

The Liner Notes

*The stories behind the
people & places that
helped shape what
became country music*

LONG
JOURNEY
HOME



SEPT 26 | 2015



Welcome to the first yearly celebration of our "storied musical history." Our hearts have been gladdened and filled with pride as we have prepared this journey for you, a musical and artistic trek back into the lives and performances of some of Tennessee's "finest and most productive musical artists."

As you journey up and down these rural roads travelled by those pioneers of country music, let your mind wander back to the Johnson County of their day. They played and sang on their front porches or often by lamplight in front of fireplaces or "pot-bellied" stoves. Many of their roads were dirt or gravel. Televisions and electronic gadgets were unheard of. Radios crackled and popped with any change in the weather and were often to be heard only by walking across the hill or down the road to an affluent neighbor's house. Old crank-up Victrolas were just beginning to be a part of the parlors of remote country homes and when the families and neighbors were not pickin' and singin', they were listening to an evolving number of breakable 78's. The sounds weren't the greatest but these early ballads were: *Tom Dooley*, *Little Omie Wise*, *The Ballad of Finley Preston*, and *The Long Journey Home*, the song that lends its name to our festival.

In that simple environment lived descendants of European settlers, many from Ireland or Scotland where storytelling and ballad making were everyday fare. And so it was that storytelling and music making, passed down through the generations, give us the rich heritage we celebrate today. In the midst of our instant electronic connection with the world, it is refreshing to pause and give a listen to our talented musicians who carry on the traditions of their forebearers by re-telling the old stories and singing the old songs that brought folks together in another day. We hope our journey will bring you together with the richness of the past and the creativity and fun to be found in the Johnson County of today.



Evelyn Cook
Co-Chair

Front: Jason Blevins posed as G.B. Grayson for the newest mural installed on the Mountain City Antiques & Collectibles Building in downtown Mountain City.

Back: In addition to John Winer and Will Kerley, who are pictured, Kyman Matherly and Weston Robinson helped pose as the Wilkes County, NC lawmen who came to retrieve Tom Dula. Also not pictured on the cover is Michael Grayson, who posed for the mural as his great-great grandfather Col. James Grayson.

Special thanks to Van & Karla Arnold, who loaned their horses for the project.

-JOE WILSON-

Putting our music on the map

A lifelong champion of mountain music, culture, and people, Joe Wilson grew up on Bulldog, a curvy, winding road, one of many in Trade, the oldest community in Tennessee. Perhaps his appreciation of the music stemmed from his knowledge that most of it had originated in the British Isles as ballads and had been brought to the Appalachians by a people whose music and language became deeply rooted in the old isolated mountains.

“When the country music mavens finally discern that artistry emanates from people (not places), the blind singer, fiddler and composer from Laurel Bloomery will be given the credit he has always deserved.”

~ Joe Wilson

Joe’s fascination grew into a passion as he realized the strong connection between the people and their music and that these people, his people, were often denigrated by outsiders who did not understand their strong connection to the music and the land. Joe’s mother, a strong believer in social justice, once advised him to “put yourself in their shoes; they’ve got feelings.” As a result, he always championed the underdog.

A journey to Maces Springs, Virginia to visit his idol A.P. Carter was to be the beginning of Joe’s story, but instead, the aging musical genius warned the aspiring teen, “I wouldn’t do that if I was you.”

If Wilson had taken Carter’s advice, he probably wouldn’t have hitchhiked to Nashville or gone on the road with Marty Robbins, nor would he have become the executive director of the National Council for the Traditional Arts where roots music was the centerpiece of his working life. He would not have planned 42 music festivals, taken musicians on tours to 33 countries or produced 131 albums of the traditional music he loved. What’s more, he would not have fostered the Blue Ridge Music Center, a country music museum that honors scores of mountain musicians.

Joe also helped launch *The Crooked Road* music trail, and even after bunking down with Willie Nelson and taking bluegrass to Thailand, he viewed the music center and the Roots of American Music exhibit, once displayed at the Smithsonian, as his crowning achievements. “It’s from the heart,” he said. His lifelong goal was to validate the music and the people of the Appalachian Mountains, and in doing so, he also validated himself as a brilliant visionary and magnanimous humanitarian (Berrier, Ralph, Jr., Roanoke Times, May, 2011).

Even though Wilson passed away in May, 2015, he also played a prominent role in the creation of the “Long Journey Home” Festival. After the unveiling of the first mural depicting Tom Ashley, a group of devotees gathered at Lois’s Country Cafe where they shared wonderful stories of the rich musical history of this community as they listened to local musicians jam. This experience and Joe’s encouragement planted the seed which grew into the LJH Festival, and for that we are grateful.

In response to the Murals in Mountain City project, created by Cristy Dunn and supported by the JC Community Foundation, the East TN Foundation, the JC Arts Council, and Danny Herman, Wilson wrote a letter encouraging support for this important venture. In this letter Wilson informed readers that an event had occurred in Mountain City that radically changed the development of folk, traditional, and country music – when a nearly blind fiddler, composer, and singer from Laurel Bloomery made the music of Johnson County known around the world during 1927-30. Almost all his recordings became standards. His professional career lasted only four years, and he died tragically, but his mark is indelible. When the country music mavens finally discern that artistry emanates from people (not places), the blind singer, fiddler and composer from Laurel Bloomery will be given the credit he has always deserved.

(Wanda Payne)



-CRISTY DUNN-

Making music with a paintbrush



Cristy Dunn and her sons, Kyman, Andrew & Jackson Matherly. *Photo by Tia Thomas.*

Born and raised in Johnson County, Cristy Dunn has been immersed in Old Time music from birth. Nearly everyone in her family was or is a musical artist, including her grandpa, Fiddlin' Fred Price, whose legacy is appreciated all over the world. "I took it for granted growing up. There was always music - good music, and I thought that's what it was like for everybody," she said. "My grandpa's fiddle, [Uncle] Kenneth and mom playing and singing permeate the memories from my childhood. It wasn't until later that I realized how special it was to be part of a family of musicians."

Although Cristy isn't a musician herself, she has a deep rooted passion for all things Appalachian - especially the music that was first conceived in the hills and hollers of upper east Tennessee. But her instrument of choice is a paintbrush.

"I am rooted here by family and community and by an intense love for the landscape. Not only beauty, but truth, emanate from the rhythms of the music and dialect, the infinite complexity and simplicity of tree branches and snail shells, the hard-won wrinkles in the faces of old timers," she shared.

"I never dreamed the impact on the community would be so great. I am humbled by the response... the murals have given Johnson County folks a sense of pride in their community and started the conversation about what happened here."

- Cristy Dunn

She has always painted music makers and one of her first portraits was of local fiddler, Frank Grayson. Murals depicting the people and places that shaped Johnson County's musical heritage have been in Cristy's sketchbook since she was in her 20s. But it wasn't until the last few years that she happened upon a funding opportunity through the East Tennessee Foundation and the Johnson County Community

Foundation to help her share her murals with her community.

Hundreds of people gathered in November 2013 as Cristy unveiled the first mural of Tom Ashley playing his banjo for his pony. The second mural is eight-feet by 40-feet and will make its home on the side of the Mountain City Antiques and Collectibles building (formerly Muse Hardware). The unveiling of *The Birth of a Ballad: The Capture of Tom Dooley* will kick off the *Long Journey Home Musical Heritage Tour* on September 26, 2015. The third mural, and last in this series, is scheduled to be unveiled in the fall of 2016.

"I knew that the music was very special and I wanted to share that," she said. "I never dreamed the impact on the community would be so great. I am humbled by the response. Most importantly, the murals have given Johnson County folks a sense of pride in their community and started the conversation about what happened here. You can go to Ireland or Germany and hear Johnson County musicians on their public radio stations, but kids in Johnson County have never heard of them."

Fortunately for the kids in Johnson County, Cristy is their high school art teacher. No doubt in her class they will hear about it. She is not only teaching and sharing her talent for art, but her love and knowledge of local music and culture.

"I teach them that differences are beautiful - that our dialect is the purest form of Elizabethan English in the world today," she said of working with students and her own three children. "We celebrate and talk about our roots."

Inspired by their own musical roots, Cristy's three boys, Andrew, Kyman and Jackson gravitated toward music at early ages. Their father, Shane Matherly, who passed away in August 2014, played guitar, and Cristy says there was always a guitar around so it was natural for them to pick it up. Her mom, Uncle Kenneth and 6th grade teacher Mike Taylor have also played vital roles, teaching and encouraging the boys to foster their natural gifts.

Cristy says she also hopes to learn one day how to saw out a song on the fiddle like her grandpa. But for now, she's busy already planning her third mural, which will feature him, along with Doc Watson and Clint Howard. Whether she ever learns a fiddle tune or not, Cristy has already left a musical legacy of her own in Johnson County. It is preserved and celebrated in her numerous paintings - on buildings and in private homes - and also in the lives of the children she teaches. (*Celia Pennington*)

-TOM DOOLEY-

“One of the most influential songs of the 20th century”

Although the Tom Dooley legend and song are well known in much of the world, far fewer people - even Tennesseans - know the various roles played by Johnson Countians in the developing legend. “If it hadn’t been for Grayson, I’d be in Tennessee.” Colonel Grayson of the song was an important figure in Johnson County, in Tennessee politics, and in the Civil War, serving as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Union Army. It was at the Grayson Farm in Trade that Dula applied for work, remaining long enough to earn money for a new pair of boots. It was Colonel Grayson who accompanied the North Carolina posse on the search for Dula, which ended in the Pandora Community of Johnson County. There, at some point along Little Doe Creek, they captured Tom Dula as he sat on the creek bank soothing his blistered feet in the cool water. Some legends say he bought his shoes from a cobbler on Ackerson Creek, which seems far removed from the Grayson Farm and Pandora. Other legends found him in Laurel Bloomery, much closer to Ackerson. Who knows how much of Johnson County he may have covered in his flight from North Carolina lawmen, nor do we know the exact spot on the creek where he was found. Cristy Dunn chose the spot proposed by folklorist, Joe Wilson, as the site for the mural. It could be the exact spot or “folklore close.” As Chuck Shoford commented in his retelling of the legend: “Keep in mind that good story tellers never let facts interfere with a true story— to my mind, it’s the stories that mix historical fact and imagination that are the most compelling and best illustrate the human condition.”

A relative of Colonel Grayson, “Blind Banmon Grayson” from Laurel Bloomery, along with Henry Whitter, made the first recording of the Tom Dooley ballad. The year was 1929. It is interesting to note that Grayson and Whitter met in 1925 at the first Fiddler’s Convention in the United States, which was held in Mountain City. Years later, Frank Proffitt, who was reared in Laurel Bloomery, recorded the ballad. The curator of the Appalachian Visitor Center recalled that Proffitt had said his grandmother had written the song, part of which she had heard Tom Dula singing as he sat atop his coffin on the way to his hanging. History does record that Dula played the fiddle and sang. Many legends tell of his ride to his death singing and talking. And some say he asked for his banjo and played on his way to the gallows. What is fact? What is legend?

One fact that we find according to Alan Lomax is that Frank Proffitt’s version of the Dooley ballad was the inspiration for the Kingston Trio’s record of 1958. *Tom Dooley* spread like wild fire and went gold. It brought fame to the Kingston Trio and led the way in the late 50’s and early 60’s to an incredible interest in folk music. The Kingston Trio made the cover of *Life* magazine and earned the first Grammy for Country and Western music. In 1963, guitars outsold pianos for the first time in the U.S. NPR chose *Tom Dooley* as one of the 20th Century’s 100 most important songs. And even though the spread of folk music was centered on college campuses, music historians began their search for the roots of folk music and for the original performers. That revival interested such institutions as the Smithsonian and helped bring to the forefront Tom Ashley, Fred Price, Clint Howard, Doc Watson, and our own Joe Wilson, who spent his professional life at the Smithsonian promoting folk music and related arts. (Evelyn Cook)



Tom Dula as portrayed in Cristy Dunn’s mural, *Birth of a Ballad: The Capture of Tom Dooley*. Joe Clawson posed as Tom Dula for the painting.

-GILLIAM BANMON “G.B.” GRAYSON-

A short career leaves an indelible mark on music



Gilliam Banmon Grayson (November 11, 1887 – August 16, 1930) was an American Old-Time fiddle player and singer. Mostly blind from infancy, Grayson is chiefly remembered for a series of sides, recorded with guitarist Henry Whitter between 1927 and 1930, that would later influence numerous country, bluegrass, and rock musicians. Grayson wrote much of his own material, but was also instrumental in adapting several traditional Appalachian ballads to fiddle and guitar formats, including the first recording of *Tom Dooley*. His music has been recorded or performed by musicians such as Bob Dylan, Doc Watson, Mick Jagger, the Kingston Trio, and dozens of Bluegrass artists, including the Stanley Brothers and Mac Wiseman. (Wikipedia, *Banmon G.B. Grayson*) Grayson was one of the best known folk and country music artists in early 20th century, and he was from the third generation of the Grayson family in Johnson County.

G.B. was born in Ashe County, NC where his parents Benjamin and Martha Roark Grayson had moved to work for his uncle Col. James Grayson (the Grayson who captured Tom Dooley). The youngest in his family, when he was a baby, his parents discovered he was almost totally blind. Due to his disability, since he was unable to get a job, he was able to focus almost entirely on his music. Thus, he developed a strong interest in musical instruments and folk music, and he received training from friends and family. At this time there was no circulation of recordings or radio. G.B.'s focus was the fiddle, and his style is common today in folk and country circles. In 1889, the Graysons moved from Walnut Hill, NC to Laurel Bloomery, TN where his father died five years later. Since his father was a Civil War veteran, the family received a pension, which was awarded to G.B. after his mother's death when he was only fifteen. Eventually, because of his disability, the U.S. Pension Agency authorized a monthly payment to G.B., and Will Robinson was appointed his guardian.

In 1908, Grayson married Frances Mahaffey. They settled in Laurel Bloomery at the Grayson home place and raised their seven children. During this time,

he continued his music career playing at parties, community gatherings, relatives' and neighbors' homes. He practiced and played constantly to earn whatever he could to supplement his income and support his family. He became a well-known figure and was respected by all that knew him. They loved his music and enjoyed his songs. Other part-time musicians he played with included Tom Ashley and Dock Walsh. The three of them performed locally and toured Virginia, North Carolina, and Central Tennessee together. In 1925, Grayson entered Mountain City's first Fiddler's Convention held at the old high school auditorium with a crowd that overflowed into the old grade school building and the courthouse. Grayson won first place, a twenty-dollar gold piece, playing *Cumberland Gap* on his fiddle. At the 1927 Convention, G.B. met Henry Whitter, his future recording partner who took him to a session in New York. From '27-'30, they had several recording sessions in such places as New York, Atlanta, and Memphis. Some of the songs they recorded included *Handsome Molly*, *Train 45*, *Old Jimmy Sutton*, *She's Mine All Mine*, *My Mind is to Marry*, *Sweet Rosie O'Grady*, *Red or Green*, *I've Always Been a Rambler*, *Jok'n Henry*, *Nine Pound Hammer*, *Goin' Down the Lee Highway*, *Where are You Going Alice*, *I Saw a Man at the Close of Day*, and of course *Tom Dooley*. G.B. did not write *Tom Dooley*, but he was the first to record it.

On August 16, 1930, G.B.'s music career tragically ended on the road between Damascus and Laurel Bloomery. He had traveled to his brother's home in the Sutherland Community to make a payment on the home place. On his way home, he caught a ride on the running board of a car filled with Bill Millhorn's family. As they passed Laureldale and crossed the Laurel Creek, they collided with a log truck. Although he was attended by a physician at the accident site and then rushed to the hospital in Abingdon, he died from severe head injuries shortly after his arrival.

In May of 1980, Grayson was inducted into the Appalachian Music Hall of Fame at Steel Creek Park in Bristol, TN. He was honored for his contribution to folk and country music along with Jimmy Rogers, The Carter Family, Mom & Pop Stoneman, and Dudley Vance. Even though Grayson was blind, that did not handicap his performance in a profession where he was one of the best.

(Wanda Payne)

-COL. JAMES GRAYSON-

Hadn't a been for Grayson I'd a been in Tennessee

During the summer after the Civil War a young stranger appeared at Colonel James W.M. Grayson's farm at Trade, TN and asked for employment as a farm worker. He said his name was Tom Hall and that his shoes were worn out, and he needed money to pay a local shoemaker to make him a pair of boots. He came from Wilkes County, N.C. by way of Watauga County, N.C. He worked four days and left early the next morning on foot, wearing the boots. Late that afternoon two deputies from Wilkes County, N.C. appeared at Col. Grayson's farm. They told him that Tom Hall was actually Thomas Dula (Tom Dooley), a fugitive wanted for murder on the east side of the Blue Ridge.

Col. Grayson invited them to spend the night and next morning, July 11, 1866, agreed to help find Dula. He buckled on the seven shot .32 caliber revolver he had carried through the Civil War and led the deputies in the direction Dula had fled. They overtook the former Confederate at Pandora, nine miles west of Mountain City, soaking his feet in Doe Creek, seeking relief from the blisters the new boots had made. Grayson dismounted, picked up a rock and told Dula he was under arrest. No doubt the pistol Grayson was carrying influenced Dula.

Grayson put Dula on his horse behind him and returned to his home near Trade where they spent the night. W.F. Grayson (father of J. Luke Grayson) was a young boy at the time and he guarded Dula during the night. The next morning Grayson put Dula on the horse behind him. He tied his hands and tied his feet underneath the belly of the horse and headed to Wilkes County to deliver the prisoner to jail. Dula was hanged at Statesville, NC on May 1, 1868, for murder of Laura Foster.

Family tradition: "Col J.W.M. Grayson finally had to use his pistol to keep the group from NC from lynching Dula on the spot when he was found and captured in Tennessee. Grayson and Dula were both veterans of the horrible Civil War, although on different sides, and Grayson was determined that he wouldn't hang in Tennessee and was determined to return Dula to North Carolina personally to see that he got a fair trial by jury. Perhaps Grayson felt that there had been too many illegal hangings during the Civil War."

The first recording of the Tom Dooley ballad was cut by Col. Grayson's nephew, Gilliam Banmon (G.B.) Grayson from Laurel Bloomery, TN. G.B. Grayson and Henry Whitter traveled to Memphis and recorded the song for Victor Records in October 1929.

A compilation by Mary Floy Katzman from articles written by Thomas W. Gentry and Joe Wilson. Taken from The Original Johnson County Tennessee Genealogy Page <http://jctcuzins.org/stories/dooley5.html>



-FRANK GRAYSON-

A musical legacy passed on to future fiddlers



Great-grandson of Col. James Grayson, and cousin of G.B. Grayson, Frank Grayson earned fame of his own as a master craftsman and fiddler. He was well-known for his Old Time fiddle style and played with many celebrated musicians including Doc Watson and Tom Ashley and the Merry Makers.

Frank was considered a musical icon in his community and a fixture at local jam sessions where his specialties, *Lee Highway Blues* and *Champagne Polka* were always in high demand.

Ever patient with novice musicians, particularly in jam settings, Frank helped encourage young fiddle players like *SPBGMA Fiddle Performer of the Year Hunter Berry. His brand of Old Time fiddle is still appreciated and remembered all over the region and beyond and is even included in the music archives at East Tennessee State University and Appalachian State University.

When Frank passed away in early 2012 at the age of 81, he left behind his wife, Jean; their children Becky and Michael; and his musical legacy that will continue to influence generations of musicians to come. *(Celia Pennington)*

Frank Grayson made music with fellow soldiers when he served in the Army during the Korean War.

**Society for the Preservation of Bluegrass Music of America*

-FRED PRICE-

A world-class fiddler with a heart full of humility & grace



A painting of Fred Price by his granddaughter, Cristy Dunn

Fred Price holds a well-deserved reputation as one of the finest of the old time fiddlers. He was reared in a musical family. When Fred was a small child, his mother, Neelie, played the banjo and sang to him. One day, when Fred was about 15, his father brought home an old fiddle and told him he wanted him to learn to play.

Supper was just going on the stove, and by the time it was ready, the young Fred could saw out *Little Log Cabin in the Lane*. "Saw out" is right, as it takes years to develop the skill to coax smooth sounds from a fiddle. But the young prodigy picked up quickly and soon became known far and wide for his smooth brand of fiddle playing.

Fred's fiddle got him through school and helped him and his buddies through World War II, where he was one of the elite group, Merrill's Marauders. He came home to marry Mattie Howard from across the mountain whom he had met while playing at a pie supper. He always managed to bid highest on her pies. They had two children, Lois Ann and Kenneth, both of whom would carry on the family's musical tradition.

During the Folk Revival of the 1960s, Fred and his fiddle toured with Tom Ashley, the young Doc Watson and Clint Howard. Among the many venues they played were Harvard, Newport, Greenwich Village, and the Smithsonian. But every time, his fiddle brought him right back home to the simple life he loved here in the East Tennessee mountains. Fred would live the rest of his life in the home where he grew up. He raised his family, farmed tobacco and corn, and drove a school bus.

In the liner notes for *The Ballad of Finley Preston*, the 1972 album made by Fred

Price, Clint Howard, and Sons, Joe Wilson describes Fred's style:

The melodic line is systematically ornamented, syncopation is used with practiced regularity and the general effect is of a bird soaring into the clouds... interestingly enough, although Tom (Ashley) himself has never played the fiddle, he has breathed the tunes into Fred's fiddling with painstaking concern for ornament and inflection, bowing and wrist action.

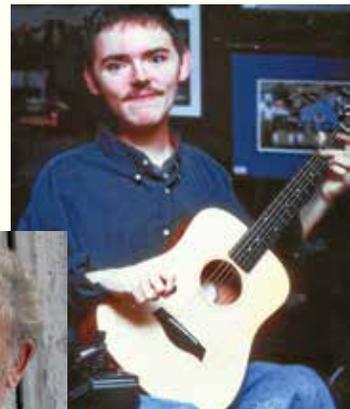
Those who knew Fred Price remember not only a world class fiddler, but a heart full of humility and grace. Whether he was performing for a crowd at Carnegie Hall or for his neighbors down the holler, his music was the same, and he always left folks with a smile on their faces. (Cristy Dunn)

-KENNY & ADAM PRICE-

Carrying on a family tradition

Kenny Price touches people's hearts with his Old Time music much like Clarence "Tom" Ashley and his father, Fiddlin' Fred Price, did years ago. Kenny has conquered Tom Ashley's clawhammer banjo pickin' so accurately that Ashley's grandson, Tommy Moore, said, "at one of Kenny's concerts, I closed my eyes and just listened and I could hear my grandfather playing banjo again especially on the *Coo-Coo Bird*." Kenny is equally accomplished on the fiddle, the favorite instrument of his father.

It is a rare treat to attend a performance by Kenny. He knows many of the old ballads and tunes brought here from the British Isles during the 18th and 19th centuries and performed by Ashley in the 1920s and 30s. In addition, he includes the Old Time fiddle tunes that his father played and Old Time gospel songs, the favorites of his son Adam Price. Even though Adam's life was cut short by muscular dystrophy, he had become a fine guitarist and bass player and touched the hearts of many people with his singing and playing. In addition to being an outstanding musician and singer, Kenny is a complete performer on stage, pausing many times to tell a humorous story or the history of a song. Kenny began playing banjo at nine years old and learned fiddle at 19. Music has been passed down in the Price family for many generations, and Kenny is playing a major role in preserving the musical heritage of our Appalachian Mountains. (Minnie Miller)



Kenny Price (left) and his son, Adam (above).

-CLINT HOWARD-

Embracing family, faith and the simple life

Clint Howard was born October 30, 1930 to George W. and Elizabeth Snyder Howard. Clint grew up on a small farm in Johnson County in the Shouns community. When Clint was six years old, his mother began to teach him to sing. She would sing a ballad or a hymn to give Clint the pitch of the part he was to sing and she would join him to harmonize. When Clint was 11 years old, his father gave him a guitar which he taught himself to play.

After marrying Betty Snyder and having three children in 10 years, he began to play professionally. He teamed up with Clarence "Tom" Ashley, Fred Price and Doc Watson. This group of men performed all over the United States including The University of California, the Pete Seegar Show, the Newport Folk Festival and most notably Carnegie Hall in New York City. Clint and Fred later formed a band with their sons called, "Clint Howard, Fred Price, & Sons," and became well known as a great Mountain Music band. They had show dates at the Smithsonian, the 1982 World's Fair in Knoxville, TN and the National Folk Festival Wolf Trap Farm in Vienna, VA. They traveled with a tour that had performances in 14 different cities sponsored by the Gabier Folklore Society. They were featured in a segment of ABC's 20/20 and in *Life Magazine*. The old time mountain music that the groups played was influential to artists around the world. Some of the more famous artists that credit their style to the influence of this type of music are Bob Dylan, Jerry Garcia, David Grisman, Joan Baez and the Kruger Brothers from Switzerland.

The Kruger Brothers loved to visit Clint at his home on Antioch Road. They say their own music is rooted in his work. "Clint Howard has been known to us as one of the most respected and influential personalities in American musical history," they wrote. "His groundbreaking recordings of classic American folk repertoire have been the cornerstones for countless musicians and audiences throughout the world. It is our humble belief that Clint Howard deserves to be recognized as one of the nation's greatest treasures."

Clint always had a twinkle in his eye and loved to make people laugh. Before he and his band performed, it often fell to him to prime the audience with a funny tall tale or to reminisce about what life used to be like when he was a boy in the hills and hollers of Johnson County. Clint truly loved his mother and credited her always with his musical talent. He once told an interviewer, "Me and her would just go to singin' songs out of the song book or gospel songs, or just whatever. Me and her'd sing sometimes till one or two o'clock in the mornin'." One of his most popular ballads, *Light in the Window*, came directly from that mother/son bond and may have been his favorite of the dozens that he and others created.

Though Clint traveled the nation and hung with some pretty popular people, he was a simple man. He, Fred, Tom, and Doc never let a little fame go to their heads. They loved their heritage, their simple life, and the beauty of their Appalachian homeland. Clint made his living as a welder, a school bus driver, and most importantly as a farmer. His daddy gave him his first cow - red, with a white star on its forehead - when he was seven years old. He said he was never without cows in his life after that. He cherished his family and his community. He fiercely took objection to anyone who criticized Johnson County in even the slightest way. He loved its rugged mountainous terrain, its people and its bedrock values of the Ten Commandments, loyalty to the US Military and the American Flag. In his cowboy boots, jeans and John Deere cap cocked ever so slightly on his head, with his wife Betty nearly always next to him, he was frequently seen around Mountain City in his pickup truck. A member and choir leader of Antioch Baptist Church and a staunch Republican, Clint served several terms as a Johnson County Commissioner and later as a Johnson County highway commissioner until his death. Clint Howard passed away on October 16, 2011 with his family at his side. He is buried in Reece Cemetery.

(Celeste Dunn)



-CLARENCE "TOM" ASHLEY-

From the medicine show to Carnegie Hall



Clarence "Tom" Ashley (September 29, 1895-June 2, 1967) was a musician and singer who specialized in the clawhammer method of picking banjo. He recorded 61 single records and 11 albums. He was a performer, an artist and a showman who loved his music and his audiences. His favorite and most famous recording was *The Coo Coo Bird* (Cuckoo Bird) first recorded in 1929.

He used a G-modal (GDCGD) banjo tuning which he called "sawmill key" and he called his songs "lassy-making tunes." The "sawmill key" came from a comment made to him by a competing musician about Tom's tuning being way up in sawmill key. Tom said, "That's right, and we are going to saw you fellers right out of the competition." The "lassy-making" came from playing music while friends and neighbors gathered to make molasses.

Ashley was born in Bristol, Virginia as Clarence Earl McCurry to Rosie-Belle and George McCurry, an accomplished fiddler. After Rosie-Belle and George had been married about a year, her father discovered that George had at least one other wife. Rosie-Belle came home to her parents, Enoch and Martha (Mat) Robinson Ashley and her two sisters, Ira and Daisy. The Ashley family moved from Bristol, TN to Ashe County, NC and then to Johnson County. Enoch worked in a lumberyard and started a boarding house at Shouns. Tom was a lively little boy and his grandfather and the boarders started calling him "Little Tommy Tiddy Waddy." Since he was reared by the Ashley family, they dropped the McCurry surname, and as he grew older, the Tiddy Waddy was dropped but the "Tom" stuck. As an adult, he signed his name Tom C. Ashley. He recorded under the names of Clarence Ashley and Tom Ashley. In 1914, he married Hettie Osborne and later purchased this tract of land where he lived for the rest of his life. They had a son, J.D. and a daughter, Eva Ashley Moore.

Clarence "Tom" Ashley and his pony in the first mural by Cristy Dunn (unveiled in November 2013). Photo by Tia Thomas.

Because Enoch, Mat and their three daughters were talented musicians and singers, Ashley was surrounded from birth by old-time music and ballads that had traveled the Atlantic along with America's early settlers. Ashley got his first banjo when he was eight, his first guitar at 12, and joined a medicine show as banjo picker and singer at age 16. During the medicine show days, Tom worked with a young man named Roy Acuff and they became friends for life. Later Acuff recorded one of Tom's songs, *The Greenback Dollar*, and it is likely that Tom taught Acuff *The House of the Rising Sun*. At the time Acuff joined the medicine show, Tom was 36 and Roy was 27. Tom made \$35 per week and Acuff was taken on at \$20. When he was not with the medicine show, Tom and G. B. Grayson, a blind fiddler in Johnson County went "bustin" (playing at coal mines or anywhere they could make a few dollars).

During the folk music revival in the 60s, Tom and his *Coo-Coo Bird* were rediscovered and Tom's musical career was once again in demand. Tom, Clint Howard, Fred Price, and Doc Watson made several recordings and played at various large city venues including Greenwich Village in New York City, the University of Chicago, UCLA, the University of Wisconsin, a three-week engagement with Jean Ritchie at Ash Grove in Los Angeles, and Pete Seeger's Christmas Concert at Carnegie Hall. After the concert, Tom was asked whether he ever realized back in his old medicine show days that he would make it to Carnegie Hall, he grinned and said, "Back then, I didn't even know there was such a place." In 1966, Tom made an educational television film, a "Voice of America" broadcast and a musical tour through England, which included 18 engagements from London to Cornwall. Tom was scheduled to return to England for a series of concerts the following year, but he discovered he had cancer. In June of 1967 at the age of 71, Tom Ashley died. His grave is on the side of a hill near his home—the place where he asked to be buried and the subject of the song he had written four years earlier. The song, recorded on his last Folkways album, is entitled *Little Hillside*.

Ashley has been cited as an influence to the music of Roy Acuff, Doc Watson, Joan Baez, Jean Ritchie, Judy Collins, Bob Dylan and Jerry Garcia & David Grisman of "Grateful Dead." In fact, Jerry Garcia said in an interview that he learned clawhammer picking from listening to Clarence Ashley. In 1981, The University of Tennessee Press published a book called *Tom Ashley, Sam McGee, Bukka White—Tennessee Traditional Singers*. In March 2013, the Library of Congress announced the album, "Old Time Music at Clarence Ashley's" would be added to the National Recording Registry. (Minnie Miller)

-FEATURED MUSICIANS-



The son of "Fiddling Fred Price," **Kenny Price** started playing banjo when he was nine years old. By the time he was in 8th grade, he and Clarence Howard (Clint Howard's son) were picking together. A teacher asked the bashful boys to play for each class in their school, and the rest

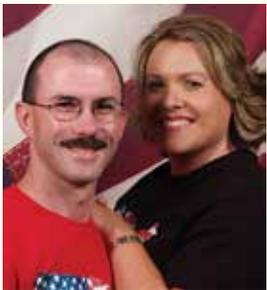
is history. By the time they were 16, they were together on the road with their dads as Clint Howard, Fred Price and Sons. The group played all over the country at prestigious venues like the Smithsonian, Harvard, and the World's Fair in Knoxville. They also recorded *The Ballad of Finley Preston*, one of the first albums Rounder Records ever recorded.

Eventually Kenny started sawing on the fiddle and is known today for his talent on that instrument as well as the clawhammer and bluegrass banjo.



John Winer has lived in the suburbs of Crackers Neck on his farm for the last 25 years. He has performed around the country on a variety of instruments on street corners, clubs, performance halls and prisons. While John started out playing old time banjo, he also plays guitar, bass, drums, banjo, and is currently immersing

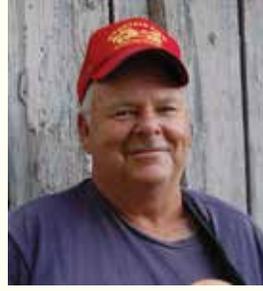
himself in mountain fiddle. John is also a well known artist blacksmith and furniture designer and raises sheep.



Tony and Cheri Jo Potter have been married for 20 years. They have two children - Dawson, 14 and Eden, 9.

Tony is the pastor at Evergreen Baptist Church, and he is also the manager of the Garden Barn. Cheri Jo is an LPN at the Extended Hours Health Clinic.

Tony plays the guitar and they both sing Bluegrass gospel music. Primarily singing for church, the couple sometimes perform for benefit events in their community.



Jack Proffitt was raised in the Butler community. Growing up, there was always a guitar at his grandmother's house, and he and his brother Johnny took an interest in playing it. When he became a teenager, he started playing bass with classmates Clarence Howard and Kenneth Price. Since 1969 he has played the bass and guitar with

various local groups. He and his family live in the Cold Springs community, and he has worked for the Town of Mountain City for the past 20 years.



Although **Lois Dunn** grew up surrounded by music, she didn't start playing the guitar until she was in her 30s. Inspired by her dad and brother - Fred and Kenny Price - to learn an instrument, she plays Bluegrass and Old Time for fun with several local groups. Lois, Kenny, and her nephew

Adam made a recording together in 1997, and she has written several songs she plans to record soon.

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-FEATURED MUSICIANS-



Andrew Matherly taught himself to play by fiddling along with videos of his great grandfather, Fred Price. Like his great grandfather, Andrew loves nothing more than to make people smile through his music. He can be found playing every chance he gets with his brother,

Kyman and his grandmother Lois Dunn, at churches, nursing homes, and at Lois's Country Cafe.



Kyman Matherly represents at least the fourth generation of Price family pickers. Kyman's late father, Shane, loved music, and he always had a guitar and a banjo around, so it was only natural for Kyman to pick it up from an early age. He is self taught, but influences include his grandmother

Lois Dunn, and sixth grade teacher Mike Taylor. Kyman plays local festivals, events, and churches with his brother Andrew, and friends Will Kerley and Cameron Clawson in a band called Country Crossroads.



Garet Howard, Clarence's son, and Clint's grandson is 30 years old, lives in Antioch and works for Dewey Wright Well and Pump. He plays banjo, guitar and bass. Garet took lessons for a couple of months from Mr. Junior Howard. He learned to play on Arthur Gentry's banjo. Garet's

first memory of playing on stage was at age five. He sang *Down In The Valley*. Garet had the privilege of playing with his daddy, his grandpa, and Doc Watson. He performed with the group at Merle Fest several times, with Dr. Ralph Stanley and David Holt. Garet knows his dad Clarence and grandpa Clint would be excited that he is playing for this event.



Will McCloud is the 16-year-old son of Larry and Sandra Howard McCloud. His grandpa was Clarence Howard and Clint Howard was his great-grandpa. Will never had any formal training on the guitar. He is completely self taught and plays by ear. His

momma said that his great-grandpa tried to teach him, but Will played lead and Clint played accompaniment so he just quit. Will has the privilege to own and play his great-grandpa Clint's 1974 Martin guitar. He can play any genre of music from gospel to Led Zeppelin. He likes to watch YouTube videos to learn songs. He and his uncle Garet play frequently at Antioch Baptist Church. He is currently working on an arrangement of *Rank Stranger* that his great-grandpa and grandpa recorded.

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-FEATURED MUSICIANS-



Tony Long was born and raised in Shady Valley. He first learned to sing at Harmon Chapel Christian Church, where he continues to lead singing to this day. He cites his mother, Hilda, and his uncle, Ambrose, as his greatest musical influences. Tony is co-owner and operator of

Foothills Dairy in Shady Valley.



Stephen Long is the nephew of Tony and Kevin Long. He has lived most of his life in Shady Valley, where the harmony singing at Harmon Chapel Christian Church helped form an integral part of his earliest memories. Listening to folks like his grandmother, Hilda, his uncle, Tony,

Fannie McQueen, and H.T. Mabry had a tremendous influence on him and made him want to sing, too! He is an educator of 18 years and currently serves as a supervisor with the Johnson County School District.



Jerry Moses says his mother's first memories were of playing in the yard with her neighbor and best friend, Dallas, whose father, G.B. Grayson, rocked on the porch playing the fiddle and singing. Jerry grew up with his mother singing him many of those songs! When Jerry was 12 yrs. old, G.B.'s son, Ed

Grayson, taught him how to play the guitar and form and sing songs, including many of his father's. In 1976, Jerry's band, The Foggy Bottom Stringband, won the Folk Song competition at the first renewed Mountain City Fiddlers Convention with Jerry singing *Tom Dooley*! If you were in elementary school in east Tennessee / SW Virginia in 1978, you probably saw Granpa Moses and Kenny Price, the Logger, in *Your Mountain Music Home*! They performed 60 shows showcasing Appalachian instruments and songs! Every show had all the kids dancing at the end! Jerry played with the Fred Price band from 1978-1988. He then moved to Canada in 1991 and began playing with three-time Gold record winner (in Canada) singer/songwriter, Alec Somerville. Jerry and Alec recorded 2 albums, *Pickin' & Grinnin'* and *North Meets South*.

Jerry has also recorded with Helen & Anita Carter, Dale Jett and Irish singer/songwriter Adrian Connolly. Jerry moved back home in 2011 and continues playing the Old Time music!



Kevin Long was also born and raised in Shady Valley, and is the brother of Tony Long. His earliest memories of music are of his mother and the congregational singing at Harmon Chapel. He was also influenced by early Bluegrass musicians, such as Bill Monroe and Flatt and Scruggs.

Kevin has served on the Johnson County Board of Education for the past 5 years, and currently serves as chairman.



Travis Long is the son of Tony Long and nephew of Kevin. Growing up with his father and grandmother, he was exposed to harmony singing from an early age. He began playing guitar when he was a teenager and was later part of the ETSU Bluegrass Band where he played at venues such as the Down Home and

the Carter Fold. He still loves to sing with his family. Travis owns and operates Double T & C Farms in Shady Valley.

*A special **THANKS** to the following individuals and organizations for helping make Long Journey Home possible:*

Mr. Danny Herman

East Tennessee Foundation

Johnson County Community Foundation

Johnson County Arts Council

The Sunflower Festival

-FEATURED ARTISTS-



Cristy Dunn began painting at a young age. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in Mathematics from East Tennessee State University, where she nurtured and maintained the connections with her Appalachian heritage and continued to observe first hand the patterns, colors, and textures of the woods and streams in the surrounding mountains. She received the President's Award from the Johnson County Arts Council in 2014 for her work on the Musical Heritage Mural Project. Cristy teaches art at Johnson County High School. You can see more of Cristy's work at www.cristydunn.com



Temple Reece is a talented self-taught artist who is influenced by her love of the beautiful Appalachian mountains and people. She credits her parents, Earnest and Shirley Odom, with passing their talent on to her. She is known in her community not only as an artist but as a very kind and generous person who freely devotes her time to community projects and helping children. To see Temple's work, visit www.templereece.com.



Buddy Vaiden is an artist, author, poet and entrepreneur. He creates high quality oil paintings with a palette knife and brush that give the impression of motion and three dimensional images. He paints from the perspective that he sees and feels with his inspirational concepts beginning within his heart. To see Buddy's work visit www.buddyvaiden.com.



John Winer is the talented, one man operator of Laughing Crow Forge. His intricate works of architectural and fine art can be found in homes and businesses throughout the Southeast. He is well known both nationally and abroad and has been featured in several books and publications. Learn more about John and see his work at www.laughingcrowforge.net.

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\$5 Reserved Seats or
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-Jeff Little Trio-



www.heritagehalltheatre.org

-OTHER LOCAL FESTIVALS & EVENTS-



The oldest music festival in this area, Johnson County's Old Time Fiddler's Convention, celebrated its 90th year in August of 2015. Above is a picture of the first Fiddler's Convention held in 1925 in what is now Heritage Hall.

May – October, Every Saturday, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.,
Johnson County Farmers Market, Courthouse parking lot

July 4th in the Park, all day until 10 p.m. at Ralph Stout Park, live music, food vendors, and activities for the whole family culminating with a fireworks extravaganza after dark.

First Saturday in August, "Joe Barlow/Kim Sutton Motorcycle and Car Show & Party Fest" 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

First Saturday in August, "Surviving the Snake, 50K & 100K Bike Race" in downtown Mountain City, benefit for Community Hospital

Second weekend in September, "Johnson County Chamber of Commerce Annual Championship Rodeo", Chamber Park, 3 miles west of Mtn. City, Hwy. 67W

Second Saturday in Sept., Annual Watauga Lake Triathlon, begins at 8a.m. at 838 Sugar Grove Church Road, Butler, TN 37640. Visit <http://wataugalaketriathlon.com>

Third Saturday in July, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., The Sunflower Festival; Main Street Mountain City roped off for food and craft vendors, live music, games and activities.

Second weekend in August, Old Butler Days at the Babe Curtis Park in Butler. Games, Vendors & Live Entertainment

Last weekend in September, Long Journey Home, a celebration of Johnson County's Musical Heritage; longjourneyhome.net

Entire month of October, Scare Crows on Main, Mountain City, scare crows representing prominent, pop culture, or historical figures, created by organizations and businesses.

Second weekend in October, The Cranberry Festival, in Shady Valley, begins on Friday night with Soup Bean Supper and Live Auction; then pancake breakfast on Saturday morning, followed by a parade through the valley to the school grounds to where the festival begins.

A Saturday in October TBA, The Pumpkin Festival, in Mountain City at Ralph Stout Park with live music, food and craft vendors, along with games and activities for the entire family.

Third Saturday in November, Johnson County Arts Council's Christmas Craft Show, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m., National Guard Armory, S. Shady St. in Mountain City

First Friday evening in December, Johnson County/Mountain City Lighting of the Christmas Tree, Courthouse Lawn on Main Street

First Saturday in December, The Christmas Parade, Produced by Chamber of Commerce, 5 p.m., Main Street in Mountain City

Other events for which there is not a date at present include:

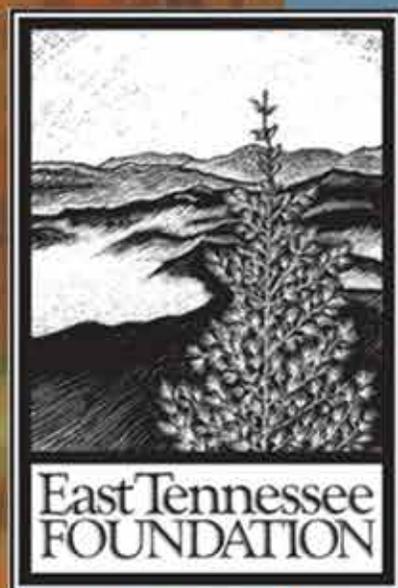
Johnson County Community Hospital Foundation's Taste of the Mountains held each spring at RedTail; also **Relay for Life**, the American Cancer Society's national fund raiser held each year in either July or August at Ralph Stout Park; **The Old Time Fiddlers Convention** held at the Old Mill Music Park each August; and several golf tournaments held at RedTail each year.

All of these listings along with **Heritage Hall Theatre's** events may be accessed on the Johnson County Chamber's website: johnsoncountytncchamber.org



The Johnson County
Arts Council

Johnson
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www.longjourneyhome.net