

## The Berea Appalachian Sound Archives Fellowship

Erynn Marshall

Conducting research in Berea College's Department of Special Collections and Archives, made possible through the Appalachian Music Fellowship Program, was an enriching and inspiring experience that enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of the fiddle music of the region.

From April 27 - June 20, 2006, my time was divided in the following ways. I listened to, studied and transcribed sound recordings of fiddle music. I also learned specific playing techniques, ornaments and tunings characteristic of Kentucky traditional fiddling.

I conducted my own fieldwork with local musicians and church congregations and donated these interviews, videos and audio recordings to the archive. To mark the end of my fellowship period I performed a concert at the College's Gray Auditorium which featured fiddle tunes I had learned from archive recordings and video footage of Kentucky fiddlers in the collections as well as a new fiddle tune I composed to commemorate my stay in Berea called the "Madison County Waltz."

Over the course of the 2 1/2 months I worked in the archive, I listened to approximately 400 hours of fiddle and vocal music. I paid special attention to recordings by the following fiddlers: Estill Bingham, Jim Bowles, French Carpenter, Clyde Davenport, Sam Dyer, J.P. Fraley, Darley Fulks, Kelly Gilbert, George Hawkins, Bill Hensley, Everett Kays, Santford Kelly, Donna & Lewis Lamb, Marcus Martin, Isham Monday, Effie Pierson, Doc Roberts, Sandy Sandusky, Dewey Shepherd, Manco Snead, Amyx Stamper, Art Stamper, Hiram Stamper, Joe Stamper, I.D. Stamper, Willie Stamper, Buddy Thomas, Lella Todd, and Melvin Wine. [Audio files for most of these musicians are available by searching the [Berea College Sound Archives](#)' web page.]

I also listened to recordings of Old Regular Baptist singing in the wonderful William Tallmadge Collection and to ballad singer Addie Graham. I especially found the Bruce Greene, John Harrod and Barbara Kunkle collections of fiddle music rich for study and I transcribed examples of some of the fiddle tunes in these collections including: "Glory in the Meeting House" (source: Hiram Stamper), "The Winds of Shiloh" (composer: J.P. Fraley), "Feed My Horse Corn and Hay" (source: Buddy Thomas), "Flannery's Dream" (source: Santford Kelly), "Paddy Won't You Drink Some Good Ol' Cider" (source: Clyde Davenport) [see [transcriptions](#)].

Although some of these pieces provided notation challenges because of their "crooked" meters or alternate "scordatura" fiddle tunings, I was particularly up for the challenge of notating them because these kinds of fiddle tunes are almost never included in music books and tune collections. They are worth documenting not only for their unique beauty but also because they shed light on the playing practices of older-style Kentucky fiddlers and demonstrate diversity among the kinds of pieces in their repertoires.

Outside of the archive there were many opportunities to do field-work which I love to do. I visited, photographed, video-taped and recorded local musicians: Ralph Marcum (Jackson County), Gene Gatts (Jackson County), G.K. Farmer (Jackson County), James Miller (Madison County), Kay Stamper (Bullitt County), Herb Stamper (Pike County), Amos and Geanette Malicote (Jackson County) and Clyde Davenport (Jamestown, TN).

I also traveled to gospel singing sessions (Wayne's Music Hall and the Conway Music Barn - in Garrard and Rockcastle Counties), bluegrass jams (in Berea and Barbourville) and old-time music festivals (in Morehead, Pikeville and Whitesburg). I recorded shape-note singing at Union Church (in Berea), and recorded Old Regular Baptist singing and sermons in Friendship Church (Waynesburg) and Little Bethlehem Church (Brinkley). All of my field recordings made in Kentucky have been donated to Berea's Sound Archive.

Although my research time at Berea came to a close I am still inspired by the music I heard and the people I met there. I do not see the Fellowship as over so much as a creative catalyst for a longer period of research into Kentucky fiddle music and song. Berea's archive is truly a treasure trove of some of the most important preserved legacy of the state's traditional music from the past up to the present.

Hutchins Library's archivists, directors and staff were all wise and most helpful. Thanks to them, I am still learning from recordings I made while I was there and I have plans for future creative "spin-off" projects. This summer I have performed many of the tunes I learned in the archive to diverse audiences in both Canada and the U.S. and I spread the word on the important folk music traditions of Kentucky.

In winter 2006, I will be recording several of these tunes on my upcoming CD *Meet Me in the Music* with old-time banjoist, Chris Coole. Lastly, I continue to interview musicians in the Stamper family for an article I am writing on that family's long musical heritage of fine traditional folk musicians and fiddlers who passed the music down through the generations. It is my goal to get this article accepted for publication in the next year. For these many reasons, I am most grateful for having receiving an Appalachian fellowship and have great memories of my time at Berea.

Sincerely, Erynn Marshall  
Gibsons, BC, Canada  
[www.hickoryjack.com](http://www.hickoryjack.com)