

**Folklife and Traditional Artists
of
Warren, Vance, and Halifax Counties, North Carolina**

North Carolina Folklife Institute

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Introduction

In 2010 and 2011, the North Carolina Folklife Institute – with partners including the Warren County Library and Arts Council, members of the Haliwa-Saponi Tribe, and the Concerned Citizens of Tillery – conducted research on the living and historical traditions of Warren, Vance, and Halifax Counties. The project is a chapter of NCFI’s Statewide Heritage Initiative, which has received support from the National Endowment for the Arts, the North Carolina Arts Council, and the Resourceful Communities Program of the Conservation Fund.

NCFI folklorists Michael Taylor and Sarah Bryan interviewed dozens of tradition bearers in the three-county region, Taylor working primarily with musicians, and Bryan documenting non-musical traditions. The fieldwork was supplemented by interviews that Taylor conducted in 2009 with Warren County musicians, as part of the New Harmonies exhibit, sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution and the North Carolina Humanities Council. Bryan also researched archival sources of documentation on the area’s folklife traditions. The Haliwa-Saponi Tribe made available interviews conducted in 2010 for the Haliwa-Saponi Arts Documentation Project, which provided important insight for the project as well. Photographer Christopher Fowler made portraits of many of the artists who participated in the project, and photographic documentation of their work. Throughout the research, NCFI received invaluable guidance from community-based advisors, including Sue Loper, former Director of the Warren County Library; Gary Grant, Director of the Concerned Citizens of Tillery; Marty Richardson, of the Haliwa-Saponi Tribe; and Jereann Johnson, cofounder of the Heritage Quilters.

Warren, Vance, and Halifax Counties are home to several geographical and cultural communities with distinct identities. The heritage of all of these groups is complex and rich, and many years could be devoted to the study of folk traditions within each county. Some degree of compartmentalization was necessary for the purposes of this project, given its finite time frame. While interviews were conducted with artists and tradition-bearers throughout each county, the areas of greatest focus were the Haliwa-Saponi community, based in a region known as the Meadows which lies around the town of Hollister, in both Warren and Halifax Counties; Henderson, the urban county seat of Vance County; the African American new Deal resettlement community of Tillery; and Ridgeway, a tiny agricultural crossroads in Warren County with a history and heritage that belie its size. Other areas are represented as well, including Warrenton, Norlina, Vaughan, Roanoke Rapids, and Halifax.

The artists and other tradition bearers of these counties shared a wealth of cultural heritage with NCFI researchers, represented by their music, artwork,

and oral history. Areas of special vitality became immediately evident. The region is home to a strong tradition of quilt making, and the Heritage Quilters especially, through their artistry and their work in cultural documentation, have greatly enriched the wider field of quilt-making and quilt studies in North Carolina. Gospel music is strongly represented by the artists who participated in this project, and including the multi-generational men's quartets the Gospel Jubileers of Halifax County and Warren County's Warrenton Echoes.

Warrenton has a distinguished architectural and building heritage, largely carried on through the generations by African American craftsmen. Ridgeway emerged in this research as the epicenter of a deeply-rooted tradition of ghost stories and beliefs about the supernatural. The popularity of the Ridgeway Opry House points to the lively traditional country music scene that Warren County shares with Vance County and the surrounding areas.

In all three counties, the careers and artistic lives of many women and men have been shaped by North Carolina's textile industry. The prevalence of tobacco farming and processing operations have also shaped the region's culture, forming a fertile environment for music and narrative traditions as well as occupational heritage.

The Haliwa-Saponi people have resided in the Warren-Halifax area since the eighteenth century. Beginning in the 1960s, the Tribe has enjoyed a resurgence of artistic energy. Haliwa-Saponi artists include talented carvers, musicians, powwow drummers and dancers, makers of regalia, and craftspeople who follow a variety of other artistic paths. The most famous exemplar of Haliwa-Saponi artistic excellence is potter Senora Richardson Lynch, a North Carolina Heritage Award recipient whose work is in the permanent collections of the National Museum of the American Indian and the National Museum of Women in the Arts, among other prominent collections.

Though Senora Lynch, and many of her fellow artists in the Tribe, have long personal and family histories of artistic accomplishment, the organized revival of traditional arts in the Haliwa-Saponi community is widely credited to two elders, Arnold Richardson and Patricia Richardson. Arnold Richardson was born in Philadelphia and grew up in the New York area, and is a descendant of a distinguished Haliwa-Saponi family. Patricia Richardson (referred to by many local artists as Ms. Pat) is a member of the Coharie Tribe, born and raised in Sampson County. In the 1960s, Arnold and Patricia Richardson were married to each other and living in New York, when Mr. Richardson wrote a grant application to the North Carolina Arts Council for funding to teach Indian arts in Hollister. The grant was approved, and the Richardsons began teaching classes in beadwork, basket making, stone carving, pottery, and regalia making. Within

a few years they moved to Hollister permanently, where they continued to teach arts within the Tribe. They are both active artists today. Arnold Richardson is a prominent Indian flautist, flute maker, and stone and wood carver. Patricia Richardson continues to do beadwork, basket making, and a variety of other artwork. Other widely respected artists in the Tribe are quick to credit Arnold Richardson and Patricia Richardson as influences and mentors; these include Senora Lynch, Henry Moka Lynch, David Lynch, Charles Alvin Evans, Sharon Berrun, and Johnnie Ray Francis. Historian, powwow drummer, and linguist Marvin “Marty” Richardson has become a leader in the younger generation’s efforts to carry on and expand upon their understanding of their Haliwa-Saponi heritage.

All of these traditions are discussed in detail in the following pages – as are many other aspects of Warren, Vance, and Halifax Counties’ arts and heritage. There are many potential directions for future research in the three counties. Among the most needed is an exploration of the traditions of the Latin American and other immigrant communities in the area.

This report is organized into three main sections, all dealing with the region’s folk heritage, but each from a different practical perspective. The first section is an exploration of the traditions documented in the project, both those that are actively practiced today, and those that are remembered from earlier generations and contribute to the historical foundation of today’s artistry. The second section contains profiles of active traditional artists who are available for programming or whose work is available for sale. The final part of the report contains resources and recommendations, both for traditional artists interested in seeking public engagements, and for programmers interested in working with traditional artists.

The audio recordings, transcripts, photographs, and other materials gathered in the course of this research are archived at the North Carolina Folklife Institute in Durham, and will be archived at the offices of the Haliwa-Saponi Tribe in Hollister and at the Warren County Library in Warrenton as well. Electronic copies of this report and full-color PDFs of artist profiles are available from the North Carolina Folklife Institute. Contact NCFI at (919) 383-6040 or staff@ncfolk.org.

Traditional Arts and Folk Heritage of Warren, Vance, and Halifax Counties

by Sarah Bryan for the North Carolina Folklife Institute

Verbal traditions

Stories

Among the region's residents are many engaging storytellers. Few would be likely to refer to themselves as storytellers – although at least two, Henderson's Alice Clark Sallins and Norlina's Patrick Draffin, tell stories for public audiences. For most people with whom NCFI consulted in this study, the region's lore is passed down among relatives and friends, in the form of family and community history; and it is created anew in telling one's own personal experiences. Draffin says, "I always have been a fan of storytelling. Sitting on the porch and listening to grandparents, and their friends, aunts and uncles – their stories from their childhood and that kind of stuff – and listening to folks get animated really taught me an appreciation of storytelling."¹ Local lore also consists of rough-and-tumble banter between men at work, cautionary tales to make children behave, and stories from classic traditions such as that of Brer Rabbit.

Alice Clark Sallins heard Brer Rabbit stories as a child growing up in Henderson, told by her mother who was a native of Granville County.

I like folktales and fables, because there are always lessons to be learned . . . [My mother told] mostly Bible stories, and stories out of the comic, and any kind of book that Mama [had]. And it was a lot of folktales and fables. Uncle Remus tales, my mom knew a lot of those, because her mom told a lot of those. Bruh Rabbit, Bruh Fox, they were always good to listen to.²

In her own storytelling today, Sallins is inspired by her mother's style of delivery, and also by her method of expanding on and embellishing stories from the Bible and children's books.

She started with stories from the Bible. And she put so much emphasis on the characters; say, for instance, if she was using maybe a Joseph part, she would say [speaks in a deep voice], "And Mary, how are you feeling now?" Something like that. And Mary [speaks in high voice], "Oh, Joseph, the pains seem to be coming closer." She would get into character, and she would even sound like the animals.

¹ Interview with Patrick Draffin by Sarah Bryan. September 28, 2010.

² Interview with Alice Clark Sallins by Sarah Bryan. November 4, 2010.

And when she couldn't tell stories, she got my older brother to tell us stories, and he did the same thing. When he'd get a comic and read it to us, when he finished I just wanted to grab that same comic and find out where did he find all this? It was so interesting, I wanted to know. And that inspired me to read a lot.³

Cautionary tales were passed down in Sallins' family, examples of real-life deception and exploitation.

[My grandmother] told me a story about how when she was working, she'd make fifty cents a week – because my grandmother was born in 1899 – and every week, the boss would figure out a way, he'd give her five dimes and then he'd say, "Sister Alice, let me keep one of these dimes, and I give it back to you next week." You couldn't argue with the boss, because you couldn't make them give you your money. And he never did give it to her. That was his way of cheating her out of money.

And she told me about that, and she told me one about never letting anyone know your plan before it comes to fruition, because people tend to undercut you. And one of the best ones she told me was about some pigs. She said during that time, you know, they wouldn't let colored people have so much on time [credit], but this man was going to let her have some pigs so she could get herself together, run a farm, and take care of her children. And she told her sister about it, and she told her the time she was going down to pick them up; and she [her sister] went down there thirty minutes before she did. And so when she got there, man said, "Sister Alice, you know I told you, you know I don't let but so many colored folk have something on time. Your sister was down here this morning. I thought she was getting them for you." And she always told me from that lesson to never let anyone know your business prior to it taking place, because people will undercut you. And she said, people are well-meaning, but when she confronted her sister, it was like, "Well, I have to take care of my family too." Desperate times call for desperate measures, and most people don't think when they do a particular thing. Probably not meaning any harm – but then some of them do.⁴

Matt Nelson is a retired tobacco farmer and a musician. He was born in 1930, and grew up in Vaughan, in northeastern Warren County. While not a storyteller in the formal sense, he recalls a great many tales and anecdotes he learned as a child. From relatives and neighbors who were elderly when he was a boy, he heard first-hand stories of the Civil War.

³ Ibid.

⁴ *ibid.*

There was a guy that lived right on 158 Highway up there. I remember seeing him walk by the school, where I went to school, up there. He was in the Confederate Army all four years of it. He was at the fighting around Bull Run in June of '61, and he was also at Appomattox when Lee surrendered. Named Charles [Reagan?]. He lived to be 104 or '5 years old.

My grandfather remembered it. He was born in 1857. He was old enough to remember the Civil War, and he was in Fayetteville when Sherman's troops took Fayetteville in March of '65. My great-grandfather had been wounded at Chancellorsville – I think that's the way the family scuttlebutt goes – and he never did really recover, and they sent him to Fayetteville, commanding troops that were guarding a bridge across the Cape Fear River, and the armory that was making ammunition for the Confederate Army there. There was a federal armory in Fayetteville prior to the Civil War. He was there when Sherman's troops took it.

I heard my grandfather say that a red-headed Yankee Sergeant set him in a barrel of sugar. He was trying to get some sugar out of a barrel with a tin cup, and he couldn't reach over in it, and the Yankee soldier picked him up...and set him in there so he could get some sugar out of the barrel. I heard him tell that sitting over here on the porch, talking to that Confederate veteran. Mr. Charlie Reagan was talking to my grandfather, because all the people his age had died. But my grandfather was somebody he could talk about the Civil War to; even though [my grandfather] was a child, he remembered it. And my daddy and Mr. Reagan's grandson and my grandfather were sitting over there on the porch, and I was up under the porch listening to them. They wouldn't let me listen to them if they'd known I was there.

I was up under there, and Mr. Reagan was talking about the battle of Sharpsburg [Antietam]. Sharpsburg, Maryland. He was telling my grandfather, and my grandfather was telling something about Cousin Something-or-Other was at Sharpsburg, and Mr. Reagan told him, he says, "On Monday morning we killed 15,000 of them damn Yankees, and on Tuesday morning there was 15,000 more of them there." ... But he would talk about Chancellorsville, Winchester, Gettysburg, stuff like that, just like men that have been over in Iraq would talk about the fighting around Baghdad or something now. I've heard the old man talk about it.

...The only Federal troops here were Sherman's troops going north in April or May, after the War. No, I've heard my brother-in-law say that his grandfather came home from the Civil War – he was a Clark, over here at Inez – and he got there at night, and his wife wouldn't let him in the house because there were brigands, outlaws around. She couldn't see him, and she wouldn't open the door

because she couldn't be sure whether it was him or somebody imitating his voice, or what. She wouldn't open the door.

I've heard vague descriptions – I was real small, but I've heard them talk about outlaws, deserters from both armies, and former slaves that had gone to outlawry and such in the country. From what I hear, some of them disappeared and nobody ever knew anything about it. I mean, somebody try to break in your house at night, you shoot him, dig a hole and keep your mouth shut. I've heard talk of two or three instances of that around the country. You don't read about it in the history books, but there were a lot of deserters from both of those armies. Sherman lost two or three thousand troops to desertion in his march through Georgia. So those men were rambling around the country.⁵

Some of the stories Matt Nelson heard growing up belong to classic narrative types well known in the South. An example is a “preacher-and-the-bear” story told of a local minister named Buck Clanton.

And they say he and the deacon were walking home from a revival meeting, and they had seen a bear around that had killed a pig. And the man asked him, said, “Reverend Clanton, if we meet that bear,” said, “what you going to do?” Reverend Clanton told him, “I'm going to drop down on my knees and pray to the Lord to save me.” Said, “Brother Deacon, what you going to do?” He said, “I'm going to run.”

So they did meet a bear, and the deacon took up to running, and the preacher passed him. And when they got away from the bear, he said, “Look,” said, “I thought you told me you were going to drop down on your knees and pray for the Lord to save you from meeting the bear.” He said, “Well, I was just talking then.” He said, “Prayer's fine at the prayer meeting, but it don't work at the bear meeting.”⁶

An elderly African American man told the young Nelson animal fables of the Brer Rabbit variety.

I knew an elderly black man, I thought he was the next thing to Santa Claus when I was a little-bitty boy, because he'd go with me fishing, and tell me stories, and such stuff as that. He was born in, I don't know 18 and 51 or '2 or '3. He wasn't sure how old he was. But he lived to be 107, '8 years old. He used to go with me rabbit hunting.

⁵ Interview with Matt Nelson by Sarah Bryan. August 26, 2010.

⁶ Ibid.

I remember him telling me stories about things. Very similar to Uncle Remus stories. He told one about the hawk and the buzzard and the owl. During a dry time, there come a real serious drought. He said back before humans were here, the animals talked to each other like the humans do now, is what he told me. He said there come a real dry time, and said the buzzard was sitting up on a limb in a dead tree. And the hawk and the owl had been flying all day trying to get something to eat, and they flew up there and lit. Said the owl told him, "Bruh Buzzard, you know if you don't get up from here and go to flying around hunting, you're going to starve to death." Said, "Me and the hawk is flying from can't-see to can't-see, and we are barely making it." Said, "You going to starve to death." The buzzard said, "Brother," said, "just wait on the Lord. The Lord will provide." He said, "Well, if you don't get to hunting, you're going to starve to death." "I'll wait on the Lord."

About that time a little old skinny rat run out from under a clump of broomstraw, a hundred yards down in the field, and the hawk and owl both took off after him, trying to beat each other to him. They got their wings tangled up, and fell to the ground, broke their necks and killed them." The old buzzard tied his napkin around his neck and pitched off, sailed down. "Just wait on the Lord. The Lord will provide."

He told me that story when I was, oh, seven or eight years old.⁷

Ghost stories

Warren County has a striking number of ghost stories, many of which emanate from the tiny community of Ridgeway. The stories reach back to the eighteenth century and up through the years to today. As area residents continue to have supernatural experiences, the tradition is ever growing. Ridgeway's paranormal lore has a material component too, in the form of photographs that are believed to show ghostly manifestations (one of which was generously shared with NCFI during this project).

Storyteller Patrick Draffin grew up in Norlina, just a few miles north of Ridgeway. Asked by an NCFI fieldworker if her impression was correct that Ridgeway was especially rich in ghost stories, he answered,

It just may be that folks like Ridgeway and don't want to leave! I don't know why that's particular to Ridgeway. Certainly there are other places in the county that have their own stories. But Ridgeway seems to – you can generate stories out of Ridgeway quick. And maybe it's just the folks in Ridgeway are more willing to

⁷ *ibid.*

talk about their ghosts, or the skeletons in their closet, than the other places. It's been kind of funny, trying to dig those stories out of different aspects. There are some folks who just won't talk about it. They kind of say, "Oh, no, nothing's happened." And you can read their body language that they're covering up.⁸

Former County Commissioner Ernie Fleming and his partner Don Arnold came to Warren County from High Point 1992, and began to invest in and renovate historic buildings in the county. Their first purchase was Oakley Hall, an 1850s house designed by local architect Jacob Holt for the Hawkins family. Oakley Hall has become Fleming's and Arnold's home, and during their years there they have heard about and experienced the famously haunted house's unusual phenomena, particularly those attributed to second owner Marmaduke Hawkins' young daughters. One night a guest visiting Fleming and Arnold stayed in the room believed to have been the Hawkins girls'. The guest heard the sounds of girls laughing and talking, followed by a voice seemingly at the door, telling them to be quiet.

Another guest visited and took photos of the furniture in Oakley Hall, which, though much of it is antique, is not original to the house. According to Fleming, "...they had sent us a photograph back and said, "Can you explain this?" And on one of the chests is a little girl in a Victorian apron, the bib part, sitting with her legs crossed on top of the chest."⁹ The child, he says, resembles a daughter of the Hawkins family as shown in a particular photograph from the 1870s. (Fleming still has the photo believed to show the ghost, but his interview for this project was conducted at a different location, and so it was not immediately available.) A more sinister presence has also been seen at least once.

It was curious that at Oakley Hall, we had workmen that worked there, doing the framing . . . And it was very curious that these were two younger guys but, you know, they didn't think about stuff like that [hauntings]. And we hadn't told them anything. And they were telling us that one time they were doing the framing for the bath . . . and they saw a figure, a dark figure, come out of one wall, and then walk through another, walk into another wall.¹⁰

Chris Tucker of Ridgeway, proprietor of Tucker's Bait Shop and son of Eunice Bender Tucker, grew up hearing stories from his contemporaries about Oakley Hall, known then (approximately the 1980s) as the Hawkins House. "Her generation," he says of his mother's peers, "don't know about it, but my generation does."

⁸ Interview with Patrick Draffin.

⁹ Interview with Ernest Fleming by Sarah Bryan. October 1, 2010.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Some of the folks that used to live up there talked about folks walking up and down the hall, foot[steps], they could hear them come up the hall. I never seen them, but I heard some of the folks in the younger crowd that stayed there. Said they could hear the steps coming up there, one behind the other one, it'd get to the door and just stand there. The door would finally creak open, and there wouldn't be nobody there.¹¹

Ernest Fleming's and Don Arnold's second purchase and renovation in Warren County was the Marshall Moore tavern in Ridgeway, a large gambrel-roofed building, parts of which date to the eighteenth century. The tavern (used in later generations as a private home) is the subject of stories told by multiple consultants to this project. According to Fleming,

... the earliest name [for the stagecoach stop where the tavern was built] I've found so far is Coler, which was listed on a map from the 1770s. But we know the structure is even older than that. ... Don and I bought it in '93, and at that point we were given [former owner] Benjamin Moore's history of the house, ...which was very fascinating, because there were several mentions of things that happened there... And one of them is that one night they [Moore and family] were all asleep, and they heard a crash of a waiter with glass on it. A waiter is a large tray. And because it was an ordinary, sure, they would be serving stuff all the time. They went all over the house to figure out where the noise came from, and they never found anything.

Some of the owners have had visions of a lady that was traveling in a 1700s cape – you know, the dark cape, to keep the clothes clean – and the thing would be that they'd also usually smell her, because she wore a very sweet scent, like honeysuckle, which can be crushed to make toilette water. So it was very interesting that those little things happened.

And then our own experiences...We came back one time, found a key that we had left inside the cabinet in a drawer, it was stuck in the back door – but the back door was still locked. Then we went in the house, because we said, "Well, that's really curious, how did that get here?" So then we went through the house.... And [a sideboard which they had bought with the house] had shelves on the top that sort of tilted forward slightly, because it was a handmade piece from about the 1850s. There were little shelves, and I had put pressed-glass goblets [on it], which are from the 1880s or so. And one of them had been picked up, and turned on its side so it could not roll off the little shelf. Because it couldn't have fallen that way, because it would have fallen to the floor – because the shelves weren't wide enough. It was wide enough just for somebody to pick and turn it. But nobody had been in the house, because there was a security system.

¹¹ Interview with Eunice Bender Tucker and Chris Tucker.

[A friend] used to come up and visit before we finished the house, because it was before we finished Oakley Hall, which is down the road about a mile. And several times she came up, and she smelled the honeysuckle scent. She also felt somebody pushing against her – which was very unnerving for her. So those were some of our little experiences in the house.

We had painters that came over to paint the structure for us, and they were three brothers, all of different ages. And the youngest one kept going back to the brothers [saying] that he saw a bearded man in bib overalls in the house. And the brothers had to remind him, “The house is locked, there’s a security system on, and there’s no one in the house.” And this went on as long as they painted the house. And the only person I can think of that would be, Benjamin Moore. Because he had, later in life, a white beard, and would have worn bib overalls. ...

It was also curious that one time Don and I was at the house, a car drove up, and a husband and wife got out. And they were telling us about some of their experiences at the house, which was always very interesting. They had had several times – because they used a little woodstove to try to stay warm in different rooms, because it did not have a central heat system – and so they closed the doors, and they’d constantly be waking up, and the door would be open. And they didn’t open it, the ghost opened it. So one night they decided, “Okay, we’re getting tired of this. We wake up and we’re cold.” So they put a wedge under the door, and said, “Okay, now they can’t open the door.” They both got up as they saw the door open, and the wedge being shoved across the floor. And that’s when they decided it was time to leave.¹²

Some of the former residents most closely associated with the home were Grace Puryear and her sister Mrs. Wyckoff. Ernie Fleming continues,

Now, the story’s been told a lot that there was a sideboard that Mrs. Puryear had full of linens. And any time she went away, she’d come back and find all the doors open, and all the linens on the floor... there was no reason for them being on the floor. But every time she went off, she came back and that happened every time. If you can figure out a way to get latches off of a cabinet – because that doesn’t open. It became kind of a problem.¹³

Eunice Tucker of Ridgeway also heard Grace Puryear’s first-hand accounts of the house’s hauntings.

Miss Grace said, she told me this herself . . . she said at night sometimes, Benjamin Moore would come down and stand at the foot of the bed. Now, he’s

¹² Ibid.

¹³ *ibid.*

*been dead, you know, a long time. And she said a little old man with a black coat . . . she said it wasn't nothing for him to come down there.*¹⁴

The possible identity of another spirit haunting the tavern is revealed in Mr. Moore's own writing. Fleming says,

*...he tells of a salesman, earlier on, that would have come and stayed at the ordinary. It was before supper – and I don't know if that would have been a noonday meal or an evening meal – but he had decided to take a walk. He said, "I'll just take a little walk, I'll be right back." Because riding all day in a coach – So he left for a walk, he had all his stuff laid out on his cot, because that's what you slept on in those days. And never came back. They got his address from his belongings, and mailed his stuff to his wife. But they sent out a search party to look for him and never found him.*¹⁵

Yet another reputed haunted site in the Ridgeway area is the house known as the Collins House, facing Route 1. Chris Tucker knows of a man who, as a teenager sleeping in that house, was held down in the bed by an unseen force. Barbara "Babbs" Holtzmann, the home's current owner, has a photograph of the house taken by someone who had been her guest there. She and others believe that a form seen in a second-floor window is the figure of a woman ghost looking out on the lawn.

Earlean Suitt Henderson grew up in an African American family in Ridgeway, and heard ghost stories from her elders. In retrospect she thinks that the adults themselves probably didn't believe the stories, but told them to keep the children from wandering too far from home.

I really do think it was just to scare us to death, so we wouldn't roam so much. You know, like at night, in the summertime – you know, in the wintertime you just had to come in and go to bed early – but in the summertime you didn't have anything to do, we would hang out late nights, just kind of running around and having fun. And I think my granddaddy would tell us these stories – my mother also has some of these stories, like ghost stories – but I think these stories really was just to scare us so they could keep us more close in the yard. I'm not sure these stories had any truth to them at all, but it was interesting . . . Yeah, everybody got a ghost story.

. . . My granddaddy had this story that this headless man would ride this horse with no head. It would come by the window. The Episcopal Church is right in front of my parents' house. I grew up with that ringing of the chimes of that

¹⁴ Interview with Eunice Bender Tucker and Chris Tucker.

¹⁵ Interview with Ernest Fleming.

*church all my childhood. And it's a graveyard there . . . so the headless monster would come right straight down past [the house]. But I think this story was strictly just to scare us. I don't think there was ever any truth to it!*¹⁶

Matt Nelson, a generation Henderson's elder, also heard about a headless ghost near his home in Vaughan.

*There was a woman supposed to walk the road, the curve right down by my tobacco barn, with[out] her head. She was walking up the road and carrying something on her head, and she stumbled and broke her neck and killed her. And they claimed she'd be walking around looking for her head at night, or something like that. But they used to tell a lot of ghost stories.*¹⁷

Two locations in Warren County are the subjects of non-ghostly supernatural stories. Patrick Draffin says,

*...there are two rocks, one on the southern part of the county and one on the northern part of the county, that have some sort of inclination of a devil's footprint on the rock. One is out in the Inez area, where it is rumored that there is the right footprint of Satan, or the Devil, and a circular pattern on a large rock that, if you tap on it, sounds hollow in the rock. And then there are many smaller looking footprints, and the legend is the Devil plays his drum and his children dance in front of that rock. And then there's a rock in the Norlina area that has a footprint or two, and it looks like baby-carriage wheels. And that's where the Devil has pushed his baby across the creek.*¹⁸

Verse

According to Matt Nelson, there was an active poetry tradition in the area around Vaughan in the early to mid-twentieth century. Nelson tells of verses that were composed and shared (sometimes inflicted) among men as a way of adding levity to the hard work of tobacco farming. In one example, a barn-full of tobacco was ruined because of a mistake made in the tending of the furnace. Nelson says of a neighbor who witnessed the scene,

...he went down and looked at it, and he took a piece of tin that they banked the fire over the end of the furnace with, and took [Red's] son Little Red's crayon and wrote a poem on it. Says,

¹⁶ Interview with Earlean Henderson by Sarah Bryan, November 2, 2010.

¹⁷ Interview with Matt Nelson.

¹⁸ Interview with Patrick Draffin.

*Around this tobacco barn I peep
And I've yet to see a yellow leaf
And when I looked up through the tears
The worst I've seen in twenty years*

*If he was to move his bulk house back
And rest his head on a fertilizer sack
I don't really know for sure
But I think he'd make a better cure*

*...and set it inside the door. The next morning when they came to see the tobacco .
. . Little Red [said], "Lookahere," said, "What this written here?" Said the man
pulled the cap off and jumped up and down on it, cussing about the barn...*

*But one of the men heard him laughing about it, and he had a[n untended] field,
got some grass in it. So they went down there and put a poem in his field. Let me
see if I can remember it. It said,*

*You pretty good at making up rhymes
So try your hand at this and see
Get up off your can and chop this grass
You bald-headed S. O. B.*

That's the way! Of course, "SOB" means "Sorry Old Boy."

*But the men used to do that. If one of them got some grass in his field, the others
would come out and put a poem out there, a comment on a piece of cardboard, just
as sure as it happened.¹⁹*

Nelson himself created a poem about the aftereffects of eating beans, which he says he was often asked to recite when selling his tobacco at Lawrenceville, Virginia. In the same interview, speaking with a female folklorist, Nelson cautioned that most of the poems and songs he remembers "won't do for mixed company."²⁰

Author Trudy Bender Duncan chronicles her Ridgeway family history *George and Katie Bender, Their Marriage and Family, 1849-1976*. Among many examples of the family's creative life, she shares a poem written by her relative Willie Bender – a first-generation speaker of English – in 1938, when he was about 22 years old.

¹⁹ Interview with Matt Nelson.

²⁰ Ibid.

"Willie's Poem"

*Alarm clocks don't bother me,
I don't need one, you see.
Every morn some dynamic power,
Wakes me up at the very same hour.
Whether I'm in bed at eight or two,
I sleep no longer than I usually do.*

*But after I'm up, my troubles begin,
With milking the cows, they come rushing in.
I feed the cows meal to balance their diet,
And hope all the time, it will keep her quiet.
Then while with a pail I sit by her side,
A big horsefly alights on her hide.*

*What happens next is another story.
The things I say next, are not to my glory.
With her foot in my bucket and her tail round my neck,
When finally I regain control of my wit,
I promise to get myself some Flit!
I just can't get by with a mere "Oh heck."*

*Soon breakfast is over and I'm out in the field,
A-working and sweating, to increase the yield.
I look to the clover and drop my tools,
To chase back in, our half-dozen mules.
The boy (dog-gone him) left open the gate.
Well, it's no use fussin', now it's too late.*

*Some days I have repair work to do.
I start in the barnyard where the chickens are too.
I raise a little clatter as a tough job I tackle.
The hens become annoyed and thus commence to cackle.
From one to another, from rooster to hen,
That deafening crescendo upon my ears does din.²¹*

²¹ George and Katie Bender: *Their Marriage and Family*, p. 3

Duncan also shares a verse that her aunt Frieda Bender made up as a child.

Mama loved to tell about the little verse that Frieda made up.

Papa aufstehen, Holz hacken.
Mama Feuer machen, Eier kochen.

Which translates to...Papa gets up, chops wood. Mama makes the fire and cooks eggs.²²

Rhymes from Vance County are mentioned in Ruth Anita Hawkins Hughes' *Contributions of Vance County People of Color* (1988). Carpenter Nelson Clay, Sr., who worked with his grown sons, liked to entertain local children while he was taking breaks from his work.

If there were children around, he would begin reciting some catchy lines in a sort of sing-song voice. As the children drew near they would hear, "As the vine grows around the stump, I choose you for my sugar lump, sugar lump, sugar lump." The children would join in and would use the ditty in their ring play. [...] When [Clay's grandchildren] lived in the home with their grandfather, they never lacked for company. All the children in the neighborhood wanted to be there to hear "Pa" Clay tell a romantic story or sing his original poems. A favorite was, "My love is like a long potato row, when I reach the end I hope to find you there with a hoe." Mr. Clay, or "Pa" Clay, said that was the line that won him his beautiful wife.²³

Matt Nelson remembers that creative taunting was a frequent occurrence among men working tobacco, in a style like playing the dozens.

Most all of the men that worked out in these fields around here had these little sassy songs they'd sing when they were out there plowing, picking at each other...

...As I say, most of it wouldn't be for you to listen to. But out in these fields, especially when there was a mix of white and black men out there, and they'd be telling these god-awful lies about everything. You know, something to amuse themselves. It's hot, dirty, mean work. Something to amuse themselves. They'd be laughing and talking about it.

²² *George and Katie Bender: Their Marriage and Family*, p. 9.

²³ Ruth Anita Hawkins Hughes, *Contributions of Vance County People of Color*. 1988, Raleigh, Sparks Press. pp. 197-198.

They could tell some terrible lies out there too. Especially the black men that I knew, they had a thing that they did, they would try to out-poor each other. They would start talking about how hard they had it when they were growing up, and one of them would say something like, "Well you know, we were so poor when I was a boy growing up that we had to take turns eating out of the plate. We didn't have but one, and we'd take turns eating, then Mama'd wash it and fix it for another one." And the other one would look at him and say, "You mean y'all had a plate to eat out of?" I don't care what he had, what he had was worse. They would kill you doing it.

Or talking about each other's girlfriend. I know one of them out there one day, he told the other one, he was talking about how pretty his girl was, and that long, pretty hair she had. And the other one told him, he said, "If you stand your girlfriend on her head, that hair's so short it wouldn't touch that ground." And said, "She's so ugly she have to sneak up on the spring to get a drink of water." Stuff like that, back and forth, all day long.²⁴

Speech

Warren, Vance, and Halifax Counties' speech is distinctive in fundamental ways, in both words and pronunciation. Many white and black natives of the region near the state line have accents that are closely related to (if not part of) the "Old Virginia" and Tidewater Virginia accent, typified by the almost Canadian-sounding pronunciation of words such as "house" ("heauwse" or "hoose"). The Haliwa-Saponi Tribe, who live primarily in Warren and Halifax Counties, have been English speakers for generations, but historian Marty Richardson, a member of the Tribe, has been engaged in the work of revitalizing native Haliwa-Saponi language, based upon archival and other sources.

Older residents of the Warren County town of Ridgeway recall their parents – first- and second-generation Americans from Germany – speaking German. Eunice Bender Tucker says,

They wouldn't teach us, they wouldn't let us learn German, because then we'd know what they'd be talking about. I say they made a mistake, they should have taught us. Same reason I tell all these Mexican people, "Teach your children that Spanish." They'd be way ahead of other children in school.²⁵

²⁴ Interview with Matt Nelson

²⁵ Interview with Eunice Bender Tucker and Chris Tucker by Sarah Bryan.

Richard Holtzmann, Sr., agrees, “They’d speak German when they didn’t want anyone to understand what they were saying.”²⁶ Trudy Bender Duncan, on the other hand, in her book *George and Katie Bender*, describes her relatives’ decision that their children should learn German.

At this point [the birth of one of their children], Mama and Papa who had always spoken English to each other made the conscious decision to speak German in the home to teach German to their children. They knew English would be learned on the outside. Mama of course spoke Hochdeutsch and Papa spoke Plattdeutsch. It was high brow versus low brow and Papa delighted in teasing her about it. Knowing just a little German, be it Platt or Hoch, can lead to a little misunderstanding. Years later, one Sunday after church, Willie went over and started hitting Frieda. They asked him why in the world he was hitting her. He replied that the pastor had said, “Wir solen Frieda hauen,” meaning, “We should hit Frieda.” What he had actually said was, “Wir solen Frieden haben,” meaning, “We should have peace.”²⁷

Richard Holtzmann, Sr., remembers a local African American cantaloupe farmer who picked up at least a bit of German from his neighbors.

I had to walk six-tenths of a mile from that fruit stand down that road, and every day I’d come out of there, he’d holler at me, “Wie geht’s?” [“How’s it going?”] I’d say, “Gut.” [“Good.”]²⁸

When they were children, Holtzmann and Eunice Bender Tucker and her siblings attended German services at St. Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran Church, although they did not understand German.

We couldn’t understand nothing they were saying. My sister Barbara, she used to love to play church at home. We’d all sit up on the steps, and she’d stand over there where the car was at, and she’d be preaching to us in German. We wouldn’t know what she was saying. She didn’t even know what she was saying herself, but listened at it, you know. “Heilig Geist!” I can remember that. She’d throw her hand up and say, “Heilig Geist!” That’s Holy Ghost.²⁹

Tucker cites certain phrases and pronunciations associated with the German-American community in Ridgeway. (Tucker is an expert traditional cook, and much of the interview she gave concerned foodways.) She says that her family’s pronunciation “fanilla” for “vanilla” is a mark of their German heritage. She

²⁶ Interview with Richard Holtzmann, Jr., and Richard Holtzmann, Sr., by Sarah Bryan. August 11, 2010.

²⁷ *George and Katie Bender: Their Marriage and Family*, Trudy Bender Duncan. pp. 7-8

²⁸ Interview with Richard Holtzmann.

²⁹ Interview with Eunice Bender Tucker and Chris Tucker.

remembers her grandmother making a yeast roll with raisins and cinnamon called *Zimtkuche* (*Zimtkuchen* is a German cinnamon bread), which is also mentioned in Trudy Bender Duncan's *George and Katie Bender*, where it is spelled "*simtkuchen*."

Explaining another local phrase, she says,

We'd say, "guckst du." I remember that. The dog would get in your way, "Guckst du." I reckon [it means], "Get out of the way." I reckon that's what it was.

This phrase may be a survival of the German "Was guckst du?" or, "What are you peeping at?" possibly used in the dismissive sense of "What do you want?" or "What are you doing here?"

Building traditions

The antebellum prosperity of Warren County and the surrounding region attracted a group of distinguished carpenters and builders, both African American and white, particularly from Southside Virginia. Thomas Day, who would become North Carolina's most renowned carpenter and cabinetmaker, apprenticed to furniture maker Thomas Reynolds in Warrenton as a young man. From Warrenton he moved to Milton, the town with which he is most commonly associated. Reynolds was a partner in prominent the firm Bird & Reynolds, Cabinet-Makers. Brothers Jacob and Thomas Holt came to Warrenton from Prince Edward County, Virginia. Beginning as carpenters, they would become some of North Carolina's most successful architects and contractors of the nineteenth century. Important examples of their work still stand in Warren County, including the house referred to as the Jacob Holt House, on South Bragg Street in Warrenton.³⁰

Many other masters of the building trades came from or were associated with Warren County in the nineteenth century. Francis Woodson and Edward Rice, also from Prince Edward County, Virginia, were prominent plasterers and bricklayers in Warrenton. Corbin Boyd, an African American brick mason renowned for the chimneys he built around Warrenton, worked for, and may have been a slave of, Jacob Holt. Carpenter John Waddell, who would become a prominent builder in mid-nineteenth-century North Carolina, was among the Prince Edward County craftsmen who came south with the Holts. Carpenter and builder James Burgess, from Mecklenburg County in Southside Virginia, became an established architect with a practice based in Warrenton. Carpenter, joiner,

³⁰ <http://ncarchitects.lib.ncsu.edu>

and builder Thomas Bragg was active in Warrenton in the early nineteenth century; among his twelve children were North Carolina governor Thomas Bragg, Confederate General Braxton Bragg, Alabama congressman John Bragg, and Alexander Bragg, who also became a well-known builder. Albert Gamaliel Jones, known for his Greek Revival buildings in North Carolina, was a native of Warren County. Jacob Allen, a Wilmington and Raleigh builder in the late nineteenth century, is believed to have been born in Warrenton.³¹

Warren County's tradition of excellence in the building trades continues today, thanks in a large part to retired educator and master brick mason W. E. Exum. Exum, a native of Goldsboro, is the son and brother of skilled craftsmen. He came to Warrenton in 1951, where he taught brick masonry first at the African American John R. Hawkins High School, and in later years in the integrated school system. He estimates that he has taught thousands of students over the years. The Exum Boys, as his students are known (although he counts at least one woman among his students who went on to become professional brick masons), became a multigenerational fraternity of professional masons and contractors up and down the East Coast. They maintained a strong sense of identity and loyalty, and as one class of students would set out in the world and establish themselves in the field, they in turn would find or create positions for younger Exum Boys just entering the profession.

With his wife Georgia Jones Exum, a native of Warrenton with deep roots in the county, who for many years was a physical education teacher, W. E. Exum influenced his students in many areas of life – not only in the professional realm. After school and on weekends, the boys spent many hours at the Exums' home, which became something of a salon for the masonry students. Formally known as the L'Entre Nous Club, the students who spent time at the Exums' home expanded their horizons by taking part in interesting conversations and listening to music, practicing social etiquette skills, and learning how to dance. They took dates to banquets that the Exums organized just for them. While still students, they worked on building projects in and around Warren County, and some accompanied Exum to summer jobs in other states. Students who might never before have traveled more than a few miles from Warrenton took a class bus trip to Canada, or a cruise in the Caribbean. They competed in – and often won – statewide and regional masonry competitions, expanding their renown well beyond Warren County. The Exum Boys' sense of fraternity accompanies them through life – and even beyond, as demonstrated by the bricks and trowels displayed on the graves of some members who have passed on.

³¹ *ibid.*

The book *Contributions of Vance County People of Color* by Ruth Hawkins Hughes contains extensive documentation of African American builders and skilled tradesmen, as well as practitioners of many other occupations. The men in the building trades profiled in the book represent a variety of educational backgrounds. Some had learned their trades in college or other formal educational settings, while others had learned through apprenticeship or family tradition. (In some cases, the eras to which the craftsmen belong are unclear from the text.)

Brick masons profiled by Hughes include Thomas Hawkins of Henderson, John Betch, John Botts, Charlie McDougal, George Pete Williams, Buddy Goode, Ted Smart, Walter Shields, Clarence Knight, and Junious, Edward, and Willie Green. John Betch “plied his trade from 1898 until early in the 1900s, not only in Vance County but in other nearby counties.” Betch and his crew, which included John Botts, were responsible for the brickwork on the Oxford Hotel on Main Street in Oxford. George Pete Williams, who often worked alone or with one helper, “was a mantel and steps expert...Many people chose him not only for his excellent work, but to enjoy the many humorous tales he kept at his fingertips.”³²

Halifax County mason Walter Shields and carpenter Clarence Knight, whose wives Mary and Martha were sisters, established themselves in Henderson in the 1920s. Of the Shields’ home on Pearl Street, Hughes writes, “Cement covers the house like frosting on a cake.” The house next-door was the Knights’.³³

Junious Green, who later studied law and worked for the federal government, “had the reputation of being one of the fastest plasterers in Vance County.” He learned the trade from his father, Edward Green, and uncle Willie Green. Buddy Goode, who had attended Hampton Institute in the early 1900s, was a brick mason and plasterer and owned a grocery store next to his house on East Rockspring Street. While living temporarily in the North, Goode is said to have laid a driveway and done other work for John Phillip Sousa and his wife.³⁴

Blacksmithing and carpentry

Buck Alston, profiled in *Contributions of Vance County People of Color*, was a blacksmith who shod horses in Henderson for many years until his death in 1928. He was also preacher at Davis Chapel; built for him by Owen Davis, the church is said to have first been called Uncle Buck’s Church. A contemporary of

³²Ruth Anita Hawkins Hughes, *Contributions of Vance County People of Color*. 1988, Henderson. pp. 198-199

³³ *ibid.*, p. 201

³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 200

Alston's, smith William Merriman, was from Warrenton, and lived in the building that would later become the Elks Home in Henderson. Both men are credited as having influenced blacksmith Johnny Wortham. Hughes writes that Wortham practiced blacksmithing in the horse-and-buggy era, and after the advent of automobiles, continued to work on older-style farming equipment. In Kittrell, horses and mules were shod by a Mr. Hall, and by a Mr. Marrow in Williamsboro.³⁵

Sidney Hayes "was considered to be the best...carpenter in Henderson, by the white people." He had learned his skills from his father, Will Hayes, remembered to have taught blueprint-making at St. Augustine College. Carpenter Omega Alfa Davis worked as a looper for the American Tobacco Company. He is also remembered for his cooking, which he learned from his mother and continued to practice in his home after marriage to his wife Susan Reavis Davis.³⁶

Homemaking traditions

Cooking

In 1914, the Ladies' Aid Society of the First Baptist Church in Henderson published a second edition of *The Henderson Cook Book*, a guide to cooking and home remedies. The book (which bears on its cover the maxim, "Here's to the Home – a man's kingdom, a child's paradise and a woman's world") supports and sheds further light on area residents' memories of foodways in the first half of the twentieth century. In Vance County, as in Warren and Halifax, older residents speak of the salutary nature of garden-to-table availability fresh food; of raising crops and animals, and preserving the foods they produced; and of recipes and food-related rituals that recall and strengthen the bonds of community.

In Warren and Halifax Counties' Haliwa-Saponi communities, middle-aged and elderly residents carry on the cooking and preservation methods they learned as young people. The establishment of the Haliwa-Saponi Farmers Market indicates an increasing community recognition of the value of access to fresh, locally-raised produce.

In Warren County, the combination of a comparatively recent immigrant group and a farming lifestyle have produced a very strong culinary heritage among the German-Americans of Ridgeway. German cooking traditions blend – and on

³⁵ Hughes, p. 204.

³⁶ Hughes, pp. 196-197, 202.

occasion contrast – with the typical foodways of this part of North Carolina. Recollections shared by Eunice Bender Tucker, and the extensive documentation of daily life recorded in *George and Katie Bender* by Trudy Bender Duncan, create an exceptionally detailed portrait of the extended Bender family’s German-Carolinian foodways from the early twentieth century on.

Fruits and vegetables

Ridgeway is known for its traditional crop, the small, famously sweet Ridgeway cantaloupe. At the time of this research (2010-2011), the only farms said still to be growing authentic Ridgeway cantaloupes were those of Richard Holtzmann Sr. and Jr., German-American farmers, and African American farmer Philip Jones. In earlier generations, the crop had been known nationally, and served at the Waldorf Astoria. The community grew around the cantaloupe crop, with black and white growers’ associations, special labels, and a railroad stop where the melons would be loaded onto trains for shipment north.

It seems that other fruits, though, were more often to be found on the Ridgeway farm families’ own tables. Orchards produced multiple varieties of apples, as well as peaches. Eunice Tucker says, “The Germans, they got to have them apple trees.”

Because they dried apples. ... They put them up on a low roof, like a little low chicken house or something, on the tin, and spread them out on cloth or bags, mostly paper bags, and weighed them down, and put them up there and let them dry.

... You didn’t leave them out all night. You just put them out there the hot part of the day. Then you took them all in, and spread them back out there the next day, and watch that didn’t no storm or nothing come up to get them wet.

... They would keep them sealed up in a jar. And they would make applejacks all through the winter.³⁷

Berries were popular as well, including raspberries, huckleberries, and dewberries. Wine-making was common, using grapes grown on home arbors. Some of these orchard and garden traditions continue today. Richard Holtzmann, Sr., maintains a long-established grapevine arbor near his house. Dewberries also went into wine.

Trudy Duncan describes the kinds of wine and process of making them that her grandparents employed in Ridgeway.

³⁷ Interview with Eunice Bender Tucker and Chris Tucker.

In one corner [of the cellar] were three fifty-gallon oak barrels. One was for grape wine, one for blackberry wine, and the other for Muscadine grape wine. If a barrel was not quite empty when it was needed to make new wine, the old wine was siphoned off and stored in half-gallon canning jars. Underneath the stairs was the winepress. Winemaking was fun. On a hot day, about three barrels of grapes were washed and run through a mill in that nice cool cellar. The pulp was pressed and the juice poured into an empty barrel. They added 125 to 150 pounds of sugar, stirred it and covered the hole at the top of the barrel with a burlap bag. It fermented and bubbled and sometimes ran over. When it stopped fermenting, the barrel was filled to the top with water and corked. But while Papa got the credit, in reality...Mama made the wine.

To make blackberry wine, about three crates of blackberries were mashed and poured in a burlap bag and allowed to drip. This juice was then handled just like the grape juice.³⁸

Barbara Lynch Brayboy grew up on her parents' 50-acre farm in Essex, Halifax County. The Haliwa-Saponi family raised most of their own food, and in season picked wild berries.

During the summertime . . . I can remember my sisters and I picking blackberries, and just picking blackberries. And there were times that Mom would probably can 100 quarts of blackberries during the summer. String beans, tomatoes galore. And before she got a freezer, she canned the corn, the peaches, the apples. I mean, she canned the whole thing. And the only thing that Dad and Mom bought were the staples like flour, sugar, rice, those kinds of things.³⁹

George and Katie Bender's Ridgeway property was planted with six pecan trees, two cherry trees, a scuppernong grapevine, a Muscadine vine, two plum trees, both an Alberta and a Georgia Belle peach tree, and an unspecified number of apple trees. Also mentioned as part of that family's diet are strawberries, blackberries, figs, Concord grapes, cantaloupes, honeydew melons, watermelons, persimmons, peanuts, and black walnuts. "These were enjoyed until they tasted a touch rancid. The cooking in winter months was dull but there was variety the rest of the year."⁴⁰

Tucker cites a variety of greens and root vegetables, and cushaw (a squash), as typical foods in her family's household — both during her childhood and today.

³⁸ *George and Katie Bender*, pp. 22-23.

³⁹ Interview with Barbara Lynch Brayboy by Sarah Bryan, August 27, 2010.

⁴⁰ *George and Katie Bender*.

Mama used to boil [parsnips] and make little cakes out of them, parsnip cakes. But they'd whup them up with . . . mashed potatoes. Also turnips and mashed potatoes. Put a few potatoes in there, it would take away some of the strong flavor. But I loved the turnips. I deep-fat fry mine sometimes. Here at home, I put one in the microwave. That's me; some people don't like turnips. Parsnips, yeah, he grew it. He grew spaghetti squash one time. I don't know, we weren't crazy about that. Lot of cushaws. We'd always grow cushaws in the fall of the year. People think of pumpkins a lot, but Grandma made cushaw pies, just over and over and over . . . My grand-younguns [say], "Grandma . . . when are you going to make a cushaw pie?" "As soon as I get my hands on the cushaw." You know, the Germans loved a lot of cushaw pie.

. . . Now, the Germans, they like the spinach. They weren't too much on turnip greens, but they liked spinach. And rape salad. In the spring, Grandma always loved that rape salad. They planted that. And a lot of spinach. They weren't crazy over turnip greens.

Every summer, Barbara Lynch Brayboy fills shelves in her home with dozens of jars of tomatoes and vegetables.

I think I kept the tradition from my mom. Many of the people in this area, when they do tomatoes, they will just cook them completely done, put them in the sterilized jars, and seal them. But my mother was always saying, no, I've got to cook mine partially done, put them in the jars, and then put them in the pressure cooker, and put them under pressure for 20, 25 minutes. So I always use a pressure cooker for mine too.

. . . I remember hearing my mom say that, after she and Dad were first married, the Agricultural Extension Service came through, and gave the married ladies a pressure cooker. They went through some lessons as to how to prepare, and that was one of the things they taught her, to put it in the pressure cooker. She always told me, "I always put just a little bit of salt in the jar so they won't spoil." And I can honestly say, in my years of canning, since 1975, I probably have not had three jars to go bad. So I have been very successful at that.⁴¹

In Tillery, Adell Davis' mother also learned about canning from the Extension Service.

They taught them how to make soup, can soup, and they would gather the stuff—like they would get the corn, and pick the beans—then . . . there would come out an agent, would come to they called it the free school, elementary school— and this lady would teach people how to make canned soup and corn and butterbeans.

⁴¹ Interview with Barbara Lynch Brayboy.

Because the people around here, they knew how to can tomatoes and peaches and apples, and that was it . . . My mom learned how to can corn, can butterbeans. You know, you really depend on that stuff . . . that was back in the '30s. And they would give you your jars. All you had to do was go and bring your stuff.⁴²

Breads and starches

Eunice Tucker draws a distinction between her German-American family's use of bread and other grain products with that of other cuisines in the region.

We were dumpling- and potato-eaters, and noodle-eaters. We weren't rice[-eaters]. . .the only time [my grandmother would] serve rice was in a rice pudding. And same with my mother. Only time we had rice was in rice pudding. But as far as like using it as a pasta, a starch in a meal, we never had rice. We never had much cornbread. Very seldom my mother ever made cornbread. It was all homemade yeast bread. Being German, you know. We made it once a week. She had big round tin Pepsi-Cola cans that Daddy would get – I guess they stood this high off the floor – and she had feedsacks that she put in there, and then we packed the bread in that and put the lid on tightly. That would last just about the whole week. If we'd run out then we had to make biscuits.

Daddy brought the flour, he'd carry wheat to the mill and come back with the flour. We had a flour barrel sitting in the corner of the kitchen, and he'd always get about a hundred pounds and put it in there. We'd make biscuits if we'd run out of yeast bread. And the first time I made yeast bread, I was eleven years old. My mother was pregnant, and she said, "Eunice, can you make the yeast bread?" "I don't know." "Wash your hands good. Wash your hands and arms good." So then she got a big dishpan, and then we put another dishpan on top of it, and we put a feedsack, tied it up in four corners, because it would rise up, and that would keep the dishpan on top of it, keep it from running all over, spilling all over. That's the way we made bread. And the day we made bread, that's what we looked for for dinner.

But Grandma always made rolls, but she would make the Zimtkuche all the time. That was just a yeast dough, and she put raisins in it, and cinnamon and sugar on top; and then stand it up and slice it.⁴³

Meat and fish

⁴² Interview with Adell Davis by Sarah Bryan. November 15, 2010.

⁴³ Interview with Eunice Bender Tucker and Chris Tucker.

Like so many rural Carolinians of her generation, Eunice Tucker emphasizes that when her family slaughtered livestock, nearly every part of the animal was put to use. The family's production of blood sausage exemplified this resourceful approach.

You catch the blood after they shoot [a hog]. My dad would shoot them, then he'd cut the throat, and we had a pan, so to speak, to put down there, and we'd catch that blood. And he'd dump it in this churn, and put a handful of salt in, and then we'd have to stir it, and keep stirring it so it didn't clot. Then we'd put a cloth over it, and put the lid on it, and set it in the smokehouse. And then we'd take the – the good meat would go into the blood sausage. We'd grind up the tongue, the lean head meat... he wouldn't put no gristle in that. And then he'd put some fresh sausage in there, and we'd mix it up, mix the blood in with it, and we'd pack it in the chitterlings. The big chitterlings. We'd pack it in that. And then it went into a cast-iron pot outside – what we called the washpot, the big pot – and then we boiled it real slow, but you had to take a needle and keep popping each sausage. Tie them off in links about like that, and then you'd stick a needle in them so that the grease would explode, would come out to the top. Then we saved that pot liquor.

... when you rendered your lard out, you know, we would take the meat skins and cook that with the head meat, with the meat that went into the blood sausage. So it was the meat skins, and the tongue, and the good pieces of head meat. That went into the blood sausage, along with a little fresh sausage. And then that was cooked real slow outside. And then they had a lot of crocks, churns, you know, that they put the broth and stuff in. It stayed cold in the winter. You used it up.⁴⁴

The *Henderson Cook Book* reflects a similar palate. In her recipe for "Pudding Made of Pork Meat," Mrs. George Harris prescribes,

Three heads, all of the lights [lungs], sweetbreads [thymus or pancreas], kidneys and any fat pieces rejected from the sausage meat, 1 liver cooked by itself. Boil meats until it leaves the bone. When cool carefully remove meat from bones and run liver and meat through meat chopper. Mix it well and season with pepper, salt, red pepper and teaspoon coriander seed, pulverized. Use sage if desired. Pack into large bowl, cut what quantity you desire to use, put into pan and warm it inside of stove.

Other pork recipes include pigs' feet ("fry for breakfast"), scrapple (head meat), and both creamed and boiled brains.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Interview with Eunice Tucker and Chris Tucker.

⁴⁵ *Henderson Cook Book*, pp. 26-30.

Canning was not limited to fruits and vegetables, but also included preservation of meat. Eunice Tucker remembers that in Ridgeway,

. . . [my father] would kill a cow when it started turning cool. He would kill a beef every weekend. That's what kept us going. And then in the '40s they come out with that pressure cooker, and I'm going to tell you, we really used the pressure cooker. Today, I wouldn't take nothing for my pressure cookers. We canned beef, and we canned sausage. Fry sausage cakes and pack them in the jar, pour some of the grease in there. Put the lid on tight. But you turned it upside-down so the grease wouldn't be on top. I don't know why they did that. But we did everything. We canned all. We canned beef, sausage.⁴⁶

To the southeast in Essex, the Lynch family was doing the same thing. Barbara Lynch Brayboy remembers that,

. . . Daddy had the pigs, and the calves – when the baby calf was born, always in the fall of the year or winter, he slaughtered the calf for the beef. And I vividly remember my mother canning the beef, because at that time she did not have a freezer.⁴⁷

In her chronicle of Ridgeway history and culture *Come With Me to Germantown*, Barbara Sinn Bumbalough distinguishes local German Americans' method for salt-curing ham from that of their non-German neighbors. While other local residents would be more likely to salt ham with dry salt crystals, the Germans, she writes, bathed the meat in brine. Trudy Duncan details the same method.

Our biggest meat staple was ham, supplied by our own hogs, which had been put in brine and smoked. After smoking, the ham was far too salty to eat. First the ham was boiled, changing the water several times. Mama had a big oblong black pot and a ham just about filled it up. After the salt was sufficiently leached out, the ham was put in the oven and baked for a number of hours. It had a distinct smoky taste and was still a little salty but it was good and it kept well. We ate it until it was gone and then Mama baked another.⁴⁸

The 1914 *Henderson Cook Book* includes several recipes for particular species of fish in addition to general guidelines for preparation of fish. Recipes include boiled rock, planked and baked shad, and codfish balls. Salted fish “should be soaked over night in a large vessel, washing the fish in two waters before putting

⁴⁶ Interview with Eunice Tucker and Chris Tucker.

⁴⁷ Interview with Barbara Lynch Brayboy.

⁴⁸ *Come With Me to Ridgeway*, Barbara Sinn Bumbalough. 1998 Record Print Co., Warrenton. pp.

into soak, not forgetting to scrape the scales off." Salted herring, after undergoing this process, "are to be dipped in meal and fried in hot bacon fat or lard."⁴⁹

Herring was part of the Tucker family's diet until the recent moratorium on the herring fishery in North Carolina. Chris Tucker, Eunice's son, remembers that his late father used to catch herring on a tributary of the Chowan River, well east of Warren County. He would bring home five or six barrels of the fish, which Eunice would then clean and salt, and offer for sale. "I salted them as long as I got them. Had five-gallon buckets full, sealed up. People'd buy them like crazy. Fried fresh herring was sold at times as a fundraiser. Nothing no better than fresh herring, fried real hard and crisp. Eat them bones and all."⁵⁰

Her father, she remembers, would catch hornyhead fish, a species of chub, in creeks.

*Daddy would take a seine, now, he'd take a tree limb that had a fork in it, and he'd take an orange bag and sew it, and make a seine. Now, he run it up under the banks. That's the only fishing we knew anything about. He'd get in the creek and walk the creek, and run that thing up underneath the banks and around, and catch fish. Catch hornyhead, a little fish about that long.*⁵¹

She also remembers that her grandmother liked to eat fried fish and would save the heads for her cats.

Tucker considers the regionally popular dish rockfish muddle to be a fairly recent arrival. She shared the following muddle recipe, which she believes came from Dr. Foster in Norlina.

Fish muddle, 40 lb.

*4 or 5 lb bacon, cut in half put in bottom of pot and let cook slow. After bacon fries remove then take 4 or 5 bunches of spring onions and a bunch of parsley, chop up fine. Cut fish in block, add enough water to cook down cook fish until the meat fall off bone. ½ gal tomato juice, couple dozen eggs (scramble). Add butter, cook 15 min. Add salt and pepper.*⁵²

Men in Ridgeway gather every Good Friday for a fish fry, a tradition that Chris Tucker says goes back at least a generation. After Good Friday services, the men

⁴⁹ *Henderson Cook Book*, p. 12.

⁵⁰ Interview with Eunice Bender Tucker and Chris Tucker.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Courtesy of Eunice Bender Tucker.

work together to seine whatever local fish pond may have grown overstocked. The fish fry itself is also an all-male event.

Soups

Soups and stews are among the most distinctive dishes in the Tucker family's tradition. Eunice Tucker recalls that her family saved the pot liquor left over from making blood sausage, and used it to make "bruckel soup." "In the morning you would take and toast your bread with a little sausage, cubes of bread, and you would pull it out and put tomatoes in there, and that was called bruckel soup. It was a German soup."⁵³

"Riddle soup" is another make-do recipe that she recalls.

We made something we called riddle soup. You didn't have nothing to fix, but you always had tomatoes canned, you know. You'd take like egg and flour, plain flour and egg, and a little salt, and you would mix it up real crumbly. You'd put it in a frying pan with a little bit of grease, and you'd toast it...I reckon they call it matzo soup or something like that, but we called it riddle soup. And then after you toast them up a little bit, you put a jar of tomatoes in there. Now, that was good. We had that a many a time.⁵⁴

The Tucker men are known for the Brunswick stew they make for fire department fundraisers. The recipe is said to be unchanged since 1975. Chris Tucker describes the recipe.

Beef, chicken, tomatoes, white potatoes, butterbeans, corn, butter, sugar, salt, and pepper. And we season it with sidemeat. We do our whole process, it takes 24 hours. We start one morning at about 8:00, start cooking the beef and chicken that morning, then about 2:00 we turn the pots off, let it cool. While we do that, while it's cooling, we peel the potatoes, five or six hundred pounds of potatoes that we do. Once we peel them and eye them, then we'll go back and get all the broth up – the broth gets separated – the beef comes out, we chop that up fine, the chicken, chop that up fine, and then we divide it up into pots evenly, and then divide the broth evenly. And that sets in there and simmers real slow. And then around 11:00, put the sidemeat, and that stays in there until 4:00. And then at 4:00 we take the sidemeat out, we add the potatoes and the tomatoes. That cooks until that's done, all the potatoes are busted up and the tomatoes busted up. 6:00 we add the butterbeans. Butterbeans cook for an hour and twenty-five minutes or so.

⁵³ Interview with Eunice Bender Tucker and Chris Tucker.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

*We add the corn, then we season it with the salt and pepper, and then the butter is the last thing that's added, at the very end.*⁵⁵

In the 1910s, the ladies of First Baptist in Henderson recommended similar recipes as those used today by the Tuckers, albeit on a smaller scale. Mrs. James H. Rankin shared the most detailed Brunswick stew recipe.

Take one chicken and 2 or 3 slices of bacon (cut up chicken as if you were going to fry it). Put this on in a large boiler with the chicken well covered with water, cook until nearly done; now add 3 quarts of nice ripe tomatoes, cut fine, 2 quarts of corn, 13 or 14 nice size Irish [white] potatoes (cooked in separate vessel), mashed and put in 1 large tablespoon of butter, 1 large tablespoon of lard, some salt, black pepper, [3?] quarts of butterbeans, 1 large onion, cut real fine.

Just before taking from the fire I often add a little corn-starch or ½ cup of flour made into a smooth paste. Stir constantly and cook down until it is right thick, and the chicken is cooked all to pieces. You can make this of beef, chicken, squirrel or birds. It is very good to use two different kinds of meat in one stew. You can can this while boiling hot and in air-tight jars and keep for many days.

A briefer recipe for “Brunswick Stew (Small)” is included without attribution.

Take one chicken or two squirrels, cut up and put over the fire, with ½ gallon water. Let stew until the bones can be removed. Add ½ dozen large tomatoes, 1 pint butter-beans, corn cut from ½ dozen ears, and 4 large Irish potatoes sliced. Season with butter, pepper and salt, and cook until thick enough to be eaten with a fork.

A receipt from Col. T. L. Jones follows, notable for its use of the term “lima beans” rather than “butterbeans.”

*Two frying size chickens; cut the chickens up, put in a deep vessel with 2 quarts of water; cook until thoroughly done, take out of vessel, leaving the water from the chicken, and chop fine 3 medium sized ears of corn, ½ pint lima beans, 3 or 4 good sized tomatoes in separate vessels. When done, cut corn from the cob, season with butter, pepper and salt, beans seasoned the same, tomatoes with same, and a little sugar. Return the chicken and vegetables to the vessel in which the chicken was boiled, cook until thick enough to eat with a fork. Add water if necessary. This will serve ten people.*⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ *The Henderson Cook Book, Second Edition*, Compiled by the Ladies' Aid Society of the First Baptist Church, Henderson, North Carolina. 1914, Raleigh, Commercial Printing Company. pp. 10-11.

Soap making

Making soap is a skill closely related to cooking, in that it requires skill in selecting ingredients and expertise in bringing those ingredients together into the finished concoction. For Carolyn Long, a Ridgeway native who has been making soap for almost a decade, the process takes four weeks from mixing and pouring a batch to the time when it is properly cured. Long primarily uses essential vegetable oils and extracts, though she also has customers who make special orders of traditional lye soap, such as Long's grandmother and older cousins made when she was a girl.

On the advice of older family members, Long experimented with timing her soap-making with the phases of the moon—just as many traditional gardeners will plant by the signs or the moon phases. She finds that soap that is mixed and poured at the full moon sets better and creates a superior product. This technique is also documented in an oral history of Mary Davis, an African American woman from Kinston, North Carolina, who remembered, “They’d make [soap] always on a full moon to keep it from shrinking.”⁵⁷

Trudy Bender Duncan describes the process of making soap as a final step in butchering hogs.

The big black pot was cleaned out and all the fat trimmed from the meat was cut up in small squares and put in the pot to render the lard. There was an art to this too, because if it got too hot, the lard would taste a little burned and would be less than white. The remaining little meat that had held all that fat was just slightly browned and very crisp. They were called cracklings and were very tasty. We gave some of them to the tenants. The rest were put in a crackling press to extract the last of the lard.

The last job for the pot was making soap. The fat, which had been skimmed off the broth, was heated, lye added and the mixture cooked until it was thick. The soap was allowed to cool in the pot, then cut into large pieces and stored in the cellar. Now the pot was done for the year, unless someone wanted to use it to make a lot of Brunswick stew in the summer.⁵⁸

Eunice Bender Tucker still makes lye soap, though the ingredients are somewhat different. Rather than using rendered lard she collects cooking grease from frying food in the kitchen. Pure lye, sold as such, is now hard to find in stores,

⁵⁷ *A Lincoln City Celebration*, 1985, Black Artists Guild, Kinston, NC, p. 8.

⁵⁸ *George and Katie Bender*, p. 49.

but Tucker has found serviceable lye packaged as a drain opener. When she has a batch of soap, she sells it at the family store, Tucker's Bait Shop.

At least one other person in the area makes lye soap today. Haliwa-Saponi craftswoman Albertia Richardson is known for her traditional soap-making skills, among other heritage arts. Her soap can sometimes be purchased at Warrenton Supply Co. on North Main Street.

Gardening

Barbara Lynch Brayboy learned about gardening on her family's farm in Essex, and throughout much of her adult life she has continued to raise vegetables and tomatoes. Her parents passed along traditions of planting by the phases of the moon, and how to tend particular crops.

. . . I remember Mom and Daddy talking so much about, you can't plant certain vegetables or certain food, plant seeds, when the moon is not right. So my daddy and mama depended on the phase of the moon much in their planting, especially with the potatoes . . . they said that the moon had to be right for that.

. . . There were certain ways that, when we were doing the peas or the corn, they always said you had to hill them up. Cantaloupe, you had to pull the dirt up around them to make sure that they were going to grow right. So those kinds of things . . . And even when my husband and I had our garden, I'd try to remember that, and try to pull the dirt up around them so that they wouldn't fall over, to give them some support. So I'm sure I learned some of those [methods] from Mom and Dad.⁵⁹

Nearby, Haliwa-Saponi artist Johnnie Ray Francis gardens with a combination of traditional skills and personal innovations. On his own inspiration he has built a series of concentric rock walls in front of his house, between which he plants his garden. He says that the walls keep heat in, and deer out.

I just started out on it, and just kept adding to it, and just kept adding to it. Then it got to looking like an egg. I've had a whole lot of people come and say, "Hey, you know what?" Says, "After you're dead and gone," says, "these archaeologist people are going to come and think it's a sacred Indian burial."⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Interview with Barbara Lynch Brayboy.

⁶⁰ Interview with Johnnie Ray Francis by Sarah Bryan. December 21, 2010.

Fabric arts

Sewing and tailoring

Halifax County's Mattie Taylor represents a generation of North Carolina women for whom working fabric has long been at the center of their professional and home lives. Taylor attended school in Gaston, and remembers, "I taken just a little while of sewing in school . . . in the eighth grade." At the age of 17 she had to leave school and find a job in order to help her farming parents, so she went to work at one of Roanoke Rapids' cotton mills. She married at 20, and in the coming years sewed clothing for her husband and their three sons. Taylor continued working in the mills, in time rising to the positions of inspector and re-grader, and retired at the age of 62 "because I couldn't stand it no longer!"

Spending 12-hour workdays inspecting cloth for flaws gave Taylor an advantage in choosing fabrics for her home sewing.

Whenever I would go to pick out material, I could check it to see what kind of flaws was in it, you know. And if it's any flaws that I thought was bad enough to weaken the material, I wouldn't buy it. I would look for something better. But it did help me, to know the kind of mistakes that the looms would make.⁶¹

Mattie Taylor lost her husband in the mid-1980s, and with their sons grown, she felt a need for "a hobby to keep her occupied."⁶² She began to make Raggedy Ann and Raggedy Andy dolls with her sister, using commercially-available patterns. While her sister drew the dolls' facial features, Mattie chooses to embroider the faces. She also labels each doll on its back with her name and the year that it was made. The dolls became popular items when she would sell them at fairs or at Historic Halifax. She has not kept track of how many she has made or sold, but she knows that her dolls are now in many different states. In the early 2000s Taylor took a quilting class at Halifax Community College, and now makes large quilts with intricate patchwork and appliqué designs.

Another Halifax County native, Doris Davis of Tillery, also draws from early work experience with fabric to inform her current sewing work. Now President of the Tillery Community Center and a prominent activist for social and environmental justice in the region, Davis grew up in a Tillery family who were among the early participants in the resettlement program of the 1930s. Her mother had 16 children, 13 of whom survived, and raising such a large family

⁶¹ Interview with Mattie Taylor by Sarah Bryan. October 7, 2010.

⁶² "Who's in the Valley: Mattie Taylor," by Jacqueline Hough. December 11, 2010, Roanoke Rapids *Daily Herald*.

while often in poor health, it was difficult to spend time instructing her children individually in skills such as sewing.

But I remember her sewing. I remember some shorts that she made for me out of chickenfeed bags, the little flowers . . . on it. Little shorts, and like a little tank top. I do remember that. And I remember my sister, one of my sisters, making me a dress. But as the years went on, my sisters used to tell me, "Our mom used to do that. She used to cut a pattern from a paper bag, then she would make different things."⁶³

In the early 1970s Davis lived in New York City, and worked in the billing department of a garment company. Working around fabric rekindled an interest in sewing.

I was working at a place called Career Club Shirts. Very exclusive shirts . . . As a matter of fact, this place was in the Empire State Building. Worked there for three years, on the 23rd floor. So what happened was, they had factories that were here down south, so eventually . . . they started bringing scraps, or either sample pieces of scraps, up to New York . . . And they would give it to us. They said, "If you want it, take it." So I started taking it. So I was accumulating it in my house. And one day, I started to have ideas about, "Oh, I wish I had me a sewing machine." I didn't know a thing about sewing machines. I didn't remember anything about a sewing machine.

My mom, I was told . . . had the same talent. They say I got it from her. I wasn't able to get a sewing machine at first, so I said, "Well, I can do this on my hand." I knew how to hem clothes, and some sewing techniques and stuff. And I made a couple of things with my hand. Then people would see it, and they'd give me a few pointers about, "Oh, maybe you should do it like this, and maybe – " And then I started asking people, "How do you this?" And, "How do you do that?" I started working more and working more, doing things with my hands. It was kind of a sewing stitch, it was a little bit longer than I necessarily wanted it to be. So sometimes it would sew a little bit, you know. But it didn't matter to me. I was just as happy, happy, I was learning how to do this.

And what I finally did, was able to get me a sewing machine. Downstairs in the Empire State Building was a Singer place, where they sold sewing machines as well as fabric. So I finally got enough money, I went down there, and they had a sewing machine that . . . looked like to me it had been converted [to electric] from the pedal machine . . . And it was the real deal. Heavy. To this day I wish I knew where it was. I drug that thing from 34th Street, downtown New York, all the way to 161st Street in the rush hour, with the help of a young lady that I knew . . . She

⁶³ Interview with Doris Davis by Sarah Bryan. December 7, 2010.

helped me to get it all the way to 161st and Yankee Stadium, where I got off to go home. And hon, I was so excited, I just didn't know what to do. When I got home and got myself together and opened up that machine, it was just like a kid under the Christmas tree. And my mother-in-law, seeing that I didn't know what to do with that sewing machine, showed me how to thread that sewing machine.

. . . And ever since then I have been sewing for people. Myself, my home, my child. Decorative sewing. I've made some of everything. Slipcovers, panties, jeans, overcoats, trench coats, dresses, skirts, blouses, anything you want to name, I made it.⁶⁴

Davis returned to Tillery in 1975, and has lived there ever since. Beginning in the mid-1980s, she has taught several sewing courses. The courses were offered through Halifax Community College and took place at the Tillery Community Center.

So what we would do, we would do the sewing classes, then after that we would have a fashion show and they would model the things that they made. And I would put it up as a display. One of things I said to them was, "With sewing class, you don't have to just be able to sew a dress. You can make an apron, you can make a tote bag, you can make some placemats, or anything. You don't have to just sew a dress or coat."

But one of the things was, some people . . . already knew how to sew, but they said, "We just wanted to come so we could be here with everybody else. We love to be together. We want to be here to fellowship and have a good time during the process." And it was really wonderful. It was really wonderful.⁶⁵

Sharon Berrun is known in the Haliwa-Saponi community as a master of sewing and adorning powwow regalia. Berrun is the daughter and granddaughter of talented seamstresses, and her grandmother, Daisy Mills, was the owner of the Mills Factory Outlet fabric store.

...she ran that store for a lot of years, and everybody would bring their sewing there. She did a lot of bedding work, making quilts, bedspreads. It was a thriving business, but now she's an elderly lady and she's not able to do that anymore. But I guess you can say it's in my blood to run that sewing machine.⁶⁶

Berrun has been a powwow dancer since early childhood, first dancing in regalia that her mother, Rita Mills, made for her. Over time she learned how to make the

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Interview with Sharon Berrun by Sarah Bryan. January 11, 2011.

garments herself, and how to create embellishments with appliqué and beadwork.

As far as the sewing goes, and creating the actual cloth portion of the regalia – of course, before we moved into the cloth regalias we wore a lot of buckskin regalias, and my mom did those for me. So those things, yes, I learned from her – how to do the buckskin regalias, and then on to doing the cloth regalias. She also started me out in doing beadwork . . . After she started me on the beadwork craft, I enrolled myself into the bead class that the Tribe offered here. And so Ms. Pat Richardson, Patricia Richardson, was the teacher of that class, and she really advanced me in the beadwork.

. . . in my early teens . . . one Christmas [my mother] said, “What would you like for Christmas?” And I said, “I’d like to have a sewing machine, so that I can maybe start doing some of my own work.” And from that, the art form that I do pretty much blossomed, and I’ve been making regalia ever since.⁶⁷

Over time, she explains, “My love has become sewing the appliqué.” Berrun sews and adorns regalia for dancers in the community, a process of creative collaboration with the regalia’s future wearers.

I enjoy doing it for the youth in the community, adults in the community, and it just gives me a sense of pride, to know that, you know, these individuals are out here dancing from their hearts, and they’re wearing something that I helped them to create. And I say “helped them to create,” because anytime that I may be doing appliqué work or regalia for a person, I set down with them and we talk, before we even start doing anything else. We talk about how they express themselves through the dance, or why they may be out there dancing; we talk about the culture and heritage of our people; so I can get a feeling of what that person is like, and then I can design their regalia according to what our conversation has been . . . Things that they like, you know. Even down to the little kids that I work with or that I do outfits for, I set down with them, and we have to know, “What’s your favorite color?” or “What are some of the things you like to do?” And that kind of tells the story when their regalia is actually created. It tells the story of that inner person.⁶⁸

Quilting

As in many communities with a strong interest in traditional arts, quilting has been the subject of a revival in the Warren-Vance-Halifax area. In this region

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

quilt making was once considered primarily a practical skill required in taking care of a family. Though few early quilt makers in region would be likely to have considered themselves artists, significant skill and practice were needed to make good quilts, and home makers expressed creativity in the patterns, stitching, and other aspects of their creation.

Today's quilters describe the work of their forebears largely in terms of practicality; they often emphasize quilting's social context as well, as an activity for which women gathered together. Barbara Lynch Brayboy's mother and other female relatives in the Haliwa-Saponi community made a party of quilting.

I remember coming home in the winter and early spring from school, and she and several ladies were sitting around the quilting frame, and they would quilt . . . I [could] always smell food when I came in the house. When I walked in, there was always laughter, there was always talking . . . It was mostly about family, things that they were doing, and I'm sure there were times that they just gossiped too! I'm sure of that. Knowing the ladies that I remember. Because they were usually her sisters-in-law and her sisters who came in to help her with the quilting, so I'm sure that there was a lot of gossip going on as well. Just like we women do, you know.⁶⁹

Quilter Adell Davis, who grew up in Tillery, remembers that her mother quilted whole-cloth comforters.

Back then, you could buy material and pay only ten cent a yard, and she would get like six yards and make a comforter. She'd quilt it, but she didn't cut up her [fabric for patchwork designs]...Then she would invite people in, and she'd cook dinner, and they would help her quilt it.⁷⁰

Davis' mother bought the family's clothes in Enfield, rather than at the clothing store then in Tillery. When clothes wore out, she would sometimes use the material, in addition to store-bought fabric, for comforters. Other families relied more heavily on scraps. Davis and other members of her generation vividly remember that when a certain hog feed company learned that people were using their fabric bags to make clothes, they reportedly began printing a picture of a hog on the bags to discourage their reuse.

...it was a white bag, but it had a big old black hog on it. You couldn't wash it out. You pass anybody[']s home], and four hogs on the line, just blowing. . . Four hogs would be on the clothesline. Because it was the best they could do.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Interview with Barbara Lynch Brayboy.

⁷⁰ Interview with Adell Davis by Sarah Bryan. Tillery, November 15, 2010.

⁷¹ Ibid.

Earlean Henderson, who grew up in the African American community in Ridgeway, remembers that her grandmother Isabella Jordan – known to her family as “A” – quilted all her life.

She would quilt with my cousin Mattie Belle, which was her cousin. And she would cut her squares out of whatever fabric, old clothes, that she had. During the summer she would cut her squares. And basically they made like nine-patch, because they were trying to get this done quickly for the winter. And then they would sew them together in the fall of the year, and by the wintertime they would have their quilts made. And mostly what they would do was tack quilts. [Tacking is a method of holding quilt layers together with individual knots rather than stitched quilting.] They weren't really quilting. Because it was quicker, and they were basically using these quilts as covers, to keep you warm. It wasn't like what we're doing – to show them off!⁷²

Eunice Tucker, from the German community in Ridgeway, remembers that her aunt Katie Bender did make quilts with patterns more elaborate than the nine-patch. “She loved that old Lone Star quilt pattern. I bet she made everybody in the country one of them.”⁷³ Trudy Duncan writes of the same Katie Bender,

Mama loved making quilts. Except for the quilt back, all of the fabric came from her sewing remnants. When she had all the layers of the quilt assembled, she tacked it to four long narrow boards. This was set up in the front room and Mama might have a quilting party. The ladies would come and quilt around the four sides until they couldn't reach any farther. Then they would roll the boards toward the center, making more un-quilted area reachable. Mama would serve coffee and dessert, and by the end of the afternoon, a good part or all of the quilt was quilted. Often this was the gift of the group to a wedding couple.⁷⁴

Portia Hawes grew up in Warrenton, and her mother made quilts in a variety of patterns, including a block pattern with stars, and a figural Little Dutch Girl design.

We had horses, and we had cows, and when Daddy would buy the feed for the horses and the cows, feed came in bags, and for years the bags were like, off-white, burlap-looking, and people would wash those bags and bleach them. Sometimes the bags had writing on them, and no matter how much they were washed, that writing stayed. And then they came out with the bags that had not calico, but figured patterns on them. Pattern fabric. And I can remember, my mother wanted to make curtains for her kitchen, and she needed two more bags. Well, Daddy

⁷² Interview with Earlean Suitt Henderson.

⁷³ Interview with Eunice Bender Tucker and Chris Tucker.

⁷⁴ *George and Katie Bender*, p. 18

bought some feed, but he didn't bring the right bags. So he had to take them back. "Get the right bags!" So she could make her curtains. And we wore dresses made from these bags. Lots of people made slips and underpants, you know, from them, after they had done all of this bleaching and washing and softening up the fabric and all. So one of the quilts is made from the feedbags. And then I have one, it's called the Dutch Girl pattern, Little Dutch Girls, and I know that that one is at least 72 to 73 years old, because my sister and I can recognize some fabric from dresses that my mother made us in that quilt.⁷⁵

Hawes' early career ambition was to be a men's tailor, a profession not open to women at the time. Instead she became an educator, teaching both shop and home economics in public schools. She recalls fondly that one year she taught a unit in sewing to her shop class, which was made up entirely of boys. After initial objections, the students grew very enthusiastic about the project, and many made pillow shams with the logos of their favorite sports teams.

In the spring of 2001, Jereann King-Johnson – an educator and cultural documentarian who has lived in Warrenton for many years – gathered together with several other quilters in the area, including Portia Hawes and Earlean Henderson, to form the Heritage Quilters.

We invited everybody we knew who was doing some quilting...I mean, we were really moving on instinct. Because quilting is something that, for some of us, really is about remembering. So we started the group, and the question was, is this something we're going to continue? We asked everybody to bring a quilt and introduce themselves through the quilt. And that's all they had to do. They had to bring something and introduce themselves through the quilt or through quilting. And then the question was, do we want to continue? And everybody said yes. So that's how the Heritage Quilters was born.⁷⁶

More than a decade later, the Heritage Quilters has approximately twenty members, most of whom are African American. It has become a prominent cultural organization in the region. King-Johnson stresses that they are a community rather than a guild, in the sense that the Heritage Quilters gather for fellowship and creativity, rather than for a structured, hierarchical learning process. They host a quilt show at least every other year, and meet regularly. In 2009, the Heritage Quilters conducted a study of the quilt traditions of Warren County. The Counting Quilts project, which was supported by the North Carolina Arts Council and National Endowment for the Arts, documented dozens of quilts from throughout the county, made by quilters of different

⁷⁵ Interview with Portia Hawes by Sarah Bryan.

⁷⁶ Interview with Jereann King Johnson by Sarah Bryan. August 12, 2010.

generations and ethnicities. The extensive documentation is available for research and browsing on the website of the Warren County Library.

Leo Kelly and Wallace Evans, Henderson residents and members of the Heritage Quilters, are two of the many area quilters who have been greatly influenced by Manson resident Peggy Stocks. Stocks, who is originally from Wilmington but has lived in Warren County since 1982, is a popular quilting instructor who has taught courses at Vance Granville Community College. Stocks' mother and grandmother were both skilled in sewing.

[My grandmother] would use that treadle sewing machine, and she would take off. And then as she got less able to do that, my mother would make the [quilt] tops, and she would just put them in the frame and quilt. She was part Cherokee Indian, and a very frugal lady. I learned a lot of things from her. But my grandmother is the one that taught me how to hand-piece. She refused to use the sewing machine. She said she couldn't do anything. And she made her dresses by hand. And I remember sitting in the swing with her, and she would let me make my daddy's handkerchiefs. Because you know, even then you didn't buy handkerchiefs so much, you had to [make them]. But she cut out the square, and she taught me how to hand-hem it. And as I said, she made her own long calico dresses . . . I don't remember when I couldn't hand-sew. It's just always been second nature to me.⁷⁷

In 1995, Leo Kelly, then the Dean of Continuing Education at the college, sat in on one of Stocks' courses. He learned how to make quilts, and was particularly drawn to patchwork patterns, in which he saw a connection to masonry and architectural elements.

Peggy taught the students how to make a sampler quilt. In the process of making a sampler quilt, each week you learned, you put together, you cut out. She discussed this particular block, how it was made, how to make the templates, and things like that. And so in the process of doing that, I decided I would take the course. What we wound up doing, we cut out felt, and I laid the pattern out on the felt, and I'd roll it up and pin it, and so one day I'd get around to sewing it, you know. Anyway, I started out cutting and making the squares. What I found with the squares, they were interesting, because – as I walk around now, I don't know whether you walk around and you look at buildings, you look at the patterns of twelve-inch blocks on the floor, and to me they're nothing but quilt patterns How guys do ceramic tile floors and stuff like that, the art design and stuff like that; but you don't see them picking up a needle to sew a quilt. But the

⁷⁷ Interview with Peggy Stocks by Sarah Bryan. November 15, 2010.

*same work, to me, when you look at buildings, is also on the floor; and so it became interesting. So I began to just cut and stack.*⁷⁸

Wallace Evans is a cosmetologist and salon owner. When he was growing up in Granville County, he often saw his mother make quilts, which she allowed him and his siblings to tuck. Around 2000, Evans and his sister-in-law enrolled in one of Peggy Stocks' classes, "and we both have been quilting ever since."

*...when I first started quilting, I said, "Miss Stocks, I can not get my stitches as small as yours are." And she said, "Well, you're using the wrong needle." And so she showed me some of the needles that she had, and kind of worked with me. And people looked at it now and say, "Was this machine-stitched?" I say, "No, it's the needle."*⁷⁹

Another of Peggy Stocks' former students now dedicates herself to teaching area quilters. Debbie Lou Powell grew up in the Vance County community of Epsom, did not have quilters in her family when she was young, but has been sewing since her teens.

*My mother did all kinds of crafts. Now, she loved to crochet, knit, tat, embroidery, needlepoint. She was very good at all of those. Sewing, not so much. She didn't have the patience to sew. So she made my clothes when I was small because when I was growing up you had to have homemade clothes. You didn't have a choice. And she didn't have the patience for it, [but] . . . she was very good at instructing me, and guiding me and supporting me in learning to sew. At 14 I took over, and I said, "I got it, Mom. I'll make my own clothes from now on." And I made all of my clothes. I made my gowns for proms. And I started making a living, when my children were small, in my home, sewing garments for people, so that I could stay in the home with them when they were growing up . . . if you know how to do something with your hands, you can always make a living.*⁸⁰

Beginning in the 1980s, Powell says, there was a quilting revival in the region. In the mid-1990s she and her mother learned quilt making together, attending Peggy Stocks' course in hand-piecing and hand-quilting. Later, Powell learned machine-piecing and -quilting. "[I] just fell in love with it, and have loved it ever since." Powell owns and operates Miss Lou's Quilt Shop in Henderson, which is a teaching studio as well as a store.

I want to share this art. I want it to continue. I do teach mostly machine-piecing and machine-quilting. People say, "Well, that's not purist. That's not the real

⁷⁸ Interview with Leo Kelly by Sarah Bryan. January 20, 2011.

⁷⁹ Interview with Wallace Evans by Sarah Bryan. November 16, 2010.

⁸⁰ Interview with Debbie Lou Powell by Sarah Bryan. October 22, 2010.

way to quilt." And I say to them, "I met my grandmother, and if she had had my equipment, she would have used it." So that's what I am passing on.⁸¹

Music

Warren, Vance, and Halifax Counties are blessed with a deep musical culture, and many excellent musicians and singers. Most of the region's musical artists play with family and friends at home, in church, and in small entertainment venues.

While few musical artists from the region have achieved widespread recognition outside of the region, among the notable exceptions is soul singer Ben E. King, a Vance County native. King, whose real name is Benjamin Earl Nelson, was born in Henderson in 1938, and raised on Vaughan Street. When he was nine years old, Nelson's family, like so many people of color from North Carolina, moved to New York. He spent childhood summers back home in Vance County, and attended Davis Chapel Baptist Church.⁸²

In New York, King was a member of the doo-wop group the Five Crowns, whose members became the Drifters when the original group of that name (led by Durham-born Clyde McPhatter) disbanded after a dispute with their manager. With the Drifters, Nelson was the lead singer on two number-one hits, "There Goes My Baby" and "Save the Last Dance for Me," in 1959 and 1960. As a solo artist, he assumed the name Ben E. King. He topped the charts three more times, with "Stand By Me," co-written with Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, "Supernatural Thing," and years later with the 1980s re-release of "Stand By Me." King and his wife have lived in Teaneck, New Jersey, since the late 1960s.⁸³

Another North Carolina music legend who has called the three-county region home is Bishop Dready Manning. Born in Gaston, Northampton County, in 1934, Bishop Manning has been a resident of Roanoke Rapids since 1969. He is the founder and co-pastor, along with his wife Marie Manning, of St. Mark Holiness Church.

Bishop Manning's early musical path was the blues, emulating stars like Lightnin' Hopkins and John Lee Hooker. Playing guitar and harmonica and singing at house parties and clubs, Manning lived the life of a bluesman in his youth. He nearly paid the price when, in 1962, he was felled by an uncontrollable

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Andre D. Vann, *Vance County North Carolina (Black American Series)*. 2000, Charleston. Arcadia Press. p. 125.

⁸³ <http://www.beneking.info/biography/>, accessed February 13, 2013.

hemorrhage from his nose. When doctors failed to cure him, he allowed friends to pray for his healing. The bleeding stopped, and from that moment on Manning rededicated his life to faith. He became a blues-inflected gospel musician, and preached, played, and recorded throughout the region, on recordings, and over the radio. He has made many recordings, including *Gospel Train*, released on the Music Maker label. Bishop Manning is a 2003 recipient of the North Carolina Heritage Award.

A Warren County native who also hit the road as a professional musician, and became quite well known in the Southeast, was fiddler “Hash House” Harvey Ellington. The Vaughan native was born in 1909 to parents who were both fiddlers. At the age of seven he began to learn to play the banjo, which his father and grandfather both played. His sisters were musicians as well, playing guitar and banjo, a fact that helped steer Harvey towards the fiddle. The family played together often. In a 1979 interview with Allan Tullos, Ellington said,

You take on the farm, especially in the wintertime, there’s nothing else to do. So we’d play there on the farm, and play that fiddle, and the neighbors would come around and listen at it, you see. And I learned them tunes Pa knew. . . So that’s how I learned to play music. There was no radio. There was a few talking machines around, but we didn’t have one.⁸⁴

After finishing high school, Ellington spent about one year working in the Harriet Cotton Mills in Henderson, before quitting around 1932 in favor of playing music professionally.

You see, I had nobody but myself, and I was fenced-in there. And I’d done a lot of playing around on the side, dances and all. Now you know, a man becomes ambitious; he’s an adventurous creature. He likes to get out, and he don’t like to stay closed in when he got nobody but himself. I could make just as good a living and meet more people – which the living wasn’t much to make, but I could make a little more money playing than I could in that textile mill, even at twelve dollars a week. And that inspired me to go off on a medicine show.⁸⁵

Ellington, along with guitarist “Starving” Sam Pridgin, first joined up with Doc Haithcock’s medicine show, and the next year began touring with Doc Lee. Ellington and Pridgin did comedy routines, with Ellington as the straight man, in addition to playing music in the shows. After several years on the medicine show circuit, Ellington, along with Pridgin, Charlie “Dunk” Poole, Jr. – whom Ellington knew from the mill – joined with two other musicians and formed a

⁸⁴ Interview with Harvey Ellington and Ram Pridgen, by Allan Tullos. March 5 and April 1, 1979, for the Carolina Piedmont Project. Southern Oral History Project, University of North Carolina.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

country-swing band, the Swing Billies. They played regularly on Raleigh's WPTF, and in 1937 made five records for the Bluebird label at a recording session in Charlotte.

The band broke up soon after, at which point Ellington and Pridgin joined the Tobacco Tags, who had already been playing and recording for several years, and were popular radio performers. With this group they played regularly on Richmond's WRVA, and recorded many records for Bluebird between 1938 and 1941. The band broke up when the War began. Ellington served in the Air Force. While in the service he learned to bake, and when he came home to North Carolina, after a few years he left the music business, and began what would be a long career as a baker at Umstead Hospital in Butner. In the late '70s and early '80s, after retiring, Ellington and Pridgin would have a second music career. In 1983, they appeared in the documentary *Free Show Tonight*, of which the North Carolina Folklife Institute was a co-producer. In the film, black and white veterans of medicine shows reunited, and put on a show in Bailey, North Carolina, in the old-time style.

In 1930, around the time that Harvey Ellington left Vaughan to work in the mill at Henderson, his near neighbors Matt and Vallie Nelson had a baby – their seventh child and first son, whom they named Matt, Jr. Matt Nelson, Jr. grew up with a passion for music, both country and blues. He listened to radio broadcasts and recordings by the Tobacco Tags when he was a child, and absorbed songs from their repertoire such as "The Preacher and the Bear." There were other local musicians as well. He remembers an elderly lady who sang "The Cabbage Head Song" – a comic song about a cuckolded husband who comes home too drunk to be sure whether his wife's preposterous evasions make sense. (Popular among early country musicians, blues musicians, and ballad singers, the song is also known as "Three Nights Drunk," among other titles, and is descended from Child Ballad #274, "Our Goodman.")

Nelson, who is white, developed his love of the blues early in life, hearing the music played by African American workers on his father's tobacco farm. At the age of 13 he bought his first harmonica, for twenty-five cents, at the Rose's dime store in nearby Littleton. As he himself became a musician, Nelson's interest in the blues quickened. Farming tobacco – a career in which he followed in his father's footsteps – provided him opportunities to hear some of the great Piedmont blues musicians of the 1930s and '40s, when they played around tobacco warehouses in the region. He heard Blind Boy Fuller sing his famous "Step it Up and Go" in Henderson. In Rocky Mount he met up with Arthur "Peg Leg Sam" Jackson, a medicine show performer and bluesman from Spartanburg, South Carolina. From Jackson, Nelson learned a song that he calls "The Iceman Blues." The song is told from the point of view of a husband who suspects his

wife of carrying on with the iceman, and resolves to move her to the outskirts of town—after buying her a brand-new Frigidaire.

While still a young man, Nelson had dental problems that caused him to give up the harmonica for many years. After retiring, and at his granddaughter's urging, he began playing again. Today Nelson is a mainstay of the local music community, performing often at the Ridgeway Opry House, among other area venues. His signature song is "The Iceman Blues."

Peg Leg Sam also influenced African American harmonica player Roosevelt May, who was born in Halifax County in 1915. Two recordings by May, "Breakway" and "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," appear on the [1989?] LP *Eight-Hand Sets and Holy Steps: Early Dance Tunes and Songs of Praise From North Carolina's Black Tradition*, a project of the North Carolina Arts Council, North Carolina Folklife Institute, and North Carolina Museum of History. In the album's liner notes folklorist Glenn Hinson describes May's early musical experiences, which included the music of a "country brass band . . . a multihorn ensemble [that] performed an eclectic mix of traditional reels, spiritual songs, stage-band numbers (many drawn from minstrel repertoires) and marches, playing for occasions as diverse as church picnics and local frolic dances." May's father and oldest brother played trap drums for this band. He had an uncle who played the harmonica, and after the uncle's passing, May took up the harmonica and played it in a similar "'accordion' style, sounding each note singly." He also learned the "flowing, cross-harp style" more common to blues music. May lived in Rocky Mount for many years, and there played at the tobacco warehouses with Peg Leg Sam. He "learned many of Jackson's stage routines and kept them alive in the Rocky Mount warehouses decades after Peg Leg Sam's departure." In later years his life gained a more religious focus. He returned to Halifax County at the end of his life, settling in the community of Moonlight near Scotland Neck.⁸⁶

In the field of gospel quartet music, among the region's best-known performers are the Warrenton Echoes and the Royal Jubilee Singers of Halifax County. The Royal Jubilee Singers have been performing together for more than half a century. Their style of a capella gospel is modeled on the popular African American recording quartets of the 1940s, '50s, and '60s. The group is led by Deacons Otis Jones, Fred Carter, Gilbert Harding, and Ralph Hardy, and Brother James Johnson. James Johnson, in his seventies, is the junior member of the quartet, who are one of the oldest and most respected a capella groups in the region.

⁸⁶ Glenn Hinson, *Eight-Hand Sets and Holy Steps: Early Dance Tunes and Songs of Praise From North Carolina's Black Tradition* liner notes. pp. 10-11

Also legendary are the Warrenton Echoes, who were founded in 1957 in the Hecks Grove community of southern Warren County, when four young African American men who worked in the cotton and tobacco fields began to sing quartet-style music together. From singing for area church engagements, the Echoes gradually expanded their schedule and touring range through the 1960s and '70s, and eventually could be found sharing the stage with such nationally-known artists as the Dixie Hummingbirds, and singing up and down the East Coast. In the 1970s, they made two 45 rpm records for the Norfolk-based Pinewoods label, and another on Mozel. In the group's more than fifty years, the lineup has changed as older members retired and younger members stepped in. Original members Roy "June" Foster and James Carter still sing with the Warrenton Echoes. They've been joined by younger artists, including James Martin, Jr., Previs Foster, Reginald Allen, Julian Smith, Jr., Terrence Foster, and Craig Allen. Foster spoke in a 2010 interview about how the younger Echoes have brought in new musical influences and tastes, adding them to the older men's sound that they have always admired.

To me, it's like a big bowl of jambalaya. You have your basis – to me, the basis is rice. But you have all those other meats that you put in. You put the shrimp, you put the chicken – whatever you want to put in it. It's a big bowl-- a big collage of stuff, but the end result is good. It's just good. There's no other way to explain it. It's just good.

So I look at these guys – they might not want me to tell it, but Mr. Carter is 78 years old. He'll be 79 this year . . . My dad will be 72 in June. And to look at these guys – these guys don't look 70-nothing. So they have brought all of their experiences, and they've taught us in the process. Coming up, they taught us what meat to use, what meat not to use, what flavors not to use. Now, we're at the point where we are a big bowl of jambalaya.⁸⁷

Arnetta Yancey is a prominent gospel performer in Warren County. Born and partly raised in Brooklyn, she was thirteen years old when her parents decided to move their family of nine back to their hometown of Wise. Though they had visited Warren County many times, actually living there was a culture-shock for Yancey and her siblings. ("It was like, 'okay, has Dad bumped his head?'"⁸⁸) They found comfort in music, particularly at the church their father founded.

Yancey and her siblings sang in the choir, and they also had a family gospel group and accompanied their father on visits to other churches. In this context she developed a love for hymns which, in addition to the gospel sounds she also listened to growing up, form the heart of her repertoire today.

⁸⁷ Interview with the Warrenton Echoes by Mike Taylor.

⁸⁸ Interview with Arnetta Yancey by Mike Talyor.

...as much as things have changed in the music world and as much as things have changed in the world as a whole, people still look for those songs that pull their ancestors through. And that's what those songs are. Those songs came from their hurt and from their struggles, from their joys of making it, "How I Got Over," "My Soul Looks Back and Wonders." But today they're still looking for those songs and that's what amazes me and gets me excited, because I sing still other songs, but I love to sing those songs because I know it goes straight to the heart.⁸⁹

Sacred songs figure prominently in the music played by local country and bluegrass musicians, and are a popular component of performances at the Ridgeway Opry. Homegrown country music has been played at the Opry location for many years. Previous owners Jane and Robert Bender, and Sam Groves, who rented the building for a time, all hosted music here. But it was the current owner, Freida Egerton Harlow, and her late partner Billy Jarrell, who purchased the building and in 2003 opened it as the busy remodeled music venue that it is today. Harlow is a member of the Bender family, who were among Ridgeway's first German families. Growing up she was very familiar with the commercial building that is now the Opry. "In fact," she says, "this is the first building where I saw a neon light in my life."⁹⁰

Harlow has always loved music, and sang informally with her siblings when she was a child. She has worked for many years as a hair stylist in Henderson, in her own shop for many years, and now at an aunt's salon. Billy Jarrell was from the Mount Airy area, the nephew of legendary Surry County fiddler Tommy Jarrell, and grand-nephew of 1920s recording artist Ben Jarrell. Billy encouraged Freida to learn how to play the lap dulcimer, and in time they and other local dulcimer enthusiasts formed the band the Germantown Strings.

Jarrell passed away in 2010, but Freida continues to host the Opry on Saturday nights. Each show lasts for three hours or more, featuring performances by headlining bands, sometimes from out of town, as well as the Opry's regular performers who are there almost every week. This informal group of musicians includes such local artists as Matt Nelson, bluegrass banjo and bass players Alan and Betsy Reid, classic country singer Wade Schuster of Henderson, and a great many more instrumentalists and singers. A typical billing for an Opry show can include a dozen or more names, a who's-who of the Warren County area's talented country and gospel musicians.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Interview with Freida Edgerton (Harlowe) by Mike Taylor.

Artist Charles Alvin Evans, who was born in 1941 and raised in the Haliwa-Saponi community, spoke of a musical experience in his family to Marty Richardson in 2010.

*I tell you something else, my grandfather on my mother's side, him and his brother one time got together, and went in the woods and cut off a whole log. And they cut it about this thick, yea thick . . . and they put a staff [neck] on it. And then they cleaned it up and sanded it down, and rode the mule and wagon to Warrenton and bought bands of strings, and made a banjo and played it . . .*⁹¹

Evans remembers the banjo head was made of deer rawhide.⁹²

Arnold Richardson is a renowned Indian flautist, but when he was young, in Pennsylvania and New York, he was mainly a percussionist. He played drums in nightclubs in Atlantic City, and on a cruise ship that toured the Mediterranean. "I never had any formal training in [percussion]," he told Marty Richardson, "That just came along natural." His interests encompassed traditions of rhythm from the Caribbean as expressed by New York-area Puerto Ricans and Cubans, and he traveled to Haiti and Puerto Rico to learn more.⁹³

In the mid-1960s, Richardson was given a flute by Tom Two Arrows (1920 – 1993), a prominent Delaware Indian artist from Albany, New York. For many years Richardson played privately, and occasionally at festivals and concert venues. He recorded his first album, *Spirits in the Wind*, in 1989, and with the support of the North Carolina Arts Council made his first professional album, *Roanoke*, in 1992. Richardson has made several recordings since, and performed widely. He has toured the Carolinas as a guest artist with the North Carolina Symphony. In addition to his music, Richardson is a widely renowned craftsman whose work includes Indian flutes.

In 1993, Haliwa-Saponi musician and historian Marty Richardson cofounded the Stoney Creek Singers, an Indian drumming and singing group. The members of the Stoney Creek Singers are primarily Haliwa-Saponi and Lumbee, joined by artists of other Indian tribes. They have now been performing for powwows and other gatherings for twenty years, strengthening and expanding the traditions of Haliwa-Saponi music for the rising generations.

⁹¹ Interview with Charles Alvin Evans by Marty Richardson. March 20, 2010, Haliwa-Saponi Arts Documentation Project.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Interview with Arnold Richardson by Marty Richardson and Karen Lynch Harley. March 6, 2010, Haliwa-Saponi Arts Documentation Project.

Active Traditional Artists in Warren, Vance, and Halifax Counties
Profiles by Michael Taylor and Sarah Bryan

John Earl Alston
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Norlina native John Earl Alston remembers that thirty and forty years ago, there were more beekeepers in Warren County than there are today. “A lot of the older folks, they had bees,” he says, but “they got too old to manage the hives and they just stopped doing it . . . [but] it’s kind of coming back in Warren County now.”

Alston has a lifelong fascination with insects, which began when he was a child and would save biscuit crumbs to feed ants in order to observe the orderly way in which the ants carried them away. As the owner of a pest control business, he has made a career out of his interest in the ways that humans and insects interact.

Like many longtime residents of this part of Warren County, Alston grows fruit trees and grapevines on his property. Inspired by a neighbor who is a longtime beekeeper, Alston acquired two hives to aid in the pollination of his trees and vines. He received some training from the neighbor, and also researched apiculture methods and the resources available to modern-day beekeepers. Alston himself has become a community resource for beekeepers, helping establish hives around Warren County, offering tips to new beekeepers, and collecting and domesticating, rather than exterminating, many of the swarms of nuisance bees about which his company receives calls.

Unlike the ants, termites, wasps, and other pest insects that Alston sees every day in his work, bees “provide a food source,” he says, “and . . . are very helpful as far as the farmers are concerned. They help pollinate the crops. So we really need them. They are a beneficial insect. Even though they might be a pest sometimes, they’re really beneficial.”

By his second year of beekeeping, Alston’s hives were producing honey. He says that locally, late April is when the honey really begins to flow, coinciding with

the peak blooming season of the tulip poplars. He now bottles honey with the Y'Mijer Honey label, named for his grandson.

Y'Mijer Honey is available from A & S Pest Control on Route 1 South in Norlina, and also at the annual Ridgeway Cantaloupe Festival.

Delores Amason
Church singer and pianist
Tillery, Halifax County
photo: Chris Fowler

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Delores Amason is not only a gifted pianist and singer; the Tillery native is also an unofficial regional historian with a deep understanding of the place that she calls home. The small Halifax County community was established during the New Deal, a resettlement community for African American farmers. "My father was a sharecropper and a tenant farmer for so many years in this area. He was reared and worked on the Tillery Plantation, and then, at the time of the resettlement, Daddy got an opportunity to buy a 40-acre farm, and he did."

While the cultural values within the largely African American community of Tillery were very traditional, Amason explains, her elders were very aware of life beyond Tillery, and worked to expose younger generations to the world outside the boundaries of the tobacco fields. "Our parents and grandparents always strived to get us exposed to other things," she explains. "Things beyond Tillery. And I think the positive thing about that is it made us love Tillery even more, even though there were so many things we didn't have. We were always urged, and pushed, and prodded, and taken to activities, things outside of the Tillery community."

As a child, Amason worked alongside her parents, farming cotton, peanuts, corn, tobacco, and soybeans. It was also during this time that she began to play a piano that her family had inherited from her grandmother. Amason remembers, "For a lack of anything else to do, I used to play with it, and that's where I picked up little things I do – on that old piano." After receiving informal lessons from the mother of a friend who was a music teacher, Amason began regularly playing in church and singing harmony with friends from school.

Me and two other girls would sit on the school bus on the way home – it was a long ride home back then – and we'd sing and harmonize. Then, when we got to a piano, we'd pick it out and the three of us sang. My friend Van and I became

known as the Gospelettes, and we started singing in different churches; we even had a television debut on a show out of Greenville called the Sammy Bland Show.

Following her graduation from North Carolina Central University, Amason moved with her husband to the Washington, DC, area. She returned to Tillery ten years later, working as a teacher until she retired. "It was my passion," she says of her years in the classroom. "I loved it."

Throughout, Amason played piano at her home church of Tillery Chapel. While her musical knowledge is wide, she is drawn to the old favorite hymns that appear in the National Baptist Hymn Book. "A lot of times in church, we sing something and everybody says, 'Where'd that song come from?'" she says. "And it came right out of the National Baptist Hymn Book. I guarantee you that nine out of ten of these hymnals that have been used, the pages will fall open to certain songs, because we sing the same songs over and over again."

Sharon Berrun
Regalia maker
Hollister, Halifax County

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Sharon Berrun has been a dancer in the Haliwa-Saponi tradition since she was a very young child. She also represents at least the third generation in a line of highly skilled seamstresses in her family, so it followed naturally that she would learn how to make the regalia that is integral to the dancing tradition. "I guess you can say it's in my blood to run that sewing machine," she says. Her grandmother, Daisy Mills, for many years had a fabric store in Hollister, and did sewing for the community.

Sharon's mother, Rita Mills Harris, made regalia for her until the Christmas when teenaged Sharon asked for, and received, a sewing machine of her own. "From there, the art form that I do pretty much blossomed, and I've been making regalia ever since."

Berrun is an experienced craftsperson in several art forms, including beadwork, pottery, basket making, and stone carving, but, she says, "My love has become sewing the applique." Dancing regalia and their applique and beadwork adornment carry a great deal of symbolic meaning, both about the dancer and about the culture. Each of Berrun's creations is unique, designed for the kind of dance it will be used for, and also personalized to reflect the spirit of the dancer. Before she begins work on a commission, she spends time learning about who the future wearer is.

We talk about how they express themselves through the dance, or why they may be out there dancing. We talk about the culture and heritage of our people, so that I can get a feel of what that person is like...when that regalia is created, it tells the story of that inner person.

Berrun feels that it is very important that the traditional regalia that she makes be used in the cultural context for which it was intended – not for wearing to a pow-wow at which one is not dancing, not for any money-making ends, and not simply for the sake of owning a beautiful garment. To ensure that it is worn for its traditional purposes, Berrun limits her work to making regalia for Native Americans. She is glad, however, to discuss her work in an educational setting with non-Native people.

In her position as Youth Services Director for the Haliwa-Saponi tribe, Berrun is responsible for passing on the traditions that she learned from her elders and other community members. In addition to her mother and grandmother, she credits Arnold Richardson, Patricia Richardson, and Senora Lynch for sharing with her their knowledge about Haliwa-Saponi art. In turn, she is helping the rising generation learn about their heritage.

I like to pass the traditions on. I'm not the type of person that keeps things bottled up inside of me, 'I'm going to keep this because I don't want anybody else doing it.' I pass it on. Anybody who wants to know about our culture, I want them to learn. Anybody who wants to learn to make regalia, I want them to learn. Because when I'm gone, somebody else needs to pick it up.

Sharon Berrun will consider requests from Native Americans for instruction in regalia making, dance, and other Haliwa-Saponi traditions, if the knowledge will be used in a culturally appropriate manner. She is also happy to give educational presentations or demonstrations for all audiences.

Arlene Bice
Author and collector of ghost stories
Macon, Warren County

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Arlene Bice's interest in ghost stories began some years ago, in her native New Jersey, when she and her family members were all visited – independently and unbeknownst to one another – by the same apparition in the old house in which they lived. When word got out in the community that she had had a paranormal experience, people began to come into the used and rare bookstore that she owned to talk about their own experiences, knowing that they wouldn't be laughed at.

Bice came to believe that, "People who live here leave an imprint. Even though their bodies pass away, they leave their mark." As Bice's knowledge about local traditions of the supernatural grew, she began to compile the stories and in time published two books of ghost stories, *Ghosts of Bordentown* and *Haunted Bordentown*. (Bice is also the author of several other books on a variety of subjects.)

It was not long after her move to Warren County that she had a conversation with a local resident about the ghosts in his home. "What we really need," the friend told her, "is somebody to collect the stories in Warren County." Warren County has a rich tradition of ghost stories, both of old stories passed down through the generations and contemporary accounts of encounters with the supernatural told first-hand by the people who experienced them. Arlene Bice accepted her friend's charge and set about collecting accounts of the region's ghostly heritage.

The stories she has collected now number in the dozens. Though Bice's technique in presenting these stories is to write them up into a consistent narrative form, she does so with as little departure from the teller's own words as possible, adding historical background information, but a minimum of embellishment. "I approach it as a historic rather than a spooky thing," she says.

Arlene Bice's latest book, *Ghostly Spirits of Warren County, North Carolina & Beyond*, is available online at www.booklocker.com.

Barbara Lynch Brayboy
Home preserves maker
Old Bethlehem, Warren County

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Barbara Brayboy is a retired elementary school principal who spent more than forty years in the field of education in Pennsylvania and North Carolina. Throughout all those years, she remembered and maintained the traditional homemaking skills that she had learned as a child, growing up in Essex, in the Haliwa-Saponi community on the Halifax-Warren County line.

There were eight children in the Lynch family, of whom Barbara is the second-youngest. Growing up, the siblings helped their parents work their 50-acre farm, and in the process learned a great deal about the old-time ways of taking care of a family and homestead. "I'm a real farm girl," she says. Her parents planted their garden and crops by the signs of the moon and knew traditional methods of cultivation, such as hilling the soil around certain vegetables.

Brayboy's mother was an expert in methods of food preservation, putting up enough vegetables in the growing season to feed her family throughout the winter. She would can beans, peaches, corn, tomatoes, and apples, and Brayboy estimates that her mother would put up about 100 quarts of blackberries every summer. Although their home had electricity, Mrs. Lynch would also can, rather than freeze, the meat from the beef cattle they slaughtered each year. The only food items that the family had to purchase were staples like coffee and sugar; everything else they produced on the farm. Mrs. Lynch continued to can produce every summer until she was in her late nineties.

Barbara married Tecumseh Brayboy, and for several years they and their children lived in Pennsylvania. When he received the call to the ministry, the family moved back to Barbara's home community. Rev. Brayboy, who passed away in 2009, pastored Walnut Grove Baptist Church near Hollister. Brayboy paid close attention to her mother's work and also became an expert canner. Summer tomatoes are among her favorite produce to can, and she estimates that she has put up hundreds of jars since 1975. For tomatoes she follows a method of pressure-cooker canning that her mother developed and taught her.

In addition to food preservation skills, Brayboy learned from her mother how to make quilts. She remembers coming home from school many times as a child and finding her mother and aunts gathered at the home, quilting together. "When I walked in, there was always laughter, there was always talking."

Barbara has kept up this family tradition as well, making special quilts for her family and friends.

A longtime educator, Barbara Lynch Brayboy enjoys sharing her knowledge, including about food preservation traditions and quilting, with those who would like to learn.

Mary Bullock
Gospel singer
Warrenton, Warren County

As a child growing up in the small Warren County community of Vaughan, singer Mary Bullock remembers, there was a very clear delineation between work – which included growing and harvesting tobacco on the Bullock family farm – and all other activities.

I don't remember singing or joking around in the fields," says Bullock. "My mother was the type that said, 'Get up, get your breakfast, get your clothes on, and get out to the fields.' And that was from when the sun came up until the sun went down. We would work until it got 'dusk dark,' as they called it.

Nevertheless, the members of the Bullock family – including Mary Bullock's mother, father, and five siblings – were known as gifted singers whose musical lineage was well established. Explains Bullock, "It all started way, way back with a man named Singing Walter – that was his nickname – from Oine, North Carolina. They say that back in the day, he would go from church to church doing revivals." It was Singing Walter's children who formed the internationally renowned New England-based Bullock Brothers and Sons in 1950. "From then on," says Bullock, "everybody just kept branching out."

I grew up with music in the house. My father would get up on Sunday morning and while he was dressing for church, he would always listen to the radio. He would lay his suits on the bed, and his shoes, and tie; while he did that, he would be listening to the gospel radio. My grandmother did the same thing. She lived with us for a while, and would wake up and put on gospel music. And sometimes we'd say, 'What happened to Grandma? Where did she go?' She would be in the living room, and the Holy Spirit had just hit her, and she was in there shouting. And this was before we even got to church.

In 1979, Bullock quit her job at the Harriet-Henderson textile mill and moved to Boston in search of opportunity; she ended up living there until 1994. While singing came as naturally to Bullock as walking, it wasn't until she returned home to Warren County that she began to get serious about music. Laughs Bullock, "I didn't realize I could actually really sing until I moved back down here."

When I got back home, I joined the group that my sister had founded, the Bullock Family Gospel Singers. I started out doing most, as they call it, doo-wop – singing in the background. I never did lead, per se. And then one Sunday – it was January 31st, 1999 – God called me to the ministry, and I preached my initial

sermon. After the sermon, I sang a song, and everyone was like, 'Wow. I didn't know you could sing.' You see, up until then, I had only been in the background. So from then on, I started branching out, leading more when we'd go out places like that.

The Bullock Family Gospel Singers are one of the most in-demand sacred music groups in the region, often performing at weddings, funerals, family reunions, and birthday parties. While their repertoire is mainly traditional gospel, Bullock says that the musicians in the group – including her brother on guitar, and two of her nieces on bass and drums – can “play the boogie-woogie too. We’ll be in church sometimes and all of a sudden I’ll hear some boogie-woogie. They laugh; they think it’s so funny.”

The band is committed to its work of spreading the gospel, both at their home church, Warrenton’s United Solid Rock Faith Ministries, and at other churches where they’re invited to perform. “We preach directly from the Word of God, the Bible, and we have a good time, you know?” explains Bullock. “We’ve had services where the Spirit was so high that the preacher didn’t even get to preach.”

Minister Roy Burroughs
Choir director of Work in Progress
Henderson, Vance County

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Minister Roy Burroughs is a Vance County native through and through, born and raised in Henderson. Burroughs' parents both worked in area textile mills, and his grandfather was a farmer. As a child, the musician would earn pocket money working in the fields. "My grandfather would say, 'If you want money for the fair, you've got to go pick that cotton. I heard that more times than I care to remember,'" laughs Burroughs.

Roy Burroughs remembers the Henderson of his childhood as a place that valued community tradition and family values.

Back then we had fun. In 1969, the doors weren't locked. We didn't lock our back doors, or front, for that matter. Everybody knew everybody. At that time, Henderson wasn't half the size that it is now. No matter what side of town you were from, everybody kind of knew everybody, both black and white. We had house parties then, and we had cookouts, and parties out in the yard.

In 1969, when Burroughs was 11 years old, he entered a Battle of the Bands at the local high school. Impressed by his vocal performance, a group of older musicians from Halifax County sought him out, eventually drafting the young singer into their nascent R&B group. "Those guys – they were from Enfield – heard me, and they came looking for me. How they found me, I do not know, but they did."

In time, the group – whose repertoire included songs by soul performers like Al Green, the Stylistics, and the Chairmen of the Board – christened itself the Ebony Six and began playing the East Coast club circuit every weekend, getting Burroughs home in time for class on Monday morning. "I was in the 7th grade," he recalls. "It still baffles me that my parents let me go. I begged, I cried, I pleaded, and they let me go."

Though Burroughs' tenure with the Ebony Six lasted only two years, he explains that the lessons he learned during his time with the group, including the importance of discipline and rehearsal, are lasting ones. "I'm still using those same tools with the people that I work with in my choir now. I still hear those guys [in the Ebony Six] in the back of my head every time I get up to sing. I wouldn't trade that foundation for anything in the world."

By the time he was a freshman in high school, Burroughs was playing the piano, often as accompaniment for the choir at his church. Following graduation, Burroughs deferred attending college, and began working for a towing company. Several years of personal struggles followed, after which Burroughs turned to religion for guidance. The experience turned his life around, and Burroughs rededicated his life to his faith.

In October of 1999, Burroughs began to hand-pick members to form a multi-church choir as part of an appreciation service for an elder at his church, Jones Chapel Missionary Baptist Church in Warren County. Out of this event, the seeds were sown for the community choir, Work in Progress, which Burroughs directs to this day. "Our rehearsals are awesome," he explains. "We have a ball and everybody's just who they are. There's no pretense. We don't have to put up a facade."

Burroughs takes his duties as the director of Work in Progress very seriously, and it shows; there is hardly a weekend when the group – widely considered one of the best community choirs in Eastern North Carolina – is not asked to perform at a church program. The group's repertoire is a mixture of traditional hymns and contemporary music, all of which Burroughs arranges meticulously. "Music has always been in me, and I suspect it always will be," he says.

Hugh Carroll
Gospel singer with the Carroll Family
Roanoke Rapids, Halifax County

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Gospel musician Hugh Carroll was born and raised in Brunswick County, Virginia, just 25 miles from his longtime home of Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina. It was here that the young Carroll picked up his first instrument, a mandolin, and began to learn to play alongside his brother. "He bought a guitar," Carroll recalls, "and we just learned on our own, and by going to every concert we could and watching others play."

The performances that the Carroll boys attended were not run-of-the-mill concerts, but rather stops on the Southeastern "schoolhouse circuit of the late 1950s. At these events, rural county school auditoriums were repurposed as Saturday performance venues that played host to some of the most exciting bluegrass groups of the time. Hugh Carroll recalls seeing Jim and Jesse McReynolds and the Osborne Brothers, among others, in the local gymnasium. "I would go to see them and watch how they were picking those instruments," he remembers. "Then I'd come home and would try to do the same things they were doing."

Carroll's family farmed tobacco. While this way of life was deeply labor-intensive, there were pockets of free time that would allow him to develop his musical skills further.

As we were curing out the tobacco, we would just sit around the barn and keep the fire going and if anybody could pick, we would bring them in and we'd kind of learn from each other what we could do. We were kind of limited in the resources we could get to learn back then; we'd just learn from each other.

As a young adult, Carroll married and moved to Roanoke Rapids to be closer to his job at the KapStone Paper Mill. By this time, he had switched to guitar and was playing backup with a gospel group at the First Pentecostal Holiness Church. When the bandleader unexpectedly relocated, the managerial – and lead singing – duties of the band fell to Carroll. Word of the group's skill gradually spread. "People began to invite us to come and sing for them. Promoters began to promote gospel music in this area, and they would ask us to come be on the programs."

Rechristening the group the Carroll Family, the band – specializing in bluegrass and Southern gospel – grew to include members of Carroll’s immediate family, including his son, Russell. In 1980, the group added a puppetry component to their performances after Carroll witnessed the enthusiastic reaction his daughter’s puppet show garnered at her high school talent show. “There were about 1,000 people there,” he laughs. “I saw the way they responded and I thought, ‘If these people enjoy puppets that much, in my next concert, we’re going to do a puppet program.’”

The Carroll Family has traveled widely throughout the Eastern United States, performing an estimated 80 to 125 shows per year. Hugh Carroll credits his success to his family and to God. “Without them,” he explains, “I could not have done the concerts that I was doing.” The Carroll Family currently includes Hugh, son Russell, daughter-in-law Becky, and grandchildren Bella, Gracie, Lydia, and Olivia.

Chambergrass (Kim Terpening and Dave Schwartz)
Chamber music/bluegrass duo
Roanoke Rapids, Halifax County

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It seems fitting that Chambergrass – a Roanoke Rapids-based duo consisting of banjo player Kim Terpening and bassist Dave Schwartz – formed while the pair were fishing for shad on the Roanoke River in Weldon, in 2004. Remembers Kim, “We met, and after discussing our musical backgrounds, Dave said, ‘I always wanted to play bluegrass,’ and I said, ‘I always wanted to play classical.’ So we started to work it out.”

In their respective styles Terpening and Schwartz were already experienced and skilled musicians. Terpening first picked up the banjo in the mid-1970s, after her older sister, smitten by Bill Monroe’s records, decided that the siblings would form a family bluegrass group. Over time, the all-female group – who became known as the Wildwood Girls – were taken under the wing of Bill Monroe himself. Under the tutelage of former Monroe sidemen like Butch Robins and Roger Smith, as well as banjo pioneer Allen Shelton, Terpening developed into an accomplished player who hewed closely to the style established by the Bluegrass Boys. “I try to keep my five-string banjo playing as traditional as I can,” she explains. “No embellishments. I don’t try to play anything fancy. Quality playing. Less is better.”

After performing with the Wildwood Girls for over a decade – including a seven year stint on USO tours and five years working at Dollywood – the group dissolved, and Terpening relocated to Roanoke Rapids, where she had found a job as a food scientist.

Schwartz was also immersed in music from a young age. A longtime resident of Greenville, North Carolina, the bassist’s father was a music professor, and Schwartz began his formal musical training, on the cello, as a child. While he was always interested in bluegrass, Schwartz explains that it wasn’t until he met Terpening that he started to grasp the complexity of the idiom. “With bluegrass guitar and bass, it needs to sound like a motor,” he says. “You’ve got to keep it going, and it can’t just last for five minutes. It’s like jogging – you have to stay in shape and practice 20 or 30 minutes a day to keep the fingers going.”

While the Chambergrass repertoire freely mixes tunes from different repertoires and styles – from Bach to Bill Monroe – together within the space of each performance, the duo explains that they pay respect to each genre by not overly hybridizing the music. Terpening says, “Most of the time, we try to keep the

songs pretty pure in what they are, whether they're classical or bluegrass. We try not to mix them up too much. We'll mix in little things, but I think 80% of what we do is pretty much either bluegrass or classical."

Chambergrass performs regularly throughout Eastern North Carolina. Terpening currently works for public radio in Roanoke Rapids and teaches private banjo lessons. Schwartz works in the bio-tourism industry.

Doris Davis
Seamstress
Tillery, Halifax County

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Tillery native Doris Davis is well known for her contributions to the community, through her leadership at the Area Wide Health Committee and her work with the Concerned Citizens of Tillery. She is also regarded as an expert seamstress, and she shares her skills with those in the community, teaching what she has learned over many years of sewing professionally and privately.

Davis' family became part of the resettlement community of Tillery in 1938, moving from the nearby Scotland Neck area. Doris was one of the younger of her parents' thirteen surviving children. Her mother had been a talented seamstress, making clothes for her family (Davis remembers her cutting patterns from paper bags), but as the younger children were growing up, she was in poor health and was unable to teach her children directly very much of her sewing skills.

Like many natives of Northeastern North Carolina, Doris Davis has spent part of her life living in New York. In the early 1970s, she worked in the financial department of a shirt manufacturer in the Empire State Building. Though she was not working directly with the textiles, she began to take home fabric that the company regularly gave away to its employees. As her stockpile of fabric accumulated, she did some hand-sewing projects, and learned tips and techniques from friends. However, she dearly wished for a sewing machine, and saved up enough money to buy one – a classic black metal Singer, which had been converted to electric power – at the Singer outlet that was downstairs in the Empire State Building.

I drug that thing from 34th Street, downtown New York, all the way to 161st Street, in the rush hour, with the help of a young lady that I knew ... And hon, I was so excited, I just didn't know what to do. When I got home and got myself together to open up that machine, it was just like a kid under the Christmas tree. And my mother-in-law, seeing that I didn't know what to do with that sewing machine, showed me how to thread that sewing machine.

The first garment she made with the machine was a smock-style blouse. One of her coworkers admired it so much that at Christmastime she asked Davis if, were she to draw her name in the company's secret-Santa pool, she would make a smock-top just like it for her. Davis did draw the friend's name, and created a blouse for her. She has been sewing for friends and family ever since. For a time

she worked in sewing factories. “That’s what I wanted to do. It didn’t matter to me how much it paid . . . I was sewing, because that’s what I wanted to do.”

In 1975 she came home to Tillery. In addition to her community leadership, she has offered several popular sewing courses over the years. Held at the Tillery Community Center, the classes culminated in a fashion show, in which the students showed off what they had made. Davis says that the classes were rewarding for her as well, both because of the fellowship with neighbors, and also because she learned from her students. “By me teaching the class, I didn’t just teach it, I also learned. It was an each-one-teach-one situation.”

Davis makes all manner of sewn items – dresses, skirts, blouses, underwear, overcoats, tote bags, slipcovers, drapery, and much more. “You’d be amazed at the things you can do if you just try,” she says. The hallmark of her work is a fine attention to detail and subtle ornamentation. “Detailing, to me,” says Davis, “is what puts the flavor in the garment.”

Patrick Draffin
Storyteller
Norlina, Warren County

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Patrick Draffin says of his upbringing that, "I was raised to understand that stories are our history, and that's how you learn it. [I] was told at a very early age, 'Listen to your elders.'" Draffin grew up immersed in the heritage of Warren County. The Norlina native's family tree includes many generations of people who called the county home. Growing up in such an environment, Draffin developed an early understanding of the importance of stories in a community's identity.

I always have been a fan of storytelling, sitting on the porch, listening to grandparents and their friends, aunts and uncles, [tell] their stories from their childhood and that kind of stuff. Listening to folks get animated about it really taught me an appreciation of storytelling.

He became a performing storyteller himself at a young age, while still in elementary school, when he was the winner for several years running of a district-wide storytelling contest for schoolchildren. He further developed his skills in college at UNC-Wilmington, where he majored in Communications Studies. A favorite theater course required the students to go out and tell stories in the New Hanover County public schools. He enjoyed the course so much that he signed up for it semester after semester.

Today Patrick Draffin is the Athletic Director for the Warren County Schools, and coaches baseball in season. He also serves on the Warren County Arts Council, and has been active in Warrenton's downtown revitalization efforts. Helping to raise the visibility of Warrenton and its heritage, every October Draffin leads a nighttime ghost-walk through the streets of the old town. He dresses in nineteenth-century clothes and performs in the character of a forlorn Charlestonian lost in time, whose ramblings brought him into intimate association with the supernatural in Warren County. Although some of the stories Draffin shares in his ghost walks are not of local origin, many are, and with each passing year, more and more people share their own tales with him.

Slowly but surely we're starting to get stories of things that go bump in the night, that actually did occur, and have . . . historical significance to Main Street and downtown Warrenton.

Driffin is uniquely qualified to share stories of Warren County's heritage with audiences of all ages; and in his work as a storyteller he has found that, the more stories that he learns and retells, the more he finds there are to learn.

Cameron Eaton
Community marching band director
Henderson, Vance County

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X-Generation bandleader Cameron Eaton remembers his first day of intensive rehearsals as a member of North Carolina A&T's marching band as the culmination of years of musical training. "There were about 300 students in one room," he explains. "We were all wearing blue and gold; everybody was of the same accord."

The director stood in front of the band, and he gave a prep before the song. I think the song that first day was called 'Salvation's Created.' He put his hands up, and it was one, two, three – breathe – play. And when we played that first downbeat, I was so astonished. It was like a wall of sound flowing through my body. That's one thing that stands with me now. It hooked me. I felt like I had a reason and purpose in life at that point. That was the beginning of my musical breakthrough. It was like, 'OK, this is what I want to do. This is what I really like.' It was a deep connection.

A native of Henderson, Eaton picked up his first instrument – a toy xylophone – at the age of three. By the time he was six years old, he was playing piano and singing, both in the church and at home. "I always heard music," says Eaton. "When I was playing, I would hear music chiming in my ear. It was always something that was with me, whether I had an instrument or not."

In elementary school, he began to play the flutophone; by middle school, he graduated to brass instruments, beginning with trumpet and eventually cycling through the euphonium, baritone trumpet, and tuba. "Basically, I tried to play everything," he laughs.

It was in high school that Eaton immersed himself fully in music, improving his compositional skills and convening with other young musicians to jam. He explains that he always had a soulful connection to music. "Music comforted me in so many ways," says Eaton. "When I was going through troubles, I would listen to music or play music or go somewhere and sing. Music was a big part of my life in high school." During high school, Eaton also began to learn about North Carolina's rich African American marching band tradition, and resolved to attend college. In 2002, Eaton enrolled as a music major at North Carolina A&T in Greensboro.

Eaton explains that his college marching band trained intensively, often from four in the morning until midnight. “People would say, ‘You people at A&T are crazy. You practice harder than the football team,’” he remembers. “And I believe we did; we were certainly better than the football team. It was a very physical thing.”

Upon his graduation, Eaton returned to Vance County, where he began volunteering with the band program at the local middle school. At the same time, he began collecting instruments – including drums and horns – in hopes of putting together a community group to give Henderson’s disenfranchised youth something to do.

After inheriting the directorship of a local drill team in 2008, Eaton began to work with the kids, holding up North Carolina’s great black marching bands as their models. He explains that his group – which he christened X-Generation – started with only three members; its ranks soon swelled to well over two dozen. Since the inception of X-Generation, Eaton has led the band in Henderson’s annual Christmas Parade, and they have traveled to Durham to take part in the Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration.

Charles Alvin Evans
Multimedia artist, wildcrafter
Warren County

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Charles Alvin Evans grew up in rural Warren County near Hollister, the eldest of Charlie and Hester Richardson Evans' ten children. A voracious reader since early childhood, Evans was intrigued from a very young age by books about Native American art and culture. It was not until he was about eight years old, though, that he came to understand that he himself was a member of a Native American community, the Haliwa-Saponi Tribe of Halifax and Warren Counties.

As an adult, Evans lived in California, and later in New Jersey. In California, he happened upon a book about the life of Pueblo potter Maria Martinez of New Mexico, deepening an interest in pottery that he had also fostered since childhood. In time, he moved back home to the Hollister area. Returning to the Haliwa- Saponi community inspired him finally to try his hand at making pottery. Arnold Richardson taught and mentored Evans in different kinds of traditional art, including both pottery and stone carving.

Over the years Evans has turned his attention to many different kinds of craftsmanship. He is a wood carver, making bows and arrows, and pipes, and learned how to make rudimentary knives with blades made from hammered-out ten-penny nails. An article in Backwoodsman magazine taught him advanced knife-making skills. Evans' avid reading has been a source of some of his knowledge of the traditional arts, while other skills have been learned in a direct manner from community members.

Evans' interest in heritage skills extends to a strong interest in the traditional uses of native plants. An enthusiastic wildcrafter, he knows how to recognize many edible plants that grow wild in the North Carolina woods. He has professional training in horticulture, a background that complements the knowledge he has gleaned over the years from neighbors and community elders. Remembering the drinking gourd that his grandfather kept by a spring many years ago, Evans has made a special study of the cultivation of gourds.

Charles Alvin Evans has a passionate interest in ensuring the survival of the traditions he has learned in his life. He is deeply concerned by younger generations' separation from the land and lack of knowledge about how to live in the self-sufficient manner of their forebears. Evans is eager to share his knowledge of the traditional arts and wildcrafting and welcomes teaching opportunities.

Wallace T. Evans
Quilter
Henderson, Vance County

Growing up in a farming family in Granville County, Wallace Evans and his siblings sometimes helped their mother tack quilts that she had pieced. Tacking is an alternative to quilting, a method for binding together the different layers of a quilt. Rather than being sewn together with continuous stitching, as in quilting, the layers are tied together with individual stitches of a thicker strand than standard thread. Sometimes the tacking method is chosen for aesthetic reasons, and sometimes because it saves time over the more labor-intensive quilting. For Evans as child, tacking quilts was a family activity. “My mother had a bench that they stretched the quilt out on, and we would sit around the bench, and do the tacking – in the living room, by the potbelly stove, in the wintertime.”

Today, Evans lives in Henderson, which has been his home for more than thirty-five years. He teaches cosmetology at Vance-Granville Community College, and is the owner of Renaissance Style by Wallace, a Henderson salon. He began to quilt when he attended a class with his sister-in-law, taught by Vance County quilter Peggy Stocks. Evans already knew how to sew, and caught on quickly to the techniques of making quilts – and in the years since, has made many.

Evans finds that the context of quilting is different for artists today than it was for people who made quilts in his mother’s generation. “Today there is a lot of time taken with patterns and that kind of thing. Years ago, they made them warm, and they used whatever they had . . . And too, people spent time together when they were doing the quilts then, and it was bonding time. Now it’s a little bit more on a personal level...”

His quilts have appeared in exhibitions, both solo and with the Heritage Quilters, a quilting group of which he is a member. He particularly likes making baby quilts. Though he sometimes uses his mother’s method of tacking, more often he quilts. A favorite technique, learned from Peggy Stocks, is to quilt along the patterns printed in the fabric; not only does this help guide the quilter’s needle, it also creates a three-dimensional effect that allows different elements of the prints to play an even greater role in the overall visual effect of the piece.

Evans sees a connection between his professional work as a cosmetologist, and his personal work as a quilter – both creative fields. “It’s all handwork. Cosmetology is handwork. So...it ties in, in that I like working with my hands. I’m able to do what I love, and very few people have the opportunity to do that, professionally or personally. But I’ve been blessed in that sense. I feel like I’m where I’m supposed to be.”

Johnnie Ray Francis
Woodcarver
Warren County

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When Haliwa-Saponi artist Johnnie Ray Francis was a child, he and his siblings learned to work hard – he started helping with farm work when he was four or five years old – and to be resourceful. “When we grew up,” he says, “we had to build our own toys.” Today, Francis uses his lifelong talent for working with wood to carve walking sticks and traditional wooden weapons.

Some years ago, when health issues caused Francis to retire, he began to enjoy spending time in the woods, as he had in younger days. At a friend’s encouragement, he also turned to woodcarving, gathering special branches and vines that he found on his walks in the woods and turning them into carved implements. Francis has since learned that his grandfather and great-uncle were both makers of walking sticks, although he does not remember ever having seen their work.

Many of his walking sticks bear a traditional snake motif, created both by carving and using a wood-burning tool. His inspiration for the pieces’ decoration often comes from the inherent characteristics of the wood itself. “Most of the time when you cut it, what it’s going to be is already there.” He also makes tomahawks, bows, and clubs, using a variety of other natural materials in addition to wood.

Francis carries on traditions of gardening that he learned growing up, and keeps a vegetable garden within the concentric curves of a pair of large circular rock walls that he constructed. The walls were a personal innovation rather than a traditional method, but he finds that they keep heat in and deer out, allowing for

especially successful growing seasons. Francis also maintains grape vines and knows how to make wine following a technique that his mother taught him.

Johnnie Ray Francis considers his work in traditional arts to be an integral part of his Native American identity. Once, he remembers, an acquaintance asked him, "Have you quit building Indian crafts?" I said, 'How can you ask the Indian such a thing as that?'"

Karen Lynch Harley
Multimedia artist
Warren County

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Like many North Carolinians, Nannie and Almorris Lynch moved north in search of work as a young couple. They settled in the Washington, DC, area, and it was in the Maryland suburbs where their daughter Karen was born and raised. Although Maryland is a long way from the Lynches' hometown of Hollister, Nannie and Almorris' children absorbed much of their Haliwa-Saponi culture on summer-long visits with relatives.

Karen Lynch Harley is most widely known for her painting. She has been painting and drawing since childhood, and received formal training in art school. Harley's paintings are marked by a synthesis of aesthetic and cultural influences, drawing both from her Indian heritage and from the European art, particularly Renaissance painting, that she has studied.

Harley now lives in Hollister. "I like that close-knit feeling that you get around here," she says. She has explored many of the traditional arts practiced today by members of the Haliwa-Saponi Tribe, from pottery and basket making to painting on hides and making dolls. Typical of Harley's approach to art is how she learned to make pottery. She learned from Senora Lynch, though by

observation rather than in direct lessons. “I took what she taught me about pottery,” Harley says, “and incorporated it with my own love of sculpture.”

Harley attributes her artistic talents to both of her parents; her mother is a highly skilled quilt maker, and her father often quilts as well. She credits her father as the source of her broad curiosity; just as he has acquired a multitude of skills simply through interest and observation, Karen’s creative curiosity has led her to express

herself through many art forms. This multifaceted approach, she says, can be confusing to some audiences of her work.

I don't want to be put in a box of just being an artist of one type...I know that some of the things I do don't seem to be traditional. That seems to be a problem for people when you're Native American, they want to think of you as a potter or a basket maker. Certain things go with the word 'Indian,' and that's what [they think] you should do. I just like to do a lot of different kinds of art. And I don't live in the 1500s.

Harley feels that the hallmark of her art, which joins together her work in so many different media, is its narrative quality. “My work tells a story, and that is the most important thing to me, is to tell a story. I don’t do a drawing, a painting, a sculpture, as just something nice to look at. I want it to tell a story.”

Freida Harlow

Dulcimer player, singer, owner of the Ridgeway Opry House
Ridgeway, Warren County

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ridgewayopryhouse.com

The way she tells it, Freida Harlow had no choice but to purchase the crumbling Ridgeway Opry House. A native of the Ridgeway section of Warren County – she grew up approximately a mile and a half from the beloved venue – Harlow says the building that became the Opry House played a critical part in her childhood. “I just about grew up here.”

In fact, this is the first building where I saw a neon light in my life. It ran on the outside. Anyway, the building was coming down – I mean, it was just about to rot and fall down because nobody ever really did anything to it to keep it up, so I decided to buy the place and remodel it, re-do it. It looked so pitiful, and I loved the place so much because it was a part of Ridgeway.

With the help of Billy Jarrell – a celebrated local musician and instrument builder who passed away in 2009 – she began extensive renovations to the building. “Billy always encouraged me to do something good, to do something nice,” explains Harlow. “He was all for it.”

If I wanted people to come, I didn't want them to come to an old building that had an old homemade wood heater back here burning wood – I wanted it nice, a place that people would enjoy. I wanted something I could be proud of. I didn't want just to fix it halfway. So I fixed up part of it, and it looked so good that I had to keep going. Once you do one thing, you have to keep going.

The refurbished Ridgeway Opry House opened its doors in 2003 and was an immediate success, due in no small part to Harlow's understanding of her community. She was raised to value hard work and the music – including hymns and string band music – that she heard around the house as a child. Harlow explains, like many in the region, that while her family, which consisted of her parents and 11 siblings, might have been poor, they didn't want for anything. “We had all we needed,” Harlow remembers. “We had what we wanted, and the rest I guess we didn't need.”

Indeed, it is Harlow's spirit of love that makes the Ridgeway Opry House such an important gathering place for musicians and community members in and around Warren County. “I think it's a warm place, an inviting place,” she says. “I just love people.”

I love to talk to interesting people, or people that have been places and done things. And I try to make everybody feel at home down here. And it's been real successful, this little place. We just have some of the finest musicians in the tri-county area come in and play and sing.

Each Saturday night, visitors can find Freida presiding over performances at the Opry House, often singing or playing a mountain dulcimer, or introducing visiting musicians to the enthusiastic audience. “If anybody needs me for anything special and I can help them out here with the Opry, I will do it.”

The Ridgeway Opry House is located at 704 US Highway 1 South, in Ridgeway, North Carolina. Doors open at 6 pm on Saturdays, and the show starts at 7 pm. Seats cost \$5. Check the website for show dates and performers.

Portia Hawes
Quilter
Warrenton, Warren County

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Portia Harris Hawes' roots in Warren County are deep. She lives in the same house in which she was raised. Her mother, Portia Jenkins Harris, was a seamstress and homemaker, and her father, Richard Harris, was a mechanic and one of the first African Americans in North Carolina to own a used car dealership. One of Hawes' great-grandfathers on her mother's side was John A. Hyman, a Warren County native who had been born in slavery, and rose to be a United States Congressman.

As a child, Hawes says, "I was an oddball. I was obstinate. I didn't want to walk that straight path." Though she learned dressmaking skills from her mother, she was more interested in the tailoring of men's clothes – an art that was then largely off-limits for women. After graduating from the Hampton Institute, she attended St. Paul's College, and earned a degree in industrial education. However, says Hawes, "They didn't hire women in that field at that time." Though qualified to teach industrial education, which included framing and maintaining buildings, car repair, masonry, carpentry, plumbing – and men's tailoring – she had also received training, on the practical recommendation of an advisor, in teaching home economics and reading.

She did in fact become a home economics teacher, and enjoyed many years of teaching in Virginia and New York. One school year, during a unit for a combined home economics and industrial education class, Hawes developed a unit on quilting. Though she had not previously made quilts as an adult, as a child she had learned the art from her mother. "I used to make little quilts for my doll-babies when I was a little girl growing up. The doll-babies always had to have little quilts on their beds." That teaching unit – which was greatly enjoyed by her male students, most of whom chose to make quilted pillow shams with motifs of their favorite hockey teams – also reignited her own interest in quilting.

Upon retirement, Hawes and her husband Nathan, a Virginian, moved home to her native Warrenton. She is an active member of the Heritage Quilters, and for some years after returning to the South was also involved in costume-design for theater productions in Virginia. These days she concentrates on making quilts, and prefers to piece and quilt them entirely by hand than to work on a machine. Her quilts, which have been shown in exhibitions in the region, include both traditional and original patterns and motifs, and she still draws inspiration from the quilts that her mother made many years ago.

Portia Hawes will consider requests to make educational presentations about quilts. She is also a valuable source of knowledge about the heritage of Warrenton and Warren County.

Heritage Quilters
Fabric artists
Warren, Vance, and Halifax Counties

Celebrating its tenth year in 2011, the Warrenton-based Heritage Quilters is both a circle of artists, and an alliance of citizens who care about the past, present, and future of the region. The twenty members provide each other with artistic inspiration and support. They also serve the wider community as philanthropists, documentarians, and educators.

The current membership of the Heritage Quilters includes Ihsan Abdin, Belinda Alston, Cathy Alston-Kearney, Margaret Bullock, Ruth Chambers, Wallace Evans, Portia Hawes, Terri Grady, Earlean Henderson, Leo Kelly, Connie Kenney, Jereann King Johnson, Krista Larkins, Dorothy Luis, Victoria Lynch, Ellen Pankey, Jackie Privitt, Wilhelmina Scott-Ratliff, Louise Spruill, and Mary Terry. Among these artists are quilters who have been doing needlework virtually all their lives, as well as quilters who have come to the art form recently. Some were born and raised in the region, and some have settled here from far away. Some are interested in traditional quilt patterns and methods, while others create entirely new ways of expressing themselves through the fabric arts.

Interested in the work of quilters who came before them, the Heritage Quilters carried out a documentary project in 2009, with support from the North Carolina Arts Council. Through this initiative, *Counting Quilts*, they gathered community members from throughout the area, inviting them to share the stories of their and their family's quilts. The Heritage Quilters photographed each quilt that was shared, and made extensive notes about its features and the life of its maker. The documentation they gathered, much of which is online through the Warren County Library, is an invaluable record of the region's heritage and creativity.

Further benefitting the community, the Heritage Quilters are a giving circle as well as an artistic organization. Their sponsorship aids area students with a scholarship towards their college education. The Quilters also contribute to area teachers' education by co-sponsoring an informative tour of Warren County in partnership with the Warren Education Fund. The group looks forward to supporting individuals and organizations that foster youth development and education.

Wayne Herrman
Woodworker
Littleton, Warren County

Although he grew up in Northern Virginia, Wayne Herrman has a lifelong connection to Warren County. Throughout his childhood and adult life, he and his family returned again and again to Lake Gaston for vacations, and in time he made it his permanent home. Herrman's family also has a long tradition of woodworking. His grandfather was a master barn builder, who led a traveling crew of builders in Maryland, and is remembered as a great craftsman. Herrman has and to this day still uses some of his grandfather's tools. His father, too, was a skilled woodworker, though he did it as an avocation rather than a profession. The family garage was given over to this pursuit. Wayne remembers, "He never parked any cars in the garage, he just made it a woodworking workshop."

It was in his father's workshop that Herrman, as a small boy, developed his own fascination with woodworking. "I can still recall the smell of the sawdust," he says, "and how that was always kind of exciting to me." His father introduced him to wood by giving him small boards and a handful of nails with which to hammer them together. The objective for the child was to hammer the nails without bending them; when inevitably he did bend them, his father straightened them out in a vise so that he could try again. Though Herrman didn't receive formal instruction in woodworking, he learned by observation and by asking his father questions. Craftsmanship in wood became a lifelong passion.

Years later, while living in Virginia, a friend who knew Herrman was a woodworker brought him a handmade spoon that she had purchased. He was fascinated and that day set out to learn how to make them himself. He had to learn by trial and error. As he found out, "There's not a lot of research you can do on carving spoons, because there's not a lot of people out there that do it."

During his many years of carving spoons, Herrman has mastered the techniques that make his work so distinctive. From his father he learned about the importance of how wood is finished, and his spoons are sanded to a silky smoothness. He also employs a laminating technique to make individual spoons from different kinds of wood, pegging them together sometimes with yet another

variety. This allows for beautiful color combinations and striking individuality of pieces.

Wayne Herrman's work is sold at the River Mill in Weldon, at arts festivals, and other area venues.

Richard Holtzmann, Sr., and Richard Holtzmann, Jr.
Cantaloupe growers
Ridgeway, Warren County

Holtzmann's Farm Produce
364 US Hwy 1 S, Norlina/Ridgeway
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The small farming community of Ridgeway has for more than a century had a wide reputation for the excellence of one of its crops, the Ridgeway cantaloupe. Smaller than the cantaloupes one might find in a store, and vastly sweeter, the melons used to be shipped north by the trainload, for sale to such exclusive eateries as the dining room of the Waldorf- Astoria. In recent years, true Ridgeway cantaloupes have become increasingly rare. Of the farmers who have brought the crop into the twenty-first century, among the very last are Richard Holtzmann of Ridgeway and his son Richard Holtzmann, Jr.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, German immigrants came to Warren County and settled in the Ridgeway-Drewry section. One of them was Diebold Holtzmann, who would become the ancestor of the largest of Ridgeway's German families. Historian Barbara Sinn Bumbalough writes that all 264 acres of Diebold Holtzmann's land holdings are still owned by his descendants. The Richard Holtzmann family trace their roots back to Diebold, and still farm family land.

Richard Sr., born in the late 1920s, remembers elderly family members who still primarily spoke German. "They'd speak German when they didn't want anyone to understand what they were saying." He remembers the older generation's stories about the difficulties they faced when first settling in Ridgeway. "Well, it

was hard times. They had to build up the soil. They worked to improve the soil.” It was this soil that would produce the famous Ridgeway cantaloupes.

Holtzmann, Sr., remembers many other unique aspects of his upbringing, and the family has retained valuable traditional skills passed down from their ancestors. For example, both men know how to witch, or dowse, for natural water sources; unlike their forebears, though, they now use coat-hangers rather than carved sticks.

The Holtzmanns are bearers of important Warren County traditions, of both the intangible and the edible varieties. The latter, their startlingly sweet Ridgeway cantaloupes, can be purchased in season from the Holtzmanns’ produce stand on Route 1.

Sherman Johnson
DJ, emcee, and community cultural resource
Warrenton, Warren County

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Anyone interested in learning about Warren County’s musical culture would do well to talk to Sherman Johnson. A longtime DJ with an encyclopedic knowledge of music, Johnson explains that his life and work in the region were “predestined.” Following his graduation from the Carolina School of Broadcasting in Charlotte, the city where he was raised, Johnson interviewed for a position at Warrenton’s WARR 1520 AM.

Arriving on the bus in 1977, he explains, “It was culture shock.” Johnson was offered the morning slot on WARR, and he moved to Warrenton, finding room and board in the Red Hill section of town. Serendipitously, the woman who offered him lodgings had a son moving away to college the day after his arrival. Johnson remembers, “She said, ‘You look like you’re an honest person. Why don’t we try it for awhile?’ I wound up staying with her for three years. I got married at her house. She’s like my mother now, and she treated me as a son.”

Having settled in the area, Johnson found a vibrant musical scene in full bloom, with both WARR and Warrenton's WVSP catering to a diverse listening public hungry to hear traditional gospel, country, blues, and R&B, along with the contemporary sounds of the day. In addition, Warren County boasted a host of clubs – including the Starlite Palace and Club 43 – where young people could gather to listen to music and dance. Over time Johnson began to think of Warren County as home, in the process becoming one of the most prominent advocates for the cultural life of the region. “When I came here, this was supposed to be a two-year stint,” he laughs. “I was coming here to hone my skills and then move on to ‘bigger and better.’ Well, the two years that I was supposed to invest in this place turned to ten, then 20.”

Johnson has now been in Warren County for more than 30 years. After some time away from the microphone at WARR, Johnson was lured back to host “The Show,” a community-based, socially conscious talk radio program that he developed to celebrate Warren County. “This is ours,” he explains. “The community is who owns the radio waves.”

I decided to accentuate the positive, if you will. We go out and we find people who are from here who have done great things; we bring them on and we talk about how they became successful. We want to let our kids know that there is hope out there. There are opportunities here. Sometimes you have to make your own.

Johnson remains, first and foremost, an enthusiastic fan of music. “There are times when I feel like nobody knows me, and I can hear songs that express what I’m feeling,” he explains. “I can see and feel myself in music in a way that you can only hope that somebody else would see what it is that you’re feeling or going through.”

Chris Joyce
Potter
Heathsville, Halifax County

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Potter Chris Joyce has deep family roots in North Carolina, in the pottery-rich South-Central section of the state. Joyce grew up in Northern Virginia, but his mother was a native of Stanly County. His grandparents had a collection of

pottery which included early pieces from the influential Seagrove-area pottery known as Jugtown. He was also interested from a young age in the salt-glazed pottery that he saw on family visits to Colonial Williamsburg.

Now settled in Halifax County, where he is a school principal, Chris Joyce has taken up the art that for so long has fascinated him. He has been mentored by potter Dan Finch, whose studio is located in Bailey, in Nash County. Joyce has a wheel at home in Heathsville, where he throws his pots late at night. He then takes them to Bailey, where he glazes and fires them. He primarily uses a gas-fired kiln and high-fire glazes.

Joyce explains that, "I make things that I would want to use." His pottery is mainly functional rather than purely decorative, and he follows many traditional forms in bowls, pitchers, plates, and other items. As a surprise for his son, Joyce once fashioned a small face jug – a form long made by traditional Southern potters. Over time, face jugs have become among the most popular items in his repertoire.

Chris Joyce's longtime love of pottery shows in his work, in the ways that he blends tradition and innovation into beautiful new combinations. He has written, "I find shaping clay into decorative and functional wares as being both calming and exhilarating at the same time." Since the beginning of 2008 he has been blogging about his exploration of pottery, and the goings-on at his home studio, Straydog Pottery.

Wayne Kinton
Singer, songwriter, and guitarist; leader of bluegrass band GrassStreet
Henderson, Vance County

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Henderson native Wayne Kinton has music in his blood. While his great-grandfather was a gifted multi-instrumentalist who worked the southeast's vibrant musical circuit, Kinton explains that it was his grandmother who first introduced him to the guitar. "Her name was Bertha Kinton," he remembers. "She got me started; she showed me a few chords when I was nine or ten years old."

By the time Kinton was a teenager in the mid-1960s, he had become inspired by the rock and roll sounds coming from England. "I was kind of riding the British Invasion," he says. "As all kids do, we got into electric guitars. We had a little band – called the Roulettes – before we could even drive. My parents drove us around to gigs. I really don't know how we did it. We had an electric guitar and a little amplifier, and we ran our vocal microphones through the amp. No sound to speak of. That got me active in music."

While Kinton's father wasn't himself a musician, he exerted a profound musical influence on his son. Upon Wayne's graduation from high school, the elder Kinton gave Wayne a five-string banjo, which he took with him when he went away to college. The musician's tenure at the university coincided with the folk revival underway at that time, and he dedicated himself to learning to play in the three-finger style developed by players like Earl Scruggs. Popularity of folk music notwithstanding, Kinton explains that bluegrass was something of an anomaly on campus.

We had the coffee houses, but bluegrass was still way out yonder; it was still considered a hillbilly kind of thing, even though it was starting to drift into folk music. I was a novelty because nobody else played banjo. In fact, nobody really played string music. Folks at the college thought it was just wonderful. It was just so unique. I guess they'd never had a hillbilly there before.

Following college, Kinton moved to the town of Wilson, where he befriended and began playing with an older mandolinist named Ben McKintosh. As a member of McKintosh's Valley Dale Boys, Kinton went through a rigorous training in the presentation of traditional bluegrass. "We played it like Bill Monroe, Lester Flatt, and Jimmy Martin," remembers Kinton. "Ben was strict, but he taught me how to run a band. That was an education."

Moving back to Vance County in the late 1970s, Kinton cycled through various bands as a guitarist and banjo player, including country and western outfit The

Country Cut-Ups and bluegrass group Swift Run. In 1982, his son David was born, and Kinton scaled back his musical commitments to spend more time on his family and career.

In 2003, Kinton formed the bluegrass group GrassStreet with David Kinton, who began playing the bass in junior high school. GrassStreet now ranks among the most prominent bluegrass bands in eastern North Carolina, and has released several albums, including *Hittin' the Street: Live at the Ridgeway Opry* and *Grandma's Hymnbook*. Kinton also works collaboratively with playwright Charley-John Smith, Artistic Director of the Louisburg College Players, and recently scored the stage productions of Smith's plays *Big River* and *Long Tobacco Road*.

David Lynch
Craftsman
Hollister, Halifax County

Craftsman and demonstrator David Lynch grew up in a Haliwa-Saponi family in Nash County. His family (which eventually moved back to their ancestral home of Hollister, on the Halifax-Warren county line) retained old traditions of making walking sticks, slingshots, bows and arrows, and other items from wood. Lynch continues these traditions today.

Lynch remembers that his relatives would fashion plain walking sticks, which they stained with pecan oil. Today he makes both plain and ornamented walking sticks, the latter featuring snakes, faces, and other forms suggested by the natural contours of the wood. Now that he has retired, Lynch is able to devote a great deal of time to his art, but he practiced it as a sideline throughout his working days. (When the Summer Olympics were held in Atlanta in 1996, Lynch and his friend and fellow craftsman Johnnie Ray Francis received orders for hundreds of walking sticks to sell at the games.) He makes bows and arrows by the hundreds every year, finished with arrowheads hand-knapped by a friend in Aurora, North Carolina. Lynch also makes tomahawks, war clubs, and other tools and weapons.

Winter is the best time for cutting and gathering the sticks, reeds, and other materials he uses. (He particularly likes to use birch, cherry, hickory, and red oak.) During the December hunting season, Lynch can only gather sticks on Sundays, and then spends the rest of the week skinning the bark off of the wood. This work continues full-time in January, and into the spring. It must be completed by mid-May, when the summer foliage makes wood-hunting more difficult.

Lynch says that his craft keeps him “very, very busy.” In addition to producing his stock of walking sticks and weapons, he shows and sells his work, and runs arrow-shooting galleries at pow-wows and other events. Visitors can also purchase Lynch’s work at the BP station and the Trading Post in the Hollister area, as well as at special events throughout the year.

Moka Henry Lynch
Woodcarver and stonecarver
Hollister, Halifax County
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Henry Lynch – who also goes by the Native American name Moka, which means Snake – retired after thirty-five years in the construction industry, and embarked on a second career as an artist. He had always wanted to pursue his artwork full-time, but had not had the opportunity to do so while working and raising a family. “When I got a little older,” Lynch remembers, “I said, well, it’s time to get back into it. That way you don’t forget where you came from, and your roots.”

Henry Lynch’s roots are in the Haliwa-Saponi community of Hollister, where he lives on land that has been in his family for many years. In the large workshop behind his house, Lynch creates traditional Native American art in a wide variety of media. Among his specialties are wood and stone sculpture, drum bases, drum hides, wooden boxes and furniture, flutes, and turtle shell rattles. Lynch’s pipes are some of his most distinctive work, combining strong figural images on the carved-stone bowls, with delicately carved wooden stems. One of his favorite stem designs features a deep double spiral pattern in gleaming exotic wood.

The Haliwa-Saponi Tribe has a heritage of craftsmanship that has been nurtured by elder artists. Among these mentors to younger generations are Arnold Richardson and Charles Alvin Evans – both of whom have been important influences on Henry Lynch – and Lynch himself, an artist of renown in the community. He has been given special recognition at the annual Haliwa-Saponi pow-wow, and has displayed his work at the North Carolina Museum of History’s American Indian Cultural Celebration in Raleigh. He is also the patriarch of an artistic family, which includes his oldest son, a pow-wow dancer

who makes knives, pow-wow regalia, and moccasins. Henry Lynch says it is his hope that “we won’t forget how to do what our ancestors used to do.”

Senora Lynch
Potter
Warren County

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Senora Richardson Lynch is widely celebrated as one of North Carolina’s outstanding potters, in a state with a tremendous wealth of pottery traditions and famous potters. Born in Philadelphia in a Haliwa-Saponi family, as a child she returned to her family’s native home near Hollister. She soon became immersed in the tribe’s artistic heritage.

Senora Lynch is a member of the Mills family, who have been respected for their creativity and artistic skill for generations. Her grandfather, James William Mills, was a prominent area craftsman, a master carpenter and chairmaker, among other talents. He taught Senora how to weave chair bottoms. Patricia Richardson, a well-known artist who has long been dedicated to the traditional arts of the community, taught Senora beadwork.

Elder women told her about how they had made coiled pots long ago. In her thirties, she began to make pottery, too. She learned to coil clay in the ancient manner, and learned an intricate method of incising decoration on the surface of her pots. Because at the time pottery was not a thriving art form among the

Haliwa-Saponi, she developed a style that blended personal expressions of her heritage with regional traditions and techniques. She has said, "I think my pottery is a combination of tradition and modern . . . I'm telling the story about our tribe like it would have been done long ago, but in a different way."

Senora Lynch is honored not only in her home community and her home state, but at major institutions throughout the nation, and by collectors around the world. Her work has appeared at the National Museum of Women in the Arts and the National Museum of the American Indian. She designed a prominent walkway for the University of North Carolina, and her work is also in the collection of the North Carolina Museum of History. In 2007, she received the North Carolina Heritage Award.

Carolyn Long
Soap-maker
Warren County

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Carolyn Long remembers the Ridgeway of her childhood as a place with strong traditional values of community life and mutual support. Families and neighbors were close, and church and school were the institutions that knit the community together. She fondly remembers Ridgeway's Christmas traditions, which included personal visits from Santa – a local man who would visit each home with children during the Christmas season. "We would tell this when we went back to school, and nobody would believe us."

Long's family farmed, growing the cantaloupes for which Ridgeway is renowned. Like many rural families, they were highly self-sufficient. Among Long's childhood recollections is a memory of her grandmother and cousins gathering to make soap. The soap was made with lye, and with lard put aside at

hog-killing time. Long remembers the finished product as large, rough blocks, containing a variety of colors from the ingredients.

In 2003, Long says, a friend of hers from work “came to me out of the clear blue, and said, ‘Carolyn, how would you like to make some soap?’” The friend had been learning and experimenting with recipes, and Long was surprised to learn how readily accessible the ingredients were: “Simple ingredients that you can go to your local grocery store and get. Sometimes you already have a lot of it in your kitchen cabinet, and you’ve already had it for a long, long time.”

In the years since, she has turned soap-making into a business. Though she sometimes fills requests for old-fashioned batches made from lard, she prefers to use purer plant-based oils, like olive, shea butter, cocoa, and palm, among others. She usually makes four batches a month, which yield 18 bars each. Just as her forebears planted their gardens and fields based upon the phases of the moon and other celestial bodies, Long has found that soap mixed and poured at the full moon sets better and makes a better finished product.

Though the ingredients may be simple, the process is long and involved. After mixing the ingredients and pouring them into a mould, she lets the mixture set overnight. The next day she cuts it into bars, which she leaves to cure for ten days. Then she flips the batches, and leaves them to cure even longer. Long likes to leave soap to cure for at least four weeks – “The longer the better,” she says.

Long has regular customers, and also sells her soaps at area festivals.

Claudese Lynch
Potter
Hollister area, Warren County

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Claudese Lynch and her husband Raleigh came to pottery as older adults, but quickly excelled in their art. They had lived in Pennsylvania, having left Hollister for work as a young couple, years ago. Like many of their contemporaries in the Haliwa-Saponi community, though, they retired to the Tribe’s home along the Warren and Halifax County line, where they had grown up.

Senora Lynch, a North Carolina Heritage Award-winning potter, is their niece. When Claudese and Raleigh came home to Hollister, they were greatly inspired by her work. Senora taught them both to make pottery, and they dove into the art form wholeheartedly. The Lynches developed a system, working together at their kitchen table. Raleigh most enjoyed shaping the pots, which he did using the ancient method of coiling the clay, and then smoothing it. Claudese found that her talent lay in creating the incised designs on the outside of the pieces. They invested in an electric kiln and were soon able to fire pots in their garage. Claudese's designs are bold and graceful. They reflect elements of the natural world, from landscapes to plants and animals.

In 2010, Raleigh Lynch passed away. He and Claudese believed that it was very important to teach their art to the younger generation of their family, and he had taught some of their grandsons how to coil pots like he did. Through them, and Claudese and Senora Lynch, this strong family pottery tradition is carried on.

Bishop Dready Manning
Gospel guitarist
Roanoke Rapids, Halifax County

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A native of Gaston, in Northampton County, North Carolina, Bishop Dready Manning played a guitar for the first time at the age of seven. "It was probably 1941 or so, and I had a cousin named Doc Mangum; he and I grew up together. He had started playing just a little, and he started showing me what little he knew, and I learned what he'd show me."

A quick study and natural musician, Manning soon surpassed his cousin in skill and went looking for other tutors who might further his musical education. "When I was about 12 years old, I met another man who I thought was the greatest guitar player in the world. His name was Russell Moody. So I started learning from him; soon, I was better than him."

Inspired by the fleet-fingered playing of musicians like Blind Boy Fuller, Brownie McGhee, Lightnin' Hopkins, and Jimmy Reed, he had one goal:

I wanted to be a blues guitar player." For lack of formal performance venues, Manning played many a house party throughout Halifax County during this time. "I was playing for house parties, and I could play so good until people just wanted me to play. Sometimes there would be as many as three parties in one night, from house to house. I'd start at one early; leave and go to the next one; and leave that one to go to the next one. But they especially wanted me to play for them. I had gotten so good, man. I was very good. When I was 15 years old, I was dynamite.

Bishop Manning says that he lived the life of the bluesman in those days. "Man, I was just terrible," he laughs. "I loved my good time." Soon, his hard living started to catch up with him, and in 1962 – at the age of 27 – Manning had a sinus hemorrhage. "I was bleeding from my nose, and I bled for about a week and a half," he remembers. "I wasn't able to work." The young musician visited a variety of medical practitioners, to no avail. It wasn't until he was prayed over in his home by members of a local Holiness congregation that he was cured. "When they prayed their prayer, I was healed, just like popping your fingers."

Not long thereafter, he dedicated his prodigious talents to spreading the Christian gospel, frequently performing gospel music with his wife, Marie, and their six children. The family moved to a tract of land in Roanoke Rapids in 1969 and began constructing the building that would eventually become their church, St. Mark Holiness, in 1975.

In 2003, Bishop Manning received the North Carolina Heritage Award. He works with the Music Maker Foundation, which released his acclaimed album *Gospel Train*. The record label Big Legal Mess assembled a compilation of Manning's early recordings entitled *Converted Mind*. Despite the accolades he receives,

Manning remains humbly dedicated to his ministry. “We just have a Holy Ghost time,” he says.

Andrew Marlin

Singer, songwriter, guitarist

From Warrenton, Warren County [currently living in Carrboro, NC]

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To hear him tell it, Warren County native Andrew Marlin began his musical education at a very early age. “Mom used to tell me that in order to get me to quit kicking when I was in the womb, she would sit down and play the piano; I guess I would just sit back in my little lounge chair in her womb and listen to the music,” he laughs. “I guess that’s when I started.”

Currently a resident of Carrboro, where he leads the popular band Mandolin Orange with his bandmate Emily Frantz, Marlin explains that his mother’s piano playing exerted a strong influence on him throughout his childhood. “My mom played piano her whole life, and her mom – my grandmother – played piano her whole life.”

“Mom played for the church, and so my whole life the piano was just right outside of my bedroom door. A lot of times when I’d be going to bed, she would be playing, practicing for Sunday. That kind of got me started on old hymns and stuff like that. I love the old hymns and I love the structures of those old tunes and the melodies.”

Marlin purchased his first guitar at the age of fourteen, with the money he earned working at Southern States in Warrenton. “It took me two weeks to pay for a hundred-dollar guitar,” he remembers. “Once I bought it, I just sat down and started playing with it. My folks kept telling me to take lessons, but I wouldn’t do it. And you know, I haven’t put it down since then. I’ve been writing tunes since I was fourteen.”

Despite Marlin’s affinity for vintage traditional music of the bluegrass, country, and old-time varieties, he says that he didn’t begin to explore those forms until his late teens. “I was coming back from Henderson with some friends one time,” Marlin remembers, “and we stopped by the Ridgeway Opry House, and that was about the first time I had listened to bluegrass.”

“It was just a whole new world introduced to me. I really liked the music they were playing. It was easy – anybody could just fall into it – and the melodies were simple. It was kind of like my mom playing those old hymns, simple chords, simple melodies, all that good stuff.”

Clearly Marlin and Frantz, as Mandolin Orange, have struck upon a musical combination that works. The duo can usually be found packing venues around the Triangle on any given night, singing original songs that are informed by the traditional music Marlin heard growing up in Warren County. Says Marlin, “You can basically do whatever you want. You can create whatever world you want to enter into. It’s a good way to escape.”

Matt Nelson
Country and blues harmonica player and singer
Vaughan, Warren County

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Warren County musician and retired farmer Matt Nelson raised 51 crops of flue-cured tobacco on the same land where he was born and raised, near Vaughan, North Carolina. As a boy, Nelson found himself drawn to the blues music played by African American laborers on his father’s farm. He explains, “When I was a child of about eight years old in the late 1930s, there was a black guy that lived not too far from me that played the guitar. I heard him playing the blues, and I liked it. That’s what really started my interest in the blues – listening to that.”

Not long afterwards, Nelson purchased his first instrument. “I started playing harmonica when I was 13 years old,” he remembers. “I bought my first one from Rose’s dime store in Littleton for a quarter, and I learned to play ‘Oh Susanna’ on it.” While Nelson was aware that the harmonica could be used to play the blues – he was a fan of players like Sonny Terry – it wasn’t until he witnessed a performance by renowned African American medicine show performer Peg Leg Sam that he began to understand the mechanics behind playing blues harp. “I played what they call ‘straight harp’ for five or six years,” recalls Nelson.

Around 1950, I was at a warehouse in Rocky Mount watching the tobacco sale, and I could hear some music out back. I walked out there, and there was a peg-legged man playing a harmonica. His right leg was gone right below the knee, and he had a wooden peg. I listened to him playing, and I knew he was playing the same kind of harmonica I played, but I knew it wasn’t sounding like what I did. I listened to him play for a while; he was playing something about an iceman.

When he stopped playing, [...] I said, 'Can you play 'The Iceman Blues' for me?' He said, 'Iceman,' coming up.' So he played it and I listened to him play and kind of caught on to what he was doing.

Later, after I realized what he was doing, within an hour's time I could halfway play what he had been doing. I realized that he was playing the harmonica off-key. In other words, he was playing a G-tuned harmonica – what they call a major or diatonic tuning, which is the normal harmonica – in D. Once I realized that he was cross-playing it I could play 'The Iceman Blues' within a day or two.

Nelson continued to absorb as much blues music as his farming and school schedules would allow. He recalls seeing musician Blind Boy Fuller, one of the greatest Piedmont blues musicians, play his trademark “Step It Up and Go” at a tobacco warehouse in Henderson, and purchasing music – including records by Furry Lewis and Jimmy Liggins – from Harry Black’s pawn shop in the same town. He also attended regional square dances and picking parties, explaining,

I'd get together with a bunch of boys at some place out on the edge of town, and we'd play. That is actually where I learned to play the blues good – getting around somebody that could handle a guitar and playing like that.

Despite the fact that Nelson was becoming a formidable harmonica player and singer, he put the instrument down for over three decades. A few years ago, however, Nelson dusted off his harps at the behest of his grandniece in Roanoke Rapids, who needed some accompaniment for a music program. Since that time, he’s become a regular at regional venues such as the Norlina Jamboree and the Ridgeway Opry House, often singing one of his signature tunes – such as “The Iceman Blues.” While Nelson is adept in traditional styles – including country and western and bluegrass – he holds a special place in his heart for the music he first heard as a child in the fields outside Vaughan. “I just love the blues,” he says.

Reuben Palmer
Wood turner
Soul City, Warren County

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Reuben Palmer says that ever since childhood, “for some reason, I just had a passion for wood.” That interest has led him to become a master in multiple fields of working with wood, from carpentry to furniture making to wood-turning. Except for a carpentry class that he attended in the 1990s – by which time he had already been constructing buildings and making fine furniture for years – Palmer has never had any formal training in woodwork. His earliest lessons were learned by observation while spending time with his father, Charlie Palmer.

Charlie Palmer was also an exceptionally skilled builder and crafter, who built his own first home, a log cabin, at the age of 18. On the Palmers’ farm, where they grew tobacco, cotton, and cucumbers for market, as well as corn for their livestock, and garden crops for the family, there was always something that

needed building or fixing. The elder Palmer built all the sheds and other buildings on the property. He made tools, and when the handle of a hoe would break, he would turn a new one. He also knew how to make baskets from white-oak splints, and he showed young Reuben how to choose and cut a tree, and shave the wood into splints, which he would soak just long enough for them to become pliable for weaving.

With the knowledge gained from his father's teaching, as well as his own considerable skills, and much practice, Reuben Palmer built a career. He taught building for Vance-Granville Community College for years, and it was at Vance-Granville that he first became intrigued with the lathe. After looking longingly at the machine for some days, Palmer finally tried it out. The first piece of wood he put on it, he remembers, went flying through the air, because it was not centered properly. But "I just fell in love with that lathe," he says. As with the other wood arts that he had mastered, Palmer soon became expert in wood-turning.

Today Reuben Palmer turns wood at his home workshop, on the same land that his family farmed when he was growing up. He crafts beautiful bowls, vases, and plates, both solid and segmented, and sands the surfaces to a fine, silken finish that emphasizes the unique beauties of each piece of wood.

In 2010, Palmer entered a vase into competition at the Warren County Fair. 8 inches tall and 10 inches wide, the vase is constructed from more than 700 pieces of walnut, oak, purple heart, and holly. He took home the Best in Show award, which vaulted him into competition at the state level. In late October of that year, Palmer was awarded the statewide Best in Show prize at the North Carolina State Fair.

Pastor Brenda Peace-Jenkins
Gospel singer
Henderson, Vance County

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Pastor Brenda Peace, nee Gale Jenkins, is minister of the congregation at Greater Little Zion Holy Church in the Flint Hill section of Henderson, North Carolina, a region that she has called home since the age of six. Peace remembers her childhood as a good one, explaining that work at that time was plentiful.

There were two cotton mills here, one in North Henderson and one in South Henderson. During that time, the community was thriving because people had jobs, they had the means of getting to their jobs, and they were able to

buy their homes. In addition, there was the J. P. Taylor tobacco factory. My dad retired from there. So as long as those things were functioning, people had jobs. Eventually, as time went on, the cotton mills eventually closed down completely, and that put a lot of people out of work.

It was in Flint Hill that Peace began to play music, often in the company of her siblings. "It just came to us naturally," she explains.

I remember that we had an old upright piano in the house. We always had a piano. My mother played the piano for the Junior Choir at Greater Little Zion at the time. There were seven of us, and we just sang all the time. It never dawned on me that we were gifted or talented, or that we knew how to harmonize or any of that. Any time we got together, somebody was at the piano.

When Peace was ten years old, her mother decided to form a family gospel group, which she called the Richards Family. The group specialized in traditional sacred music, but the younger members of the band couldn't help but be influenced by the secular music that was popular at the time, including rock and roll and R&B. "My mother was a very religious woman," says Peace, "but we were lovers of music."

The young singer continued to hone her musical skills, and the Richards Family developed a reputation as being among the most skilled gospel groups in the region. In 1997, Peace accepted the call to the ministry after she experienced a prophecy that she would eventually become the pastor of Greater Little Zion. A member of a family who had played a central role in the foundation of the church, Peace blazed a trail as Greater Little Zion's first female pastor and its first locally raised pastor.

Peace is now known around her neighborhood as the Flint Hill Pastor for her dedication to the place that she has called home for more than four decades. She continues to employ her prodigious musical skills in each of her weekly sermons, making sure that Greater Little Zion remains the warm and welcoming institution that it has been for 75 years. "What I am is not something that I chose to be; it's not somewhere I thought I would be," Peace explains. "I'm just being obedient to what God has given me to do. He wants me to stay in this section of town, even when these walls get torn down and a new church is built. I have to be in Flint Hill, to help this community."

Margaret Person
Church musician and singer

Tillery, Halifax County

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Halifax County native Margaret Person is widely considered one of the preeminent performers of traditional church hymns in the region. The gifted singer and pianist has been intimately familiar with old meter hymns – such as those that appear in the National Baptist Hymn Book – since she was a child and could hear parishioners in the Tillery section of Halifax County singing them during outdoor services.

They were down by the riverside singing,” Person remembers. “You could hear those voices a long way off. When I was a child, we had to walk to church, and when we’d come around the curve, you could hear feet patting and hands clapping, but there wasn’t a piano. Those old folks, they were serving the Lord.

A largely self-taught pianist, Person remembers, “My mother and father taught us how to play those little songs like ‘Mama, Mama, Have You Heard?’ and ‘Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross.’” As a young musician, Person was asked to become the pianist at her family’s church. “When I was 16 years old, our pastor asked my mother and father if I could play for the choir, and they gave me permission to do that. He wanted me to take music in order to learn how to play hymns, because that was his style of music – hymns. I took enough music to learn how to play those hymns in that hymnbook, and he said, ‘Don’t worry about that other stuff. You just stick with those hymns.’ He was old, and by ‘other stuff,’ he was referring to contemporary music; he wasn’t for that.”

Over time, Person traveled throughout Halifax County, playing for choirs at Piney Grove, Zion Hill, and Crowell’s Missionary Baptist Churches, and at First Baptist Church in Halifax. She also traveled to churches in Nash County, filling in for pianists as needed. During this period her skills grew even further. Despite the fact that Person has been playing for over six decades, she still maintains a vigorous schedule that has her accompanying multiple choirs in the area. “Lord, I’m so tired when Monday morning comes,” she laughs.

Asked what it is that draws her to traditional hymns, Person explains, “Just listen to the words. That is the most important part of a song – the words. They bring back memories about how God has done things for you. When I hear about choirs that only sing contemporary gospel, I think, Oh, Lord – they just don’t know what they’re missing.”

Debbie Lou Powell
Quilter
Henderson, Vance County

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Debbie Powell grew up in Epsom, between Henderson and Louisburg, observing just about every kind of needlework but quilting. Her mother was skilled at knitting, crocheting, tatting, embroidery, and needlepoint. She did not care greatly for sewing, though, and taught her daughter, then a young teenager, how to make her own clothes. Powell was soon so accomplished that she made her own prom gowns. Later, married and raising her own children, she sewed professionally, so as to be able to work at home.

Powell's love of quilt-making dates to a class that she and her mother enrolled in at Vance-Granville Community College, taught by local quilter Peggy Stocks. Together they learned about hand-piecing quilts, and later Powell would go on to take a machine-quilting course. Though she enjoys and is very accomplished in hand stitching, she finds that it is both enjoyable and efficient to piece and quilt on a machine. "People say, 'Well that's not purist, that's not the real way to quilt,' and I say to them, 'I [knew] my grandmother, and if she had had my equipment, she would have used it.'"

Her first experience as a quilting instructor came when her friend, who was teaching a course, experienced a health issue and asked Powell to help her out. "I fell into teaching by accident, and I absolutely love it." She now teaches at her own business, Miss Lou's Quilting Studio on Route 1. Like her mentor Peggy Stocks, Debbie Powell has encouraged many others to take up the art form that she loves. She feels that quilters are a special sort of person, and, in particular, are very generous in spirit. "I can honestly say I've never met one I didn't like."

In her teaching, Powell emphasizes that a quilt-maker can express his or her creativity, as well as be authentically traditional, whether sewing by hand or with a machine. She tells them, "There are no rules and regulations, there are no quilt police. You just do what you want to do, and that is your creativity." When it comes to patterns, she also encourages innovation, but finds that in North Carolina, the traditional patterns, like log cabin, remain the favorites. "They want

to make art quilts, and they want to hang them,” she says of quilters, “but they want to go back to covering up with the Log Cabin.”

Alan and Betsy Reid

Country/bluegrass/gospel banjo player and bassist

Warrenton, Warren County

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Visit any musical function in Warren County – say, the Friday-night Norlina Jamboree or the Ridgeway Opry House on a Saturday night – and you’re likely to find Alan and Betsy Reid at the core of the house band. Alan explains that while he was raised in a musical family in Warrenton – his mother and aunt would often sing on the radio in Rocky Mount during tobacco sales – he didn’t begin to play the banjo until he was in his early twenties.

“I bought a little Sears and Roebuck model,” he recalls. “It was kind of hard to play and keep in tune and all, but I brought it home and had it on the table. My grandfather picked it up and started playing it. I didn’t even know he could play. He didn’t use picks; he just used two fingers.” After learning of his grandfather’s skill on the instrument, Alan set about picking up the two-finger style favored by the older Reid. “The first song he taught me was ‘Red River Valley,’” he explains. “I started playing a little two-finger. I play in that style a whole lot now.”

“I would say it was five years before I really started playing well enough to play with anybody. About that same time, Robin St. Sing was getting started good, too, messing with the Dobro. Our first group together consisted of Robin St. Sing, myself, James Matthews, Butch Meek, and Tommy Brantley, and we played as the Country Grass Band. So we started performing around then, and it was good fun. We’d play at dances and stuff like that.”

Alan’s wife, Betsy, was born and raised in the Vicksboro section of Vance County, and met her future husband while she was working at the Progress Energy plant in Warren County. Though her mother played accordion and her sister played the piano, it wasn’t until she and Alan married that she picked up the bass guitar. She explains:

I actually had no idea that I could even play anything until I was married to him and started going to dances where he was playing. Then when they all started coming to the house, that's when I really got interested in the bass; I could see the other bass player sitting around playing. The bass player of Country Grass – James Matthews – is the one who really enticed me to play, because I just loved to hear him playing. I'd sit across the room and watch him. Finally, Alan bought me a bass, and I started sitting on the other side of the room. He showed me a few chords, and after that I just picked it up and started playing.

It's fair to say that the Reids are central figures in Warren County's musical community. For their part, the couple sees music as a means towards fellowship and a way of strengthening community bonds. Says Alan, "I don't care about competitive playing. I want everybody to be recognized for what they're doing – though I do think the music is just as good here as you can hear anywhere." Betsy nods, adding, "We really enjoy it together."

Wayne Reid
Country electric and acoustic guitarist
Henderson, Vance County

"A lot of people own guitars," laughs Henderson native Wayne Reid. "But everyone that owns a guitar is not a musician." A veteran of the European country music circuit – he played guitar for 28 Grand Ole Opry tours between 1968 and 1972 – Reid certainly understands what being a musician demands. "I started out trying to be a singer," he explains. "And then I ran into a tape recorder."

After that, I immediately became a lead guitar player. I heard this guy who used to play on a show over in Raleigh; he was backing up singers on the guitar, and I thought that was the most beautiful thing I'd ever heard, the way he played background behind the singer. So that's what I studied most of all, how to play backup to a singer.

A nephew of regional fiddler Lefty Reid, young Wayne Reid acquired his first guitar in 1952 at the age of 15, inspired by the likes of Chet Atkins, Hank Garland, and Leon Rhodes. "I had a friend who bought a guitar," he remembers, "and nothing would come out right, so he tore the strings off and sold it to me for a dollar a week – I paid nine dollars total. That's how I started." Innately gifted as a musician, Reid worked his way through a guitar instruction book by Wayne Raney and Lonnie Glosson, eventually scoring a regular gig on Henderson's WHBH, where he further honed his chops. "On Friday nights, we had a jamboree in uptown Henderson at the Stevenson Theatre, which was recorded and played back on the radio on Saturday morning," Reid explains.

“That was pretty much all I was doing until I was drafted into the Army one month before I turned 26.”

However, far from hampering his musical career, Reid’s military service provided his point of entry into the floorshows in Germany, Holland, and Italy. “While I was in the Army, I met this guy that was a retired sergeant. He ran an agency, and he had about seven country bands that played all the military bases. I started playing for him.” Following his overseas stint – during which time he played for stars such as Bobby Bare, Johnny Paycheck, and Barbara Mandrell – Reid returned to North Carolina, where he played on the WDVA Jamboree and the Jim Thornton Show in Durham. I tried to live a regular life, but I still had the itch.”

Throughout the 1980s and ‘90s, Reid focused on his career outside of music as well as raising a family. For many years, he pursued his boyhood dream of drawing comic books, eventually working for 13 different publishers. He continues to this day to play guitar with local bands, and can frequently be found onstage at Dee’s Music Barn in Creedmoor on Saturday nights. Wayne Reid is a consummate professional, a soulful player who continues to draw on the lessons he learned as a young man touring Europe. “There’s something very unusual about people who play country music,” he explains. “They’re a very unique bunch of people. Listeners think country music sounds so simple that anybody can play it, but they can’t. It’s a very specialized music.”

Marty Richardson
Haliwa-Saponi drummer and singer
Hollister, Warren County

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Marty Richardson is a founding member of the Stoney Creek Singers and a leader in the Tutelo-Saponi language revitalization movement. "I've been involved in American Indian culture since I could walk. My parents pushed me out into the dance arena; I started out as a fancy dancer at pow-wows, and I still consider myself that."

Richardson was born in Rocky Mount, and his family always maintained strong connections with the local Haliwa-Saponi community, even when they moved to the Baltimore area, where Richardson's father took a job with the American

Indian Center. “This was always home,” he says. “We may have lived in Baltimore, we never really called that home. This was where family was; this was where our roots were.”

Richardson attended many pow-wows throughout his childhood, and soon found himself drawn to the musical component of these events. “The drum started calling me,” he explains. “Eventually, I started sitting in, which means you go up to a drum and you ask [the drummers] whether you can sit in with them. That indicates that you’re ready to learn; you’re ready to take on something new. That’s what I did. I don’t ever remember being nervous around the drum. It was kind of like a natural thing. I remember being glad, and being dedicated to it. It takes a lot of willpower and dedication to be a singer. It’s not just a matter of sitting down and singing a few war whoops. That’s not what American Indian singing is. There are thousands of songs, and each type of song has hundreds of variants to go with specific dances. I dedicated myself to that.”

By the time he was in his early teens, Richardson had put together the Young Society, a singing group inspired by local groups such as the Shallow Water Singers and the White Tail Singers. Not long afterwards, Richardson – who was still living in the greater Baltimore area, and trading tapes by mail with group members in order to learn new songs – found out that a nineteenth-century linguist had recorded the language of the Tutelo, a tribe closely allied with the Saponi. Remembers Richardson, “I started reading more and I found out – and this is the revelation of my life, literally – that some of their language had been written down.”

The young singer traced the article to a Washington, DC, archive where he hand-copied over 800 Tutelo-Saponi words and their English translations. Not only was this a monumental discovery within the Haliwa-Saponi community, but it dovetailed nicely with Richardson’s desire to begin composing songs in his ancestral language, which he soon began doing.

By 1993, the Richardson family had moved back to the Hollister region, and Marty began to put together the Stoney Creek Singers – named after a body of water in the Rocky Mount area that is part of the Haliwa-Saponis’ historic home – drawing from his earlier singing groups. “Our first pow-wow was in November of 1993 at the Great American Indian Exposition in Richmond, Virginia,” he recalls. The Stoney Creek Singers are now a venerable institution within the Haliwa-Saponi Tribe, and have inspired younger generations of singing groups such as Blue Moon and the Red Earth Singers. Since 1994 they have released several recordings.

Richardson earned his Bachelor's degree from UNC Pembroke, went on to get his Master's degree in Sociocultural Anthropology at Indiana University, and is currently a PhD candidate in history at UNC Chapel Hill. He has become as fluent as is currently possible in the Tutelo-Saponi language, and explains that in the past couple of years, "my phrases have become deeper."

Royal Jubilee Singers
Gospel quartet
Roanoke Rapids, Halifax County

“I just love to sing; I don’t know of anything that I love in this world better,” says Otis Jones, lead singer for Roanoke Rapids’ Royal Jubilee Singers. Jones has been singing with the Royal Jubilee Singers – an a capella group modeled on early quartets like the Golden Gate Quartet, the Heavenly Gospel Singers, and the Selah Jubilee Singers – for nearly six decades, and his gift and dedication to his craft are clearly evident in the way he leads the group through well-loved songs like “Lord, I’m in Your Care” and “Working on a Building.”

Jones explains that his love for singing began early. His family farmed, and the young singer took any opportunity he could to improve his skills. “I would go up in the barn loft,” he remembers. “And as I looked through the peanut vines to get peanuts out of them, I would sing those Golden Gate songs. That’s how I got started.”

Jones remembers the Roanoke Rapids of his childhood being a place that encouraged community and creativity, and in this way fostered his own ambitions as a singer.

We had a lot of love then. People in the community mainly farmed, so we had the chance to see each other on a regular basis. Now, we don’t see each other because everybody’s busy doing their own thing. At that time, we would often get together. We used to have something called Children’s Day, and the young boys would have little quartets they’d gotten together, and they would sing on the program. That’s the way it was back then.

The Royal Jubilee Singers – who currently count Deacons Otis Jones, Fred Carter, Gilbert Harding, Ralph Hardy, and Brother James Johnson as members – are considered among the top tier of gospel quartets in the region. All in their eighties (except for Johnson, who is in his seventies), the group continues to perform on church programs throughout Halifax County. “The Lord has blessed us,” says Jones. “We have been to many places. We’re getting slower in age now, but God continues to bless us.”

Louis Sachs
Wood-turner
Henderson, Vance County

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Growing up in Henderson, Louis Sachs learned woodworking skills early on from his father. As a young man he worked at the family business, which produced handmade furniture, as well as a variety of smaller wooden household items. He would go on to other pursuits and careers – from dirtbike racing to engineering – before becoming the expert wood-turner he is today.

Several years ago, Sachs paid a visit to a friend who was a woodworker, and found that at his home the friend had on display hundreds of turned bowls that he had made himself. “It humbled me,” remembers Sachs, “but at the same time, it inspired the heck out of me.” The friend encouraged him to try woodturning, and predicted that one day Sachs would be even more skilled than he, having the considerable advantage of a background not only in woodwork, but also in engineering.

With experimentation at home on his own woodworking equipment and further inspiration from the DIY Network, Sachs was soon making a variety of hand-turned bowls, in traditional and contemporary forms. Many of the bowls are carved from solid wood, while others are segmented and combine a variety. Sachs collects wood from locally-felled trees, and customers sometimes bring him pieces from treasured trees that have come down. Sachs also makes wooden cutting boards, and in recent years has created a line of duck and other game calls.

Today, from his home studio in Henderson, he operates Sachs Woodcrafts. Billed as the Bowl Man, he shows and sells his work at regional events and venues, including the River Mill in Weldon. His work is enjoyed in homes around the country and overseas.

St. Sing Family
String band and gospel musicians
Macon, Warren County

Robin St. Sing (252) 257-4836

Asked about Warren County's musical legacy, most regional musicians are likely to mention Macon's St. Sing Family among those of whom they are most proud. "[Robert St. Sing is] one of the best country guitar players I've ever heard," says harmonica player Matt Nelson. "He could have been a professional if he'd gone to Nashville; he was actually better than some of the musicians that played for Hank Snow or Hank Williams or Ernest Tubb. Anything he heard he could play. There aren't many like him."

Longtime residents of Warren County, Robert St. Sing and his brother Zeb began to play at an early age. "My oldest brother ordered a guitar from Chicago," Robert remembers. "He laid it down on the bed and he wasn't fooling with it, so Zeb got to fooling with it, and then I got to fooling with it. We learned it that way. I must have been nine years old." Inspired by the popular hillbilly music of the day, such as North Carolina-based musicians including Charlotte's Arthur Smith, and the Tobacco Tags – the St. Sing brothers were soon entering local fiddle contests, with Zeb on fiddle and Robert on guitar, frequently taking home the purse. "We used to go to the fiddlers' conventions in Norlina and play," says Robert. "We were little bitty things, and we were scared to death, but we went up there and did it."

In time, the St. Sings were making their musical names entertaining at local functions, including square dances at the Armory in Warrenton and house parties, many of which they hosted themselves. "They would go to somebody's house and clear out one whole room," explains Robert's son Robin, laughing. "The place would just pile up with people. That's what a dance consisted of."

And they used to play at the basement here [at the family home in Macon]. People would come over here. I asked Daddy the other week, 'How did we get all these chairs in the basement?' and he said, 'This is where we used to play music.'

By the time the brothers St. Sing were drafted into the military during World War II, they were without peer as multi-instrumentalists in the region. Remembers Robert, "I had to get it from the radio and records, because nobody could show me nothing back then."

Small wonder, then, that Robert's sons, Robin and Bobby, became excellent musicians – on the Dobro and fiddle, respectively – in their own rights. Robin, who can be found most weekends playing at the Norlina Jamboree and the Ridgeway Opry House, explains that the first song he ever learned to play was "Two Dollar Bill." For his part, Bobby moved to Nashville, where he worked as a session musician for several years before settling in Kentucky.

Perhaps most remarkable is the emotion that comes through in the St. Sings' playing, a quality that is difficult to achieve, no matter the amount of practice. Robin says, "Somebody told me once, 'You really play from your soul.' Well, that might be a good way to look at it." Robert concurs, "Music's good for you – any kind."

Alice Clark Sallins
Storyteller
Henderson, Vance County

(252) 767-4579
alicevc2002@yahoo.com

Alice Sallins' talent for communication is an integral part of the varied ways in which she serves her community. A gifted singer, she teaches music at a Henderson elementary school. She is the minister of an independent congregation and the author of a column on faith in the Henderson Daily Dispatch. She is also a storyteller in a tradition handed down by her mother, a native of Granville County.

Among her mother's favorite stories to tell were narratives from the Bible. Sallins remembers that her mother's delivery of these stories was especially vivid, because of her enthusiasm and ability to convey the essence of the different personalities. Sallins also grew up hearing folktales and fables, as well as the life experiences of her grandmother and other elders in the community. "I learned a lot from . . . sitting around older people."

In her capacity as an educator Sallins often combines storytelling with sharing books with children. By acting out and expanding upon the words of a children's book, she encourages the audience's curiosity about reading. She also shares

traditional and childhood stories with her students. She especially likes fables, “because there are always lessons to be learned.”

In 2010, she gave her first public storytelling performances for adults. She believes that it is important to share stories, particularly those about community history, with grownups as well as children. She plans to seek future opportunities for sharing with the public her trove of tales. “ It was just that love that Mother inspired . . . I love when people are enjoying – they’re sitting on the edge of their seats, and they’re smiling...I get so excited just to see how excited they are.”

Wade Schuster
Country singer and guitar player
Henderson, Vance County

(252) 492-4687

As a six-year-old in the small Warren County community of Oine, Wade Schuster could tune his family’s radio to Chicago’s WJJD just in time to catch the Suppertime Frolic show. It was then, the Henderson musician explains, that he became transfixed by country music – in particular the work of country and western star Hank Williams. Says Schuster, “I knew when I heard Hank Williams sing that I wanted to do that.”

The youngest of eight children, Schuster grew up in a farming family. “We farmed tobacco, cotton, and corn,” he remembers.

When it came to planting the crop, my two brothers and my daddy would do the plowing. Daddy would always take a bucket, which was full of soda, and he’d

show us – my sisters and I – how he wanted us to dress the crop. He'd say, 'Now you all go ahead and drop the top dressing, and we're going to plow it behind you.' And sometimes those rows just looked like they kept winding around forever. But we were always a close-knit family. We worked together, and we played together. We did it all, and we were all in the same boat; nobody had a whole lot, but we had each other.

Between farm work and school, Schuster had little free time, but he explains that his family was a musical one, and both his mother and father played the harmonica around the house. His mother's skill in particular impressed him; she played family favorites like "Home Sweet Home" and "Redwing" with soulfulness and an improvisational spirit.

At the age of seven, Schuster was given a guitar for Christmas, and he began to learn the rudiments of the instrument. Schuster laughs, "Elvis Presley came out, and I came out with him." A born showman, he recalls his early stage ambitions outstripping his ability on the guitar. "We had a fiddlers' convention up there at Norlina High School, in the gymnasium one night. And we had a fellow there named Norman Ball. Everybody – especially the older set – knew of Norman Ball, because he was a big-time fiddler. He played left handed, and he held the fiddle down in his elbow. Well, I played in that show – a fiddlers' convention, mind you – and I didn't know a single chord on the guitar. I sang [Elvis Presley's] 'Jailhouse Rock.'"

Schuster continued to hone his musical skills throughout his teenage years, eventually appearing on a number of radio programs in Henderson, and performing with area group the Warren County Ramblers. Following high school, he was stationed with the National Guard in Fort Knox, Kentucky, where he often performed for his fellow servicemen.

Upon his return to North Carolina, Schuster settled down to raise a family and concentrate on his job as the Training and Personnel Director at the Harriet-Henderson textile mill, and later running a delivery route throughout the tricounty area. Throughout this time, he continued to perform in the region, becoming a regular at the Ridgeway Opry House in Ridgeway. Schuster is the type of musician whom other musicians admire – a gifted and affable performer just as adept at performing a rollicking country tune as he is a three-quarter-time weeper.

Alan Ralph Stallings
Singer and guitarist
Roanoke Rapids, Halifax County
(252) 537-7580

Within the musical community of Halifax County, Alan Ralph Stallings is known as a musician's musician. A lifelong native of the region and currently a resident

of Roanoke Rapids, Stallings possesses a broad, powerful vocal range that places him squarely in the tradition of gifted singers, such as Roy Orbison, who have the ability to alternate between silky low and keening high registers, often within the space of a single song. Stallings is also an accomplished multi-instrumentalist; in addition to the guitar – the instrument on which he accompanies himself during most performances – he plays the bass, piano, and drums.

Alan Stallings credits his grandfather – also a gifted musician – with teaching him the rudiments of musical technique and harmony. “He was the musical force in our background,” explains Stallings. “The main influence. He taught me and my siblings how to sing, and was an inspiration to us.” “My mother tells me that my grandfather would sing, ‘Here Comes the Bride’ – he would hum it, you know? Anyway, when I was about 18 months old, I sat up in the bed and start singing it, parodying what he did. I don’t remember this, though Mama remembers it. That’s how I started.”

As Stallings got older, he began to play music with friends, gradually improving his skill on the guitar under the guidance of more experienced players and with tips from a chord book. Stallings explains that he was always drawn to music, from Hank Williams and Eddy Arnold to the pop music that was appearing on the radio during his childhood. Says Stallings, “I enjoyed music probably more than television when I was small.”

During his teenage years, Stallings started a gospel trio with his older siblings, Tony and Cathy. Calling themselves the Stallings Family, the group sang Southern gospel in churches throughout Halifax County. While not as active as they once were, this group still performs on occasion.

While it’s hard to imagine any doubt about Stallings’ calling, he explains that he “didn’t really settle on music fully” until he was in his late teens. In 1979, he sang at his high school talent show, an event about which he recalls laughingly, “I enjoyed myself, but I was scared to death. And the reaction was very good. The audience sounded like they were about to tear the place apart.”

Asked about the secret to his musical skills, Stallings modestly chalks it up to “years and years of practice.” Alan Stallings currently performs solo, and as a duo with guitarist Sparkie Watts of Roanoke Rapids.

Quilter
Manson area, Vance County

(252) 456-3403

Peggy Stocks cannot remember a time when she did not know how to sew. Growing up in Wilmington, she learned from her grandmothers, who were both skilled seamstresses. Of her paternal grandmother, she says, "I remember sitting in the swing with her, and she would let me make my daddy's handkerchiefs." Her mother's mother made quilts, and on her treadle sewing machine would stitch fabric to torn-out pages of the Sears-Roebuck catalog, and join those together in a string quilt. But "the only thing I was allowed to do was pull the paper off the back," says Stocks. Though she was very interested in learning how to make quilts, her mother and grandmother decided that she wasn't ready. "They said I was too restless, I couldn't sit still long enough. So I grew up wanting to learn."

Years later, as a young mother in Greensboro, Stocks sewed often for her two daughters. But it was not until her younger daughter left for college that she decided the time had come to learn quilting. She still had a while to wait, though, as the quilting class she wanted to attend at Guilford Tech was so popular that it had a one-year waiting list. When a spot opened in the class, at last she learned how to make quilts.

In the years since, Stocks estimates, she has made between 100 and 125 quilts. Though occasionally she pieces on a machine, and when she gets backed up with too many pieced tops she will sometimes have them machine-quilted, she greatly prefers hand-sewing for the greater control that it affords her. The majority of her work is both pieced and quilted by hand. Also, she says, "the thing about hand piecing is that you can put it in a bag and take it with you, and sit there and watch a ballgame."

Since the mid-1990s, she has taught quilting at Vance-Granville Community College. Through her class she has made a significant contribution to the renaissance of quilt-making in this part of North Carolina, teaching many students who have gone on to become expert quilters as well, including Heritage Quilters Leo Kelly and Wallace Evans, and Debbie Powell, owner of Miss Lou's Quilting Studio.

Raymond Strum
Country, bluegrass, and gospel guitarist and singer
Henderson, Vance County

(252) 438-3931

Henderson native Raymond Strum was born in 1939. Growing up, he and his nine older siblings learned to plow the family's tobacco fields with a mule.

You had a few people that would work in town – at banks, or at farm stores that sold fertilizer and stuff, but 95% of the kids I went to school with were from farming families. We just came up raising tobacco. We had a little cotton. Raised enough corn for the team to eat, and for the cows; everybody raised their own food at home. You had milk cows, and you had pigs that you raised. And we just grew up in – well, what I call poor farm families, although we really didn't feel poor because everybody was in the same boat.

It was in this milieu – in which Strum remembers families traveling to downtown Warrenton on weekends, often in horse-drawn wagons, to purchase what they couldn't grow – that he began to learn to play the guitar. “Back then,” says Strum, “There wasn't any TV. But my father played a little music. He'd get together with some friends at somebody's [tobacco] strip house and have a little dance or something like that.”

My daddy was a banjo picker. Back then they played more clawhammer style; they didn't do this three-finger roll stuff. And my mother was a good singer. As a child, I remember them playing and singing. Most of my older brothers could play a few chords on the guitar. They weren't anything fantastic, but they could play enough to sing with. You just sort of grew into it, like a child grows into seeing his daddy farming. You picked up things all along the way.

Over time, Strum became a gifted musician, often singing while he worked his family's plot of land. “There isn't nothing that will soothe a mule like singing or whistling all day long,” laughs Strum. “And see, if you were trying to sing and your voice was breaking or you couldn't quite get the high notes you wanted to get, the mule didn't care. He just kept on working.”

In 1967, Strum took a job with the local telephone company, a job he retired from after 35 years. At the same time, he continued to play – mainly bluegrass and country music – throughout the counties of Vance and Warren, including a stint as a member of Wayne Kinton’s Tri-County Bluegrass Band. The music venues during that time, Strum remembers, were informal and community-based. “There was a little grill in Epsom,” he says, “And we would gather down there at night and play. You’d have 30 or 40 people come in, sit around, eat, play a little music down there. Nothing professional. Just something to enjoy a little music and pass the time.”

Raymond Strum is considered one of the elder statesmen among musicians in the tri-county area, equally adept at singing a shuffling country weeper or a high lonesome bluegrass song. For his part, Strum credits his musical gifts to his traditional upbringing, a way of life in which skills were learned within the community. “I wouldn’t take nothing for being raised the way I was,” says Strum.

Mattie Taylor
Needleworker
Roanoke Rapids, Halifax County

(252) 537-3035

A lifetime of working with fabric has made Mattie Taylor one of Halifax County's best-known craftspeople. She is a familiar face, and her handmade dolls favorite items, at area fairs and festivals. In recent years she has learned a new fabric art, now making exceptional quilts.

A native of Roanoke Rapids, Taylor was born in the house next-door to her current residence. Her father farmed on a share, and she left school as a young teenager to help with the family's hard work. At 17 she took a job at a cotton mill to help make ends meet. She excelled in her work, and over the decades, working 12-hour days, she rose to a position as an inspector. She developed a keen eye for flaws in material caused by loom malfunctions, a skill that has served her well in her personal work with fabric as well. Taylor and her husband raised three sons, and for many years she sewed clothes for the whole family.

About twenty years ago, at her sister's encouragement, Taylor made her first Raggedy Ann doll. Introduced to the public in 1915, Raggedy Ann and Andy dolls have a long and interesting history as manufactured and later home-made toys, as characters in a series of books, and even as symbols of a movement in medical activism. McCall's patterns for the dolls are commercially available

today. Taylor has made countless Raggedy Ann and Raggedy Andy dolls in the last two decades, and has sold them to families all over the country. One of the most recognizable characteristics of her dolls are the finely embroidered facial features. She also signs and dates every doll.

She has continued to learn more forms of needlework. Just a few years ago she attended a quilting class at Halifax Community College. With a new outlet for her creativity and mastery of sewing, Taylor now enjoys making large quilts in traditional patterns, which she shares with her family.

Ellis Vaughan
Chair seat weaver
Halifax, Halifax County

(252) 583-4201

For many years Halifax County native Ellis Vaughan and his wife Margaret were proprietors of the antique shop Treasures and Trash in Weldon. During their years in the business and their many antique-hunting sojourns, they gained a deep knowledge of old forms of furniture.

Vaughan had a longtime interest in building with wood, dating to his high school days in the late 1930s, when he attended shop class. He remembers his excitement at the newfound skills: "I thought I could build near-about anything I wanted now. And I could." In addition to skills, he had talent, and years later he would build very fine reproductions of antique furniture. He also made punched-tin panels for cabinets, and though he no longer does woodworking, he recalls how much he loved working with a lathe.

One day Margaret Vaughan came home from the shop with an old chair that needed to have its seat replaced. She intended to learn how to weave a seat herself, but instead it was Ellis who went to the library and found a book on the craft. He became a very skilled chair seat weaver, working with laced cane, rush, rope, and other traditional materials. About the now-rare art, he says, "I feel that I'm performing a service that is no longer available in a whole lot of places."

Today, in his late eighties, he stays busy. He weaves chair seats for antique dealers in North Carolina and Virginia, and individual customers come to him from as far as fifty miles away to have their prized antique chairs bottomed. "I appreciate the people having the confidence in me to let me do it," he says.

Over the years, when not working with antique furniture, Ellis Vaughan has found time to minister to the ill in nursing homes, teach Sunday school, and serve as Mayor of Halifax. He is a recipient of the Order of the Longleaf Pine Award.

The Warrenton Echoes
Gospel group
Warrenton, Warren County

James Martin, Jr. (252) 492-4881, (252) 213-0671

"If there was a group around town that anyone talked about or said anything about when I was growing up," remembers bassist Julian Smith, Jr., "it was the Warrenton Echoes." Founded in 1957, the Echoes – who currently count founders Roy "June" Foster and James Carter, alongside younger recruits James Martin, Jr., Previs Foster, Reginald Allen, and Smith as members – have long been celebrated performers on the Upper South's gospel circuit.

“When we first began, it was only four guys,” remembers June Foster. “It started out when we were farming. [Original member James Harris] made a guitar out of haywire, and when we’d break for lunch, we would go to his house and sit on the porch before it was time to go back to work and play. That’s how he learned how to play. He couldn’t play nothing at first, but he learned with the haywire. We didn’t have any money – we certainly didn’t have enough money to buy a guitar. So we took it from that.”

The early addition of powerful singer James Carter established the Warrenton Echoes as a group to watch. Carter’s masterful vocal delivery of traditional material such as “Standing On the Promises of God” has become one of the group’s trademarks. Gospel music has captivated him since childhood. “I used to sing behind the mule in the fields, and I’d get happy singing behind that mule. There used to be a group that came on the radio every day – the Selah Jubilee Singers. My daddy used to fuss at me all the time because I’d stop the muling and go to the house to listen to the radio.”

Smith elaborates, “A lot of their songs from that era were actually songs about working in fields and cutting wood, pulling wood home with mules and wagons, this type of stuff, because that’s where they originated from – out of those fields.” By the 1960s, the Warrenton Echoes had begun to perfect their sound, a rich musical tapestry that presented traditional African American hymns in tight gospel quartet harmony, while performing on programs with the likes of the legendary Dixie Hummingbirds. Despite their far-reaching acclaim – the group regularly traveled to South Carolina, Virginia, Washington, DC, New York, and Pennsylvania – the Warrenton Echoes remained very much a homegrown enterprise. June Foster’s son Previs explains that the Echoes’ sound “really came from traveling to community churches, to the homes and families in the communities of Warren County.”

Over time, retiring Echoes were replaced by younger members, all of whom had community connections to the group. Smith, Jr. explains, “These were the type of guys that inspired me to play, so to grow up and actually play with them is something special.” Concur Reginald Allen, “When they asked me to sing with the group, it was like a kid on Christmas.”

Since their inception, the Warrenton Echoes have become something of a training ground for gospel musicians, having provided North Carolina-based groups like Slim and the Supreme Angels and Rocky Mount’s Burden Lifters with some of their key members. And while the Echoes’ musical range is quite broad – the group is as adept at performing a contemporary number as they are a traditional piece – hymns stand at the group’s heart. Previs Foster says, “To me, [the Warrenton Echoes are] like a big bowl of jambalaya.”

You have your basis – to me, the basis is rice. But you have all those other ingredients that you put in. You put the shrimp, you put the chicken – whatever you want to put in it. It's a big bowl – a big collage of stuff, but the end result is good. It's just good. There's no other way to explain it. It's just good.

The Warrenton Echoes perform regularly at gospel programs and celebrations throughout North Carolina.

Fingerstyle guitarist
Roanoke Rapids, Halifax County

(252) 537-6481
sparkiewattsmusic@gmail.com

Renowned guitarist Sparkie Watts was born and raised within the city limits of Roanoke Rapids. His mother and father both worked at the local textile mill, and he recalls his upbringing as the third of four boys as a happy one. "We were poor," Watts explains, "but everybody else was too. There were very few people that had any money to amount to anything. We stayed out of trouble because of Mama and Daddy. We were boys, but they kept up with us pretty good."

Watts remembers his father spending what little free time he had away from the mill playing music. "My father was a guitar player, and that's where I picked it up at an early age, I guess," he says. "I still have a J-50 Gibson guitar that he bought in 1953." During this time, the Watts home regularly hosted informal picking sessions, during which the young guitarist began to pick up the rudiments of his musical technique. He remembers,

My father and his friends played primarily hymns – probably 85% hymns. But then they also played stuff like 'Soldier's Joy' and 'Black Mountain Rag.' A fiddle player would come along and play some stuff like that. There was a mandolin player in the group that usually came to the house too, and sometimes a bass player. I would join in, although I wasn't doing too much. I was just trying not to be too loud.

While Watts learned the basics of guitar chord shapes from his father, he soon outstripped the older man in skill on the instrument, a fact about which his father was rightfully proud. As a teenager, Watts remembers putting in long hours with his instrument, in the process beginning to develop the complex style that he is now known for. "Sometimes I would get with a couple of guys and we'd start playing on Friday afternoon around six o'clock," he laughs. "We'd play until six o'clock the next morning. And sometimes we'd do it again the next night."

Far from confining his playing to simple chordal accompaniment, Watts favors a fleet, jazzy fingerpicking style such as that pioneered by players like Chet Atkins, Paul Yandell, Jerry Reed, Hank Garland, and his favorite, Merle Travis. Using this style of play, Watts plays walking rhythm patterns with his thumb, while his index finger picks the lead melody; his repertoire consists of tunes popularized by Travis, as well as American standards, such as "Somewhere Over the Rainbow," that he has adapted for solo guitar.

Despite the fact that he was one of the top guitarists in the region, Watts explains that in his early twenties, he put down his instrument. "I put it down for twenty-five or thirty years," he remembers. "I hardly ever played. It just stayed in the closet." Over time, however, he picked up the guitar again, and began to re-hone his skills on the instrument. "One of my brothers makes the comment frequently that I knew as much at 13 years old as I know now," laughs Watts. "But I think I've picked up a little more since then. It's always come easy. It was natural."

Having raised a family and retired from his job as a supervisor at the J. P. Stevens & Co. textile mill, Watts is now able to dedicate himself wholly to music. He often performs solo or in tandem with local musician Alan Stallings. Watts is proud of his musical accomplishments, and clear that he has consciously chosen to work in this particular genre of playing, in part for the way that it connects him to an American music that he considers very important. "The style that I play," he says, "you just don't see many people doing it anymore."

Otha Wilkins
Old-time accordion player
Henderson, Vance County

"I've tried to quit the accordion two or three times, but everyone says 'Otha, you can't quit. You've got to play,'" laughs Otha Paul Wilkins. Born in 1926 and reared in the North Henderson section of Vance County, Wilkins grew up farming. "I didn't know about anything except raising sweet potatoes," he recalls. "That's what my daddy grew. We children had to pick them out of the ground with an old wooden peg."

Wilkins studied shape note singing at his church with a traveling representative of the Stamps-Baxter Music Company. "They'd come through to different churches and you had to pay so much to learn to sing with them," remembers Wilkins. He explains that the first time he encountered an accordion was through the wife of a local Church of God minister.

She said, "Brother Paul" – she called me by my middle name – "why don't you put it on and see if you can play it?" I said, "Oh Lord, I can't do anything with that thing. I wish I could." She said, "Put it on anyway and try it." I put it on and made some noise and she said, "Well, you're not quite ready for it yet, but you never know, maybe the Lord will have you play." I said, "I sure wish He would, that's one thing I want to do. I believe I could learn to play that one day or another."

It wasn't until Wilkins was an adult that he was given the opportunity to learn the instrument when he picked up his son's toy accordion – abandoned by the boy in the wake of the Beatles' popularity, when "everyone had to have guitars" – on a whim. Wilkins remembers,

I went out and I got on my knees with that little old accordion. I said, "Lord, it says on here that it can make good music." It wasn't but a little toy, but it started

me off and it showed me what to do. I said, "You know I don't know nothing about it. You've got to help me somehow so I'll be a blessing to somebody." I was sincere. After I got through praying, I said, "Lord, I'm depending on you." I reached down and got that little accordion and put my sunglasses on. I put it on and I said, "Here I am, Lord," and I put my hands right to the right keys and played "On Top of Old Smokey."

Over time, Wilkins developed into a formidable accordion player, adept at playing traditional songs in the genres of bluegrass, country, old-time, and gospel. His repertoire includes songs like "The Kentucky Waltz," "Corrina, Corrina," "Blue Skirt Waltz," and "Just a Closer Walk With Thee." "I love those old songs," he says.

Considered a local treasure among musicians throughout the counties of Vance and Warren, Wilkins can often be found playing his accordion on weekends at the Norlina Jamboree and the Ridgeway Opry House.

Arnetta Yancey
Gospel Singer
Warrenton, Warren County

252-257-6719
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arnettayancey.com

At the age of 13, singer Arnetta Yancey moved with her family from their home in Brooklyn, New York, to the small community of Wise, North Carolina. While Yancey was no stranger to the area – her parents had both grown up in the region, and she and her siblings often spent summers at their grandparents' farm – she explains that actually living in rural Warren County was, initially, "a culture shock."

My father was a young pastor, and at the time there were seven of us kids. I think what prompted [my parents] to move back here is that this is home for them; both of my parents' families were all here, and this is where they were born and raised. And raising teenage children in Brooklyn, New York – we moved here in 1970, and there was a lot going on there between '69 and '70, so I think Dad decided that going back to the South was a better place to raise the children.

In her new home, much of Yancey's social life revolved around the church, and her father's ministry offered her the opportunity to sing in public. "We were in the choir in church and we ended up having a little family group," Yancey

explains. “Our dad would go to different churches to preach and his children would sing.” The Yancey Family often performed on gospel programs throughout the region and sang on the radio as the guest of disc jockey Freddie “Preacherman” Hargroves on Warrenton’s WARR 1520 AM.

Following high school, Yancey attended King’s Business College in Raleigh and settled in the Triangle region, before moving back to Warren County in 2005. While Yancey is a longtime listener and performer of all genres of gospel music – she lists North Carolina’s own Shirley Caesar among her biggest inspirations – she explains that she didn’t begin singing traditional hymns until the year 2000.

I realized that as much as things have changed in the world as a whole, people still look for those old songs that pulled their ancestors through. That’s what those hymns do. Those songs came from their hurt and from their struggles, and from the joy of making it: ‘How I Got Over,’ ‘My Soul Looks Back and Wonders.’ Today, people are still looking for those songs. That’s what amazes me and gets me excited. I still sing other songs, but I love to sing the hymns because I know they go straight to the heart.”

Arnetta Yancey keeps a busy schedule, performing both traditional and contemporary gospel music at weddings, funerals, birthday parties, church programs, banquets, anniversaries, and conferences.

Programming Recommendations **By Libby Rodenbaugh**

For Artists:

Though finding venues for traditional arts is sometimes a challenge, many opportunities exist, some in surprising places. While traditional musicians and artists should not necessarily ignore conventional venues, they can also benefit from considering a wider range of possibilities including farmers’ markets, school PTA events, libraries, museums, parks and festivals.

A good place to start looking for opportunities is your local arts council

Halifax County Arts Council
Sherry Wade, Chair
1027 Roanoke Ave

PO Box 374
Roanoke Rapids, NC 27870-3701

[\(252\) 532-2571](tel:(252)532-2571)
[\(252\) 535-4161](tel:(252)535-4161)
info@halifaxarts.com
www.halifaxarts.org

Vance County Arts Council
Alice Clark Sallins, Executive Director
PO Box 34
Henderson, NC 27536

Gallery at 233 S. Garnett St.
Henderson, NC 27536

(252) 915-6118
alicevc2002@yahoo.com
vancecountyarts.com

Farmers' and flea markets often welcome both craft vendors and musicians. Several farmers' markets in the state pay performers to entertain shoppers, and craft vendors of all kinds may find success with shoppers who would not otherwise be exposed to such products. Vending booths are generally inexpensive to rent, ranging from \$10 to \$20 per day.

Market	Months Open	Days/Times Open	Location	Contact Phone #	Contact Email Address
Lake Gaston Flea Market	Year-round	Friday & Saturday 9 am - 5 pm Sunday 10 am - 5 pm	3358 River Road Henrico, NC 27842	(252) 535-3700	

Haliwa-Saponi Tribe Farmers Market	July - November	Friday 6 am - 2 pm	Haliwa-Saponi Tribal Ground 39021 Hwy 561 Hollister, NC	(252) 586-4017	
Scotland Neck Farmers Market		Saturday 8 am - noon	Corner of W. Tenth and Main Streets Scotland Neck, NC	(252) 826-3152	
Roanoke Valley Farmers Market	May - October	Wednesday & Saturday 8 am - 2 pm	378 NC Highway 158 Roanoke Rapids, NC 27870	(252) 583-5161	matt_stevens@ncsu.edu
Vance County Farmers Market	June - October	Saturday 8 am - noon	Corner of Williams and Arch Streets (downtown Henderson)	(252) 438-8188	wayne_rowland@ncsu.edu
		Wednesday 7:30 am - 1 pm	Henderson YMCA on Ruin Creek Road		
Warren County Farmers Market	April - October	Saturday 8 am - noon	BB&T parking lot (corner of East Macon and Bragg Streets) Warrenton, NC	(252) 257-3640	warrengrowers@hotmail.com

Another channel for performing artists and craftspeople alike is the school event. Schools and their PTAs, at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, may be looking for someone to perform, teach, or demonstrate at a school fair, book fair, or end-of-year celebration. Consider contacting the school district administration or individual schools.

	Contact Phone #	Website	
Halifax County Schools	(252) 583-5111 extension 228	http://www.halifax.k12.nc.us	
Warren County Schools	www.warrenk12nc.org	(252) 257-3184 extension 1245 [Superintendent Ray Spain at extension 1245]	Superintendent Ray Spain at: rspain@warrenk12nc.org
Vance County Schools	www.vcs.k12.nc.us	252) 492-2127	1724 Graham Ave P.O. Box 7001 Henderson, NC 27536

Here are some schools in Halifax County:

School Name	Contact Phone #	School Address
Aurelian Springs Elementary	(252) 586-4944	10536 Hwy 48 Littleton, NC 27850
Belmont Elementary	(252) 519-7500	1517 Bolling Rd Roanoke Rapids, NC 27870
Chaloner Middle	(252) 519-7600	2100 Virginia Ave Roanoke Rapids, NC 27870
Dawson Elementary	(252) 826-4905	6878 Old 125 Rd Scotland Neck, NC 27874
Enfield Middle	(252) 445-5502	3723 Hwy 481 Enfield, NC 27823
Everetts Elementary	(252) 537-	458 Everetts School Rd

	5484	Roanoke Rapids, NC 27870
Hollister Elementary	(252) 586- 4344	37432 Hwy 561 Hollister, NC 27844
Inborden Elementary	(252) 445- 3525	13587 Hwy 481 Enfield, NC 27823
Northwest High	(252) 586- 4125	8492 Hwy 48 Littleton, NC 27850
Pittman Elementary	(252) 445- 5268	25041 Hwy 561 Enfield, NC 27823
Roanoke Rapids High	(252) 519- 7200	800 Hamilton St Roanoke Rapids, NC 27870
Roanoke Valley Early College	(252) 536- 6364	200 College Dr Weldon, NC 27890
Scotland Neck Primary	(252) 826- 4413	901 Jr. High School Rd Scotland Neck, NC 27874
Southeast Halifax High	(252) 445- 2027	16683 Hwy 125 Halifax, NC 27839
William L. Manning Elementary	(252) 519- 7400	1102 Barrett St Roanoke Rapids, NC 27870
William R. Davie Middle	(252) 519- 0300	4391 Hwy 158 Roanoke Rapids, NC 27870
Weldon Elementary	(252) 536- 4815	805 Washington Ave Weldon, NC 27890
Weldon Middle	(252) 536- 2571	4489 Hwy 301 Weldon, NC 27890
Weldon STEM High	(252) 536- 4812	415 County Rd Weldon, NC 27890

Warren County schools:

School Name	Contact Phone #	School Address
Mariam Boyd Elementary	(252) 257-3695	203 Cousin Lucy's Ln. Warrenton, NC 27589
Northside Elementary	(252) 456-2656	164 Elementary Ave. Norlina, NC 27563
South Warren Elementary	(252) 257-4606	216 Shocco Springs Rd. Warrenton, NC 27589

Vaughan Elementary	(252) 586-4739	110 Matt Nelson Rd. Vaughan, NC 27586
Warren County High School	(252) 257-4413	149 Campus Dr. Warrenton, NC 27589
Warren County Middle	(252) 257-3751	118 Campus Dr. Warrenton, NC 27589
Warren Early College High	(252) 738-3598	210 Ridgeway St. Warrenton, NC 27589
Warren New Tech High	(252) 257-3676	427 W. Franklin St., PO Box 110 Warrenton, NC 27589

Vance County schools:

School Name	Contact Phone #	School Address
Aycock Elementary	(252) 492-1516	305 Carey Chapel Rd. Henderson, NC 27537
Carver Elementary	(252) 438-6955	987 Carver School Rd. Henderson, NC 27537
Clarke Elementary	(252) 438-8415	309 Mount Carmel Church Rd. Henderson, NC 27537
Dabney Elementary	(252) 438-6918	150 Lanning Rd. Henderson, NC 27537
Eaton-Johnson Middle	(252) 438-5017	500 N. Beckford Dr. Henderson, NC 27536
Henderson Middle	(252) 492-0054	219 Charles St. Henderson, NC 27536
New Hope Elementary	(252) 438-0054	10199 NC 39 Hwy N. Henderson, NC 27537
E. O. Young Jr.	(252) 438-6423	6655 Broad St. Henderson, NC 27537
Pinkston Street Elementary	(252) 438-3441	855 Adams St. Henderson, NC 27536
E. M. Rollins Elementary	(252) 438-2189	1600 S. Garnett St. Henderson, NC 27536
Southern Vance High	(252) 430-6000	925 Garrett Rd. Henderson, NC 27537
Western Vance High	(252) 438-8407	2785 Poplar Creek Rd. Henderson, NC 27537
Northern Vance High	(252) 492-6041	293 Warrenton Rd. Henderson, NC 27537
L. B. Yancey Elementary	(252) 438-8336	311 Hawkins Dr. Henderson, NC 27536

Zeb Vance Elementary	(252) 438-8492	4800 Raleigh Rd. Kittrell, NC 27544
Vance County Early College	(252) 738-3580	200 Community College Rd. Henderson, NC 27537

Libraries, museums, cultural organizations, parks, and other community venues can be good spots for an exhibit or performance, and they may sponsor events elsewhere that would benefit from the presence of traditional artists.

Organization	Website	Contact Phone #	Address
Lakeland Cultural Arts Center	www.lakelandtheatrenc.org/	(252) 586-3124	PO Box 130 411 Mosby Ave. Littleton, NC 27850
The Centre at Halifax Community College		(252) 538-4336	200 College Dr. Weldon, NC 27890
Roanoke Rapids Theatre	www.rrcitytheatre.com	(252) 536-5577	500 Carolina Crossroads Pkwy. Roanoke Rapids, NC 27870
Historic Halifax State Park	www.nchistoricsites.org/halifax/halifax.htm	(252) 583-7191	25 St. David St. Halifax, NC 27839
Concerned Citizens of Tillery (Tillery Community Center)	www.cct78.org/	(252) 826-3017	321 Community Center Rd. Tillery, NC 27887
Roanoke Canal Museum	www.roanokecanal.com/	(252) 537-2769	15 Jackson St. Ext. Roanoke Rapids, NC 27870
Halifax County Library	www.halifaxnc.com/library.cfm	(252) 583-3631	33 S. Granville St. Halifax, NC 27839
Riverside Mill	www.riversidemill.net	(252) 536-3100	200 Mill St. Weldon, NC 27890
Halifax	www.halifaxarts.org	(252) 532-	1027 Roanoke Ave.

County Arts Council		2571	Roanoke Rapids, NC 27870
4-H Rural Life Center	www.halifaxnc.com/4hrurallife/	(252) 583-1821	13763 Hwy. 903, PO Box 37 Halifax, NC 27839
Medoc Mountain State Park	www.ncparks.gov/visit/parks/memo/main.php	(252) 586-6588	1541 Medoc State Park Rd. Hollister, NC 27844

Here are some such organizations in Warren County.

Organization	Website	Contact Phone #	Contact Email Address	Address
Ridgeway Opry House	www.ridgewayopryhouse.com	(252) 456-3890		704 US Hwy 1 S Ridgeway, NC 27570
Warren County Memorial Library	www.wcplnc.org	(252) 257-4990		119 S. Front St. Warrenton, NC 27589
Cherry Hill Historical Foundation	www.cherryhillconcerts.com	[contact form on website]	mary.b.raiford@gmail.com	2740 NC Hwy 58 Warrenton, NC 27589
Preservation Warrenton	preservationwarrenton.com	[contact form on website]	[contact form on website]	Harriet Banzet PO Box 944 Warrenton, NC 27589
Lakeland Cultural Arts Center	www.lakelandtheatrenc.org	(252) 586-3124		PO Box 130 411 Mosby Ave Littleton, NC 27850
Warren County Chamber of Commerce	www.warren-chamber.org	(252) 257-2657	info@warren-chamber.org	133 South Main Street Warrenton, NC 27589

Vance County organizations

Organization	Website	Contact Phone #	Address
H. Leslie Perry Library	www.perrylibrary.org	(252) 438-3316	205 Breckendridge St. Henderson, NC 27536
Vance County Arts Council	www.vancecountyarts.com	(252) 915-6118	233 South Garnett Street Henderson, NC 27536
Vance Granville Community College	www.vgcc.edu	(252) 492-2061	
Bee's Knees Country Store	http://www.facebook.com/pages/Bees-Knees-Country-Store/110714542310822	(252) 492-9599	2250 Weldon's Mill Rd. Henderson, NC 27537
Miss Lou's Quilting Studio		(252) 492-6469	4733 Raleigh Rd. Henderson, NC 27537

Organizers of large, coordinated community events of all kinds seek performers and vendors, and festivals that revolve around local traditions or symbols may be particularly interested in traditional music and craft.

Halifax County events:

Event/Festival	Month	Website	Contact Phone #	Contact Email Address	Town
Battle of the Barbeque	May	www.lakegastonchamber.com/battlebbq.html	(252) 586-5711	lgcc@earthlink.net	Lake Gaston
Crepe Myrtle Festival	August	www.townofscotlandneck.com	(252) 826-3152	marketing27874@embarqmail.com	Scotland Neck
Cultural Arts Festival (Roanoke River Regional Collaborative)	May		Gary Grant at (252) 826-3017	tillery@aol.com	Halifax
Ducky Derby	September	www.rvchamber.com	(252)		Weldon

			537-3513		
Enfield Peanut Festival	October	www.enfieldnc.org	(252) 445-5122	info@visithalifax.com	Enfield
Fall for the Arts	October	www.lakegastonchamber.com	(252) 586-5711		Lake Gaston
Family Fun Day	June	www.townofscotlandneck.com	Bob Chavis at (252) 813-6557		Scotland Neck
Halifax Harvest Days	October	www.nchistoricsites.org/halifax/halifax.htm	(252) 583-5161	info@visithalifax.com	Halifax
Hobgood Cotton Festival	October	www.townofhobgood.com	(252) 826-9827	townofhobgood@earthlink.net	Hobgood
Haliwa-Saponi Powwow	April	www.haliwa-saponi.com	(252) 586-4017	alynch@haliwa-saponi.com	Hollister

Warren County events:

Event/Festival	Month	Website	Contact Phone #	Contact Email Address	Town
Haliwa-Saponi Powwow	April	www.haliwa-saponi.com	(252) 586-4017	alynch@haliwa-saponi.com	Hollister
Ridgeway Cantaloupe Festival	July		Lucy Holtzmann at (252) 456-2601	lucyh@vance.net	Ridgeway
Warren County Fair	September	www.warren-chamber.org	(252) 257-2657		Warrenton

Vance County events:

Independence Day at Kerr Lake	July	www.kerrlake-nc.com	(252) 438-2222	Henderson
Vance County Fair	September/October		(252) 226-0551	Henderson

For Programmers:

Whether or not you consider your organization to be involved in the preservation of traditional arts, local artists and musicians can be a great resource for your next event or program.

Interest in traditional arts and occupations has been building over the last several decades; cultural tourism is now the fastest-growing sector of tourism overall. In 2003, North Carolina was named one of the top ten states in cultural and heritage tourism by the Travel Industry of America and *Smithsonian* magazine, and cultural tourism projects have only increased in number since then. Given that a great part of this culture-focused travel is intrastate, even small local events benefit from the increased attention to traditional arts.

Including and promoting local musicians and craftspeople not only enriches your programming, but it also helps to sustain the unique resources of your community. Groups from school PTAs to city administrators are finding that investment in such resources tends to serve the needs of organization and community alike.

If you're interested in learning more about the traditional artists in Warren County, contact the **North Carolina Folklife Institute (www.ncfolk.org, 919-383-6040)**, and/or the organizations below.

	Website	Contact Phone #	Address
Halifax County Arts Council	www.halifaxarts.org	(252) 532-2571	1027 Roanoke Ave. Roanoke Rapids, NC 27870
Heritage Quilters			111 S. Front Street Warrenton, NC 27589

Ridgeway Opry House	www.ridgewayopryhouse.com	(252) 456-3890		704 US Hwy 1 S Ridgeway, NC 27570
Lakeland Cultural Arts Center	www.lakelandtheatrenc.org	(252) 586-3124		PO Box 130 411 Mosby Ave Littleton, NC 27850
Warren County Chamber of Commerce	www.warren-chamber.org	(252) 257-2657	info@warren-chamber.org	133 South Main Street Warrenton, NC 27589
Vance County Arts Council	www.vancecountyarts.com	(252) 915-6118		233 South Garnett Street Henderson, NC 27536