

Folk Music- Part 3: People and Trends in North Carolina Folk Music ^[1]

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Folk Music

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Additional research provided by Wiley J. Williams.

See also: "[Ballad of Tom Dooley](#)" ^[2]; [Mountain Dance and Folk Festival](#) ^[3]; [Southern Folklife Collection](#) ^[4].

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Part 3: People and Trends in North Carolina Folk Music

Several North Carolinians endeavored to keep traditional music alive in the state. [Bascom Lamar Lunsford](#) ^[8] (1882-1973) remains an important presence in folk music. Remembered by many as the "Minstrel of the Appalachians," Lunsford was an [Asheville](#) ^[9] attorney and an inexhaustible source of southern culture and [folklore](#) ^[10]. He wrote, collected, and performed dozens of ballads, banjo tunes, and sacred songs during the years immediately preceding and following World War II. In 1928 he began the Mountain Dance and Folk Festival in Asheville as a means for people to share the southern Appalachian music and dance traditions handed down through generations in western North Carolina.

[Artus Monroe Moser \(1894-1992\)](#) ^[11] spent much of his life collecting ballads in and around his home in western North Carolina in an effort to document the folk traditions of Appalachia. Moser wrote extensively about the folk songs, folklore, and history of Appalachia and recorded the works of numerous Appalachian performers onto acetate discs. In 1945 the [Library of Congress](#) ^[12] provided Moser with the equipment to collect and record more material, which was later placed in the library's Archive of American Folk Song. [Dellie Chandler Norton \(1899-1993\)](#) ^[13] lived and farmed in [Madison County](#) ^[14]. She was also a ballad singer and storyteller in a tradition passed down for two centuries among the Mountain families. Norton sang the old English and Scottish ballads brought to the Appalachian region by the first settlers. She performed at the [Smithsonian's Festival of American Folklife](#) ^[15], and Alan Lomax and John Cohen recorded her songs.

North Carolina-born composer, conductor, and flutist [Lamar Stringfield \(1897-1959\)](#) ^[16] won a [Pulitzer Prize](#) ^[17] for composition in 1928 for his orchestral suite "From the Southern Mountains." Instrumental in founding the [North Carolina Symphony](#) ^[18], Stringfield was particularly interested in using American folk music in his compositions. Born in Tennessee, [Frank Proffitt \(1913-65\)](#) ^[19] lived most of his life in [Watauga County](#) ^[20]. In the early 1960s, he became to many a symbol for the newly awakened interest in traditional music and was recognized as the source of "Tom Dooley," the Kingston Trio recording of which sold more than 3 million copies.

[Arthel "Doc" Watson](#) ^[21], a blind vocalist, guitarist, banjoist, and recording artist, was born in Deep Gap. His professional career took off in the early 1960s when he played to urban folk music audiences at the [Newport Folk Festival](#) ^[22] and on college campuses. His wife, the former Rosa Lee Carlton, coauthored and recorded several love songs with Watson. Their musician son Merle died in a tractor accident in 1985. In his honor, the couple established MerleFest, a yearly festival featuring traditional music held on the campus of Wilkes Community College. Doc Watson has performed at the [Smithsonian Institution](#) ^[23], [the White House](#) ^[24], and [Carnegie Hall](#) ^[25].

Demographic changes have enriched North Carolina's folk and traditional scene with artists from afar or from outside entertainment circles. For example, the [Menhaden Chanteymen](#) ^[26] from Beaufort gained much attention for their

performances of the fishing work songs [27] that once were simply a part of their daily lives. Morrisville's Los Peregrinos and the Ricardo Granaldo Group provided the Triangle with two strong Latino ensembles. During the early 1980s, Chapel Hill and Cary [28] provided the home base for Touchstone, an extraordinary Irish outfit. Mickey Mills and Steel and Rolly Gray and Sunfire are two of several North Carolina ensembles specializing in Caribbean folk music.

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Image Credit:

"The Menhaden Chanteymen." Video courtesy of YouTube User BobNGarner, February 19, 2011. Available from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=geAJI6he75I> [29] (accessed May 30, 2012).

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[11] <http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/m/Moser,Artus.html>

[12] <http://www.loc.gov/index.html>

[13] <http://www.visitmadisoncounty.com/who-we-are/traditional-music-heritage/the-wallins/dellie-chandler-norton-lloyd-chandler/>

[14] <https://www.ncpedia.org/geography/madison>

[15] <http://www.festival.si.edu/>

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[20] <https://www.ncpedia.org/geography/watauga>

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[22] <http://www.newportfolkfest.net/>

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