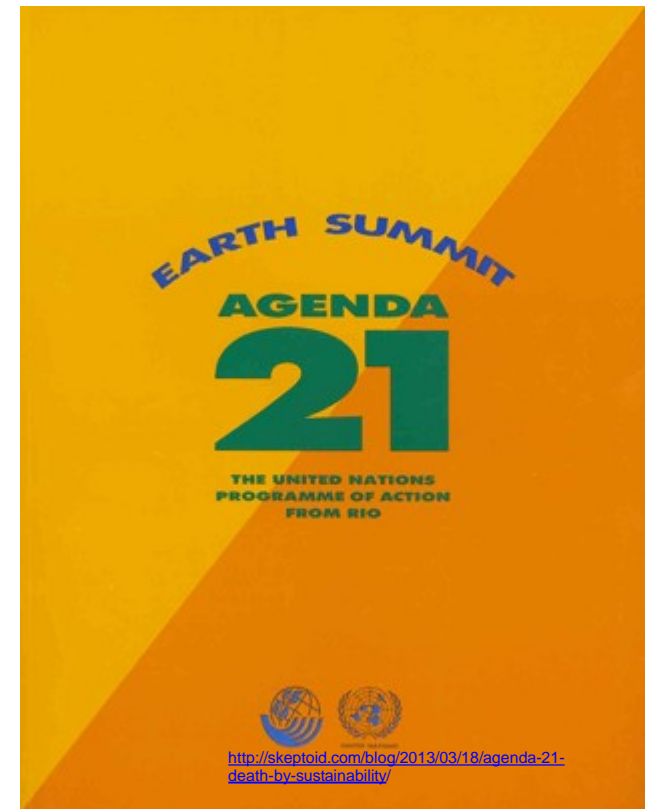
Agenda 21 and The Crooked Road

- Threat to Private Property Rights
- Agenda 21
- \$200,000 of Federal Funds

“A lot of the small communities of Southwest Virginia are really stretched.

And this was a way to create a sustainable funding source for us.”

–Woody Crenshaw



Economic Impacts

- Little monetary benefit for the musicians
- Little benefit for the local area
- Most benefits go to corporate headquarters

LOCALLY OWNED BUSINESS
SPEND \$100 AT A LOCAL BUSINESS



NONLOCALLY OWNED BUSINESS
SPEND \$100 AT A NON-LOCAL BUSINESS



GREEN - Money Staying In Your Community
For every \$100 spent locally, \$68 remains in the local economy

RED - Money Leaving Your Community
For every \$100 spent non-locally, \$57 remains in the local economy

<http://www.yearofplenty.org/2010/11/study-by-tcal-73-stays-tcal-by-ra&onal-chain-43-stays-tcal.html>

Quotes

- “I just started building (instruments) because I enjoyed it, I never did it to sell them or make money” -Clint Smith
- “He saw music as cultural, not something to make a living by” -Alan Jabbour speaking about Henry Reed



http://www.news.appstate.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/north_shore_decoration_day_symposium.jpg

African-American Communities

- Small heavily black populated communities
- Focus on Wake Forest community
- Gospel music
- Christiansburg Institute, Inc.

Christiansburg Institute, Incorporated (1866-1966)



African-American Communities continued

- Entertainment Clubs
- Local Musicians
- Music's involvement with local integration



<http://jazzchill.blogspot.com/2013/10/new-releases-donna-summer-lew-kirton.html>

Recommendations for the Crooked Road

- Take charge of the preservation of the heritage and authenticity of the local music.
- **Bring the heritage to the schools.**
- Have “camps” or community workshops to **teach** traditional music and bring the communities together to share and learn about the music and its heritage.
- **Encourage the participation from non-white communities (i.e. African American and Native American)**
- Make The Crooked Road events more accessible for local people (e.g. promote events more within counties and consider those who may not have computer/internet access)

We Would Like To Give Special Thanks To....

- The Appalachian Regional Commission
- East Tennessee State University center for Appalachian studies and services
 - Roberta Herrin
 - Ruth Human
- The 24 interviewees who agreed to talk to us
- The venues we visited, including:
 - Anna's Restaurant
 - Blacksburg Farmers Market Dedication Ceremony
 - Blacksburg Square Dance
- Jack Hinshelwood

