

Blue Ridge Institute & Museum of Ferrum College

Ferrum College's Blue Ridge Institute & Museum is part of a local heritage rich with singers and musicians. The English scholar Cecil Sharpe collected ballads in Franklin County in 1916. County fiddler Posey Rorer and North Carolina banjo great Charlie Poole picked, partied, and even made moonshine here before starting their recording careers. The Ferrum fiddle and guitar duo William Lloyd and Howard Maxey cut records for the Okeh label in 1927, and in 1936 Herbert Halpert collected tunes in Franklin County for the Library of Congress. With an ancestry that blends English, Scots-Irish, German, and African-American settlers, Franklin County's traditions naturally go far beyond fiddle tunes. Over the years the area has produced talented bluesmen such as Archie Edwards and songsters such as Rabbit Muse. From 1924 through the 1950s, Roanoke's radio stations—heard as far away as Canada—featured live local talent, and numerous Franklin County musicians took part in the string band, bluegrass, and western swing broadcasts.

Franklin County's musical traditions remain strong to this day. The heartfelt praise of gospel groups and the "a cappella" congregational singing of Old Order Baptists and Primitive Baptists inspires listeners each weekend. Public jams and performances for string band and bluegrass fans take place almost daily. For young and old, music is a continued source of Franklin County pride and identity.



Jam at Ted Boyd's Shop



Mattie Jacobs



Starlight Gospel Singers