

Our mission is to preserve and honor the music of the Appalachian region

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## History



*Joe Shannon, Founder & Executive Director —*

I moved to Boone in 1977 and as soon as I arrived I started looking for folks who shared my love for traditional music. I found many—Cecil Gurganus, a neighbor who played fiddle, Steve Lewis, who played guitar and banjo, Mary Greene, who played just about everything and also loved to sing old ballads and hymns. And I met many more great musicians.

Mostly we would play at somebody's house, or barn, or church. There also were occasional festivals and weddings where some combination of local musicians would gather. Fortunate to be invited to many places, over the years I met a wide variety of traditional performer—musicians, dancers, storytellers and poets.

I met so many incredible performers, but except for the one or two big fiddle festivals each year, there was no ongoing event or place where locals and visitors to the High Country could experience this talent. It was my belief that once folks saw or heard these local, and relatively unknown performers, they would respect their talent and also feel an authentic connection to Appalachian culture.

### Performances Begin

I decided to test my belief. On February 4, 1994 *Music in the Mountains* was started. The first concert featured Steve Lewis, Rachel Nelson, Becca Eggers-Gryder, and myself. The location was Our Daily Bread, a small delicatessen in downtown Boone. Crowds were small at first, but soon started to grow and after several months we outgrew Our Daily Bread. Summer and fall programs in 1994 were moved to the Student Union on the ASU campus. "Community folks" were hesitant to venture to the ASU Student Union, and in 1995 concerts were moved to the Boone United Methodist Church.

Because Boone United Methodist Church (and other churches) often have weddings on Saturday evenings, this necessitated us moving around some more. In subsequent years, other locations have included the Broyhill Inn & Conference Center, the Wesley Foundation, Watauga High School Auditorium, Appalachian Brian Estates, the First Baptist Church, and Grace Lutheran Church.

Name changes came too. In 1996, I discovered that Music in the Mountains was a registered name by another organization, so I changed the name to Old Time Music in the Mountains. After another year, I decided this was too long so in 1997 I changed the name, again, to Mountain Home Music.

We have continued to use different venues in the community, but for the past three years we seem to be settling into St. Luke's Episcopal Church and ASU's Valborg Theatre for Spring/Summer concerts and the Blowing Rock Auditorium (a.k.a. the Blowing Rock Stage Company) for Fall programs.

Consistent with the reason I started Mountain Home Music, our purpose is to honor the musicians, dancers, storytellers, and poets of the Appalachian region. In the Winter of 2001, I thought of another way to say this: "We present world-class Appalachian performers that you've probably never heard of."

As of September 2002, Mountain Home Music has produced one hundred and twenty-seven concerts, thirty-seven of which have aired on regional educational television and forty-five have aired on public radio. And over five hundred different performers from the Appalachian region have appeared on the Mountain Home Music stage.

### Becoming a Non-Profit

In September, 2002, a group of interested individuals got together with Joe to discuss converting Mountain Home Music into a non-profit organization so grants could be applied for and memberships could be solicited. Since Mountain Home Music had not made a profit in eight years of existence, that seemed a reasonable approach.

A mission statement was developed: The mission of Mountain Home Music is to celebrate diverse styles of Appalachian performing arts. Mountain Home Music strives to educate and build community through the arts, providing accessible cross-generational experiences.

In November, 2002, the Articles of Incorporation were written for non-profit status. Mountain Home Music applied to the state of North Carolina to convert the corporation to non-profit and was approved in December, 2002. In January, 2003, Mountain Home Music applied for non-profit status with the IRS. In May, we finally received a letter from the IRS requesting additional information. That was submitted May 28, 2003.

Mountain Home Music was awarded 501(c)3 non-profit status on June 5, 2003. The Helen M. Clabough Charitable Foundation awarded a grant for \$8,617 to Mountain Home Music, Inc. to purchase sound and recording equipment. Trustees for the **Clabough Charitable Foundation** presented the award to the Executive Director, Joe Shannon, and the Mountain Home Music Board of Directors at the Annual Christmas Concert—An Appalachian Christmas—on Saturday, November 29, 2003.

The sound and recording equipment that this grant enabled Mountain Home Music to purchase has not only improved the sound quality for every concert, but it has also enabled capturing the audio sound track from every show. This will preserve every concert in the future on CD for archiving as well as to provide a source of income by copying the CDs and making them available for purchase by radio stations, members, or other interested persons.



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