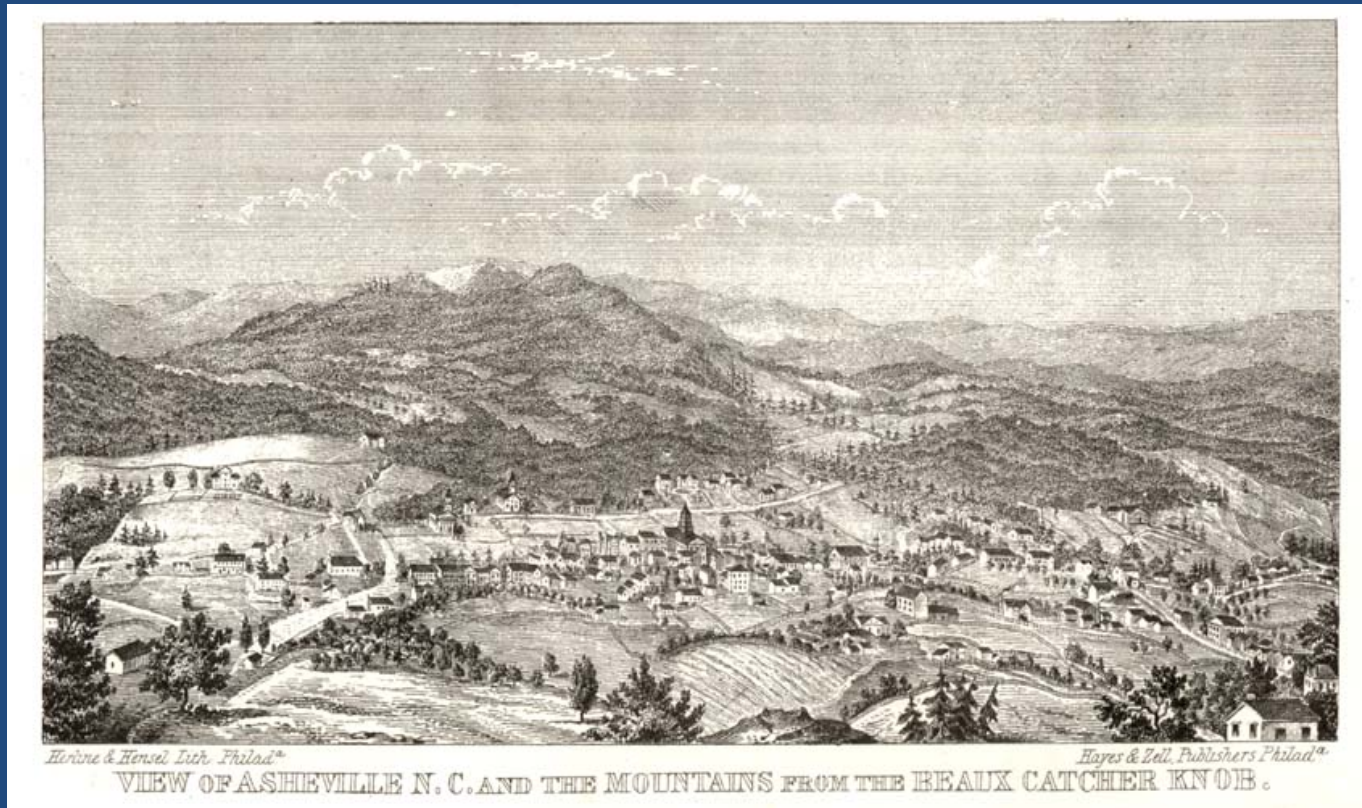


African Americans and Mountain Dance Traditions in Western North Carolina

African Americans in Western North Carolina
University of North Carolina – Asheville
October 28, 2016

Phil Jamison
Warren Wilson College
Asheville, NC

What is “mountain” dance?



Asheville, North Carolina (1859)

Square Dancing



Haywood County, North Carolina (1930s)
North Carolina Collection, UNC – Chapel Hill



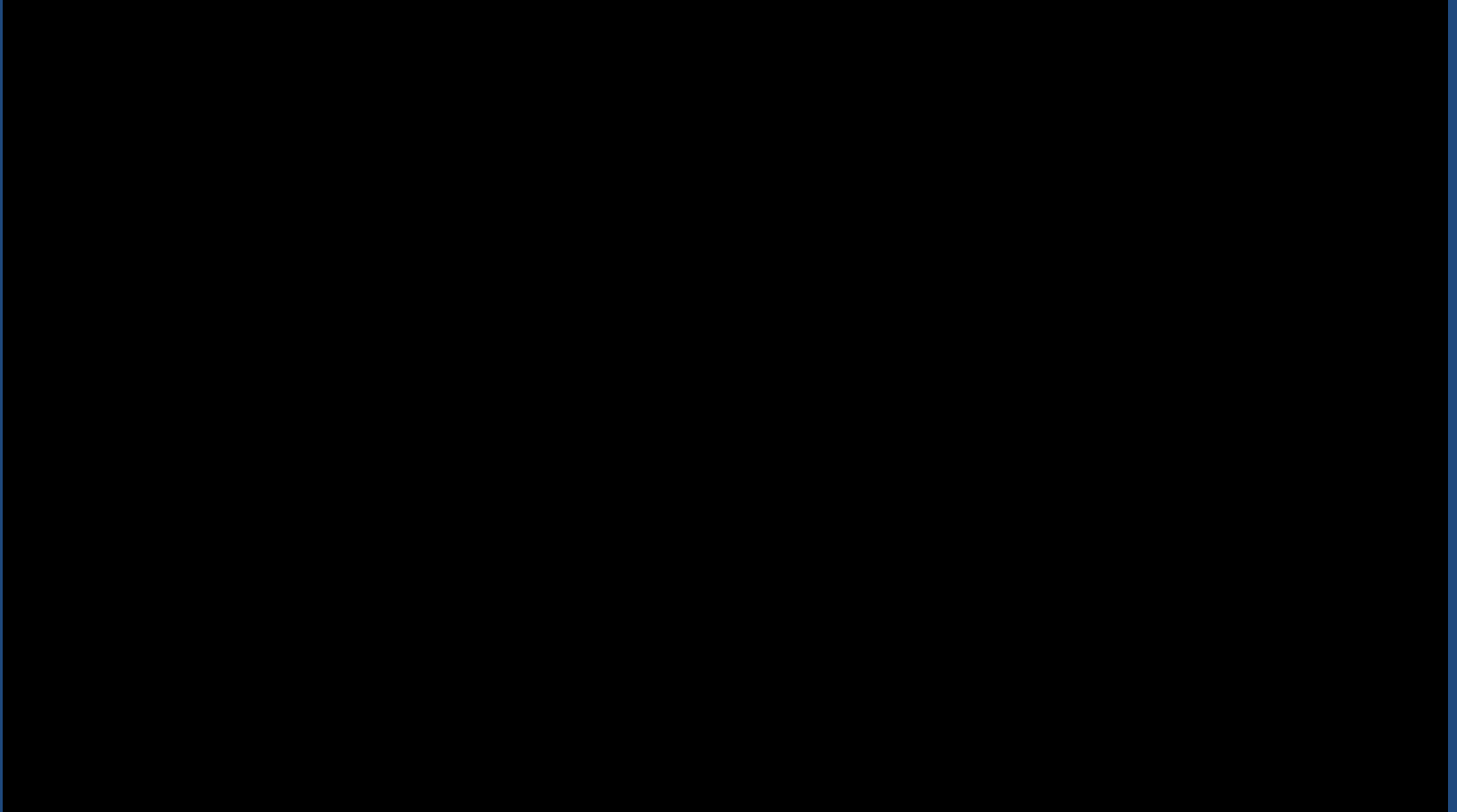
Square Dance at Pulaski, Tennessee (2014)

Step Dancing



- Buckdancing
- Flatfooting
- Clogging

Cumberland Gap, Tennessee, 1940s



Meadows of Dan, Virginia

Mountain Dance and Folk Festival (1928) Asheville, North Carolina



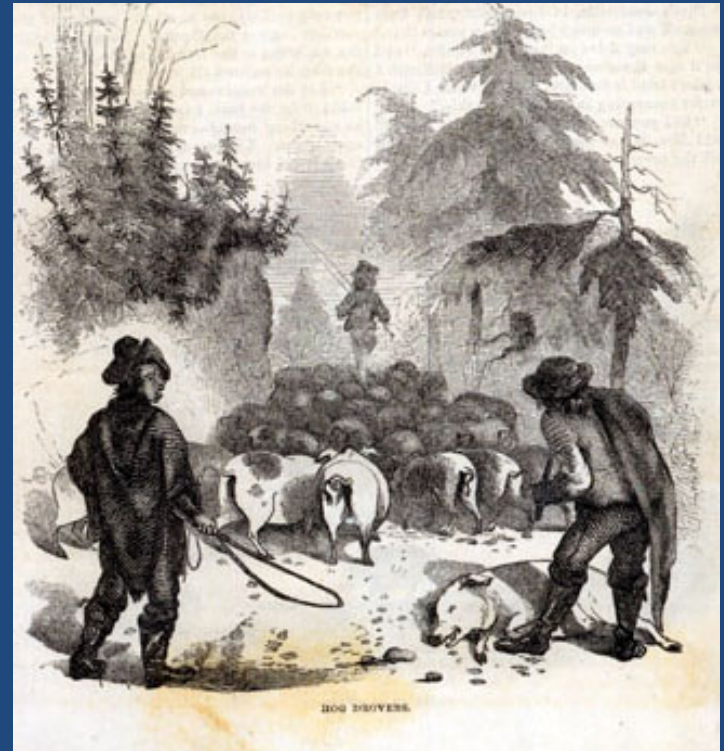
“Songs and dances of the mountain folk,” which “had their origin in England before Colonial days” and “have been preserved in their pure form by the mountaineers.”

– *Asheville Citizen* (June 5, 1928)

Soco Gap Square Dancers (1940s)

Who were the “mountain folk”?

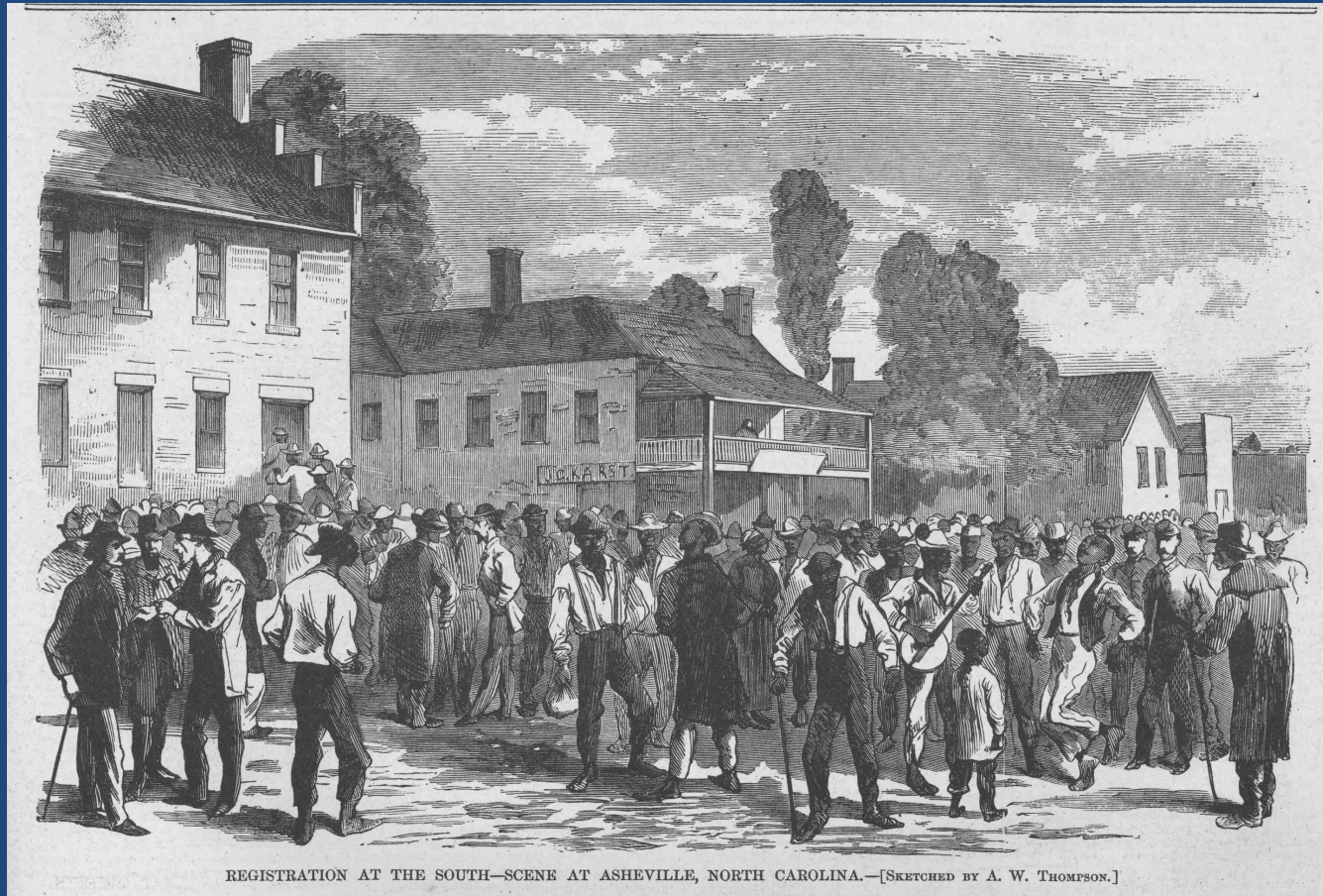
Slavery In Western North Carolina





Eagle Hotel (1814)
Asheville, North Carolina

“A mixed multitude of all classes and complexions”
– Charles Woodmason (1772)



“(Voter) Registration at the South – Scene at Asheville, North Carolina”
Harper’s Weekly (September 28, 1867)

Where did the traditional mountain
music come from?

Where did the traditional mountain
music come from?

English “songs and dances” that “have been
preserved in their pure form by the mountaineers.”

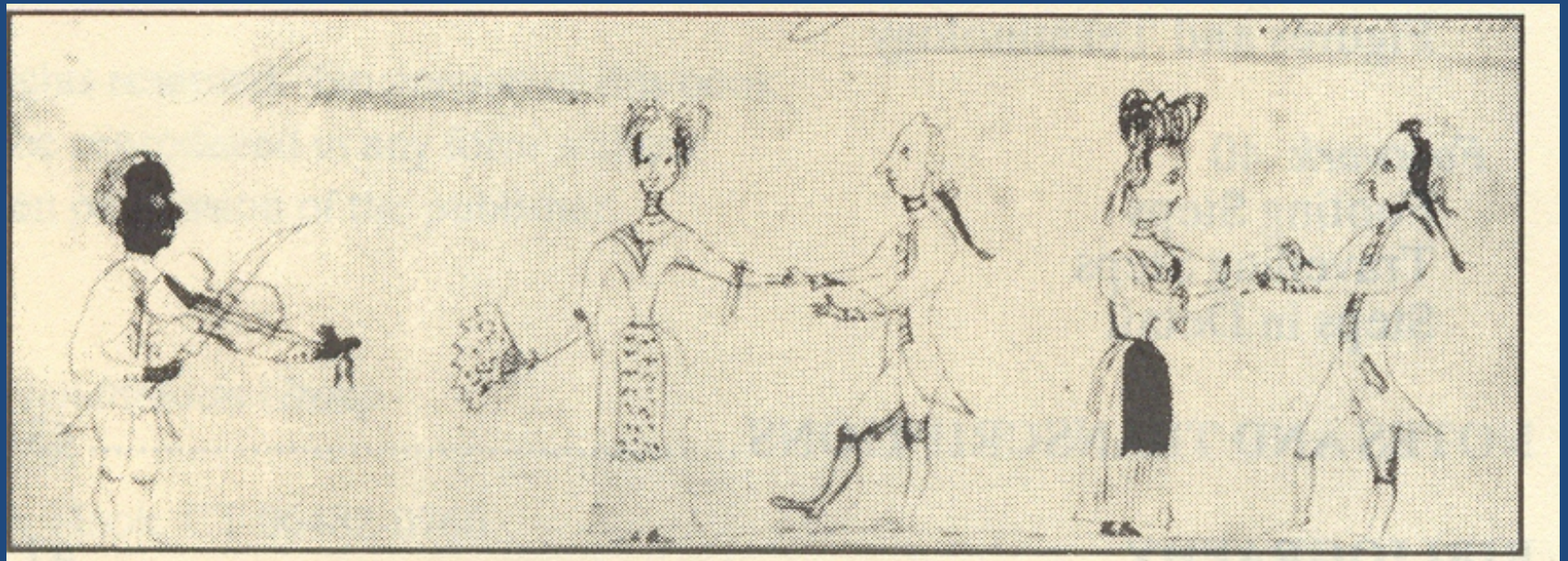
– *Asheville Citizen* (June 5, 1928)

The Fiddle



“Dance of the Haymakers” William Sidney Mount (1845)

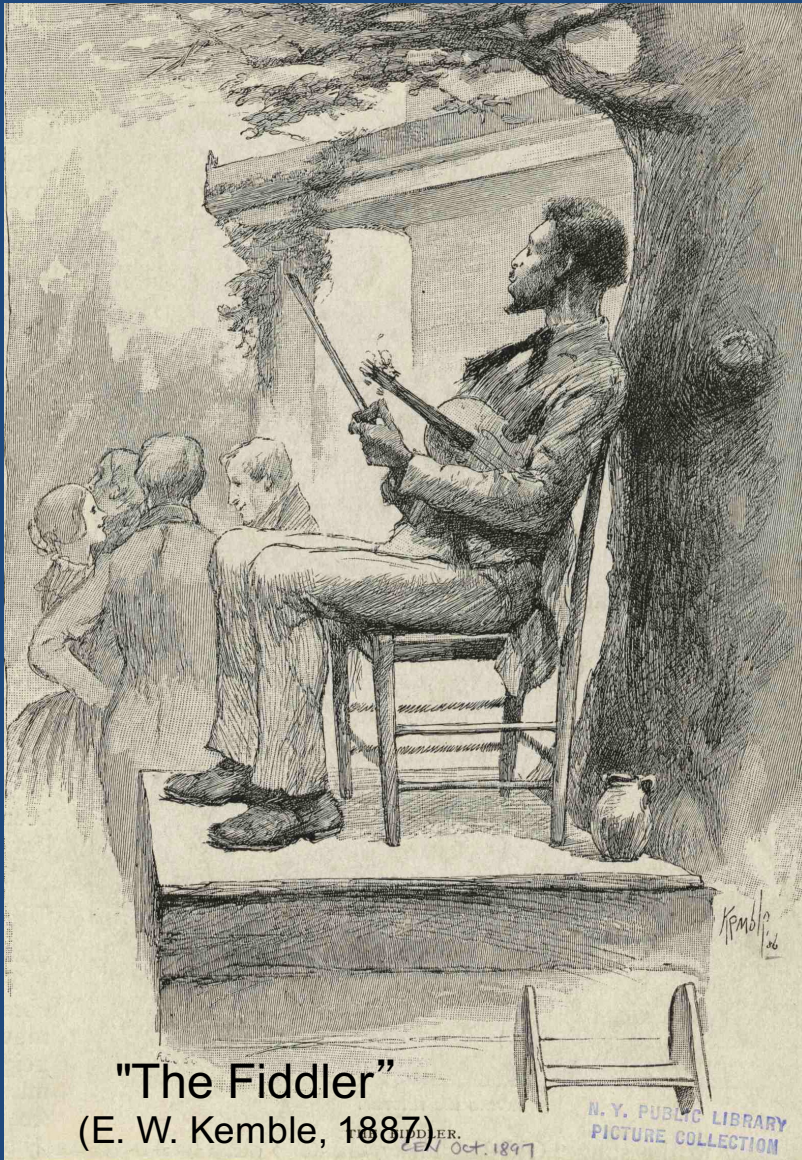
African American Fiddlers



Thomas Nixon's Book of Capers of All Sorts (c. 1778)



"Dance in a Country Tavern"
(John Lewis Krimmel, 1820)



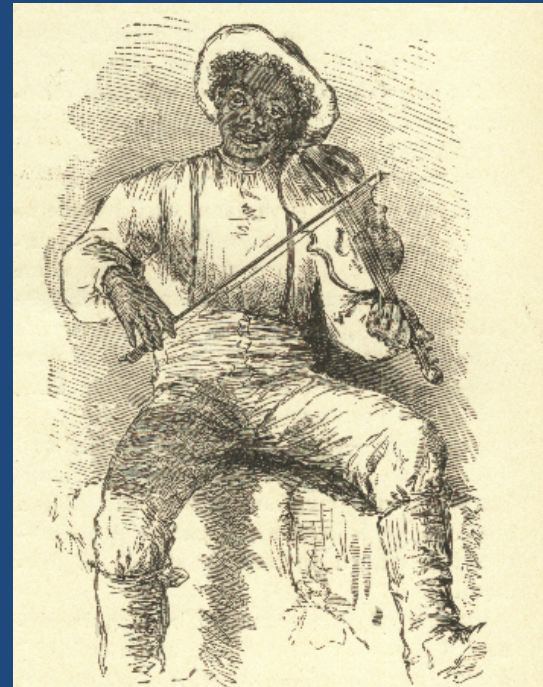
"The Fiddler"
(E. W. Kemble, 1887)

"I was indebted to my violin,
my constant companion, the
source of profit, and soother of
my sorrows during years of
servitude."

– Solomon Northup (1841)



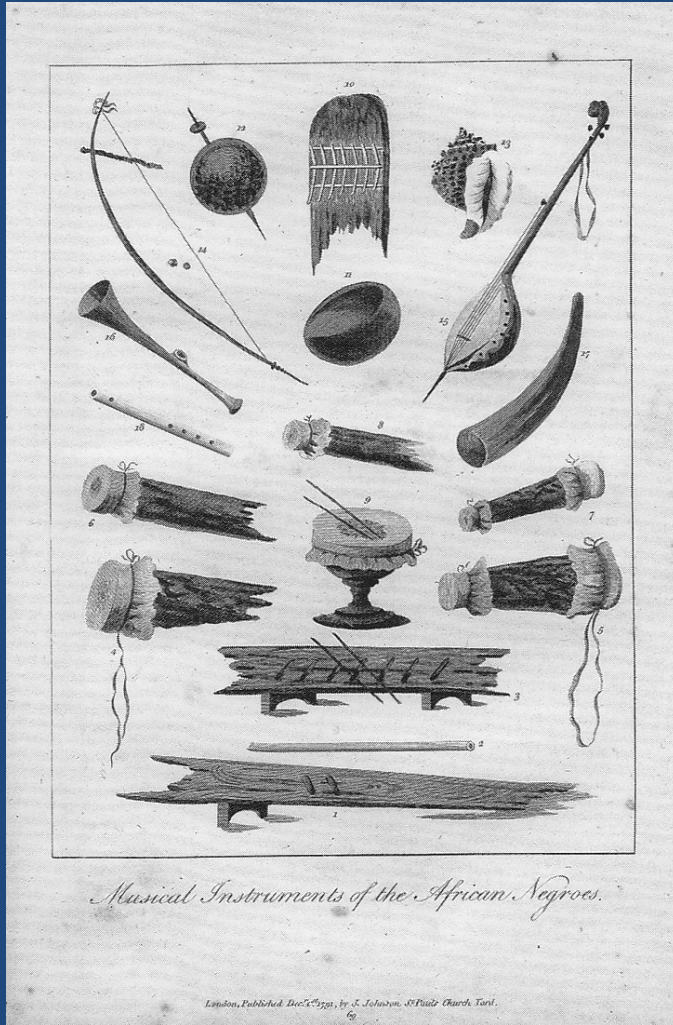
The Reel.



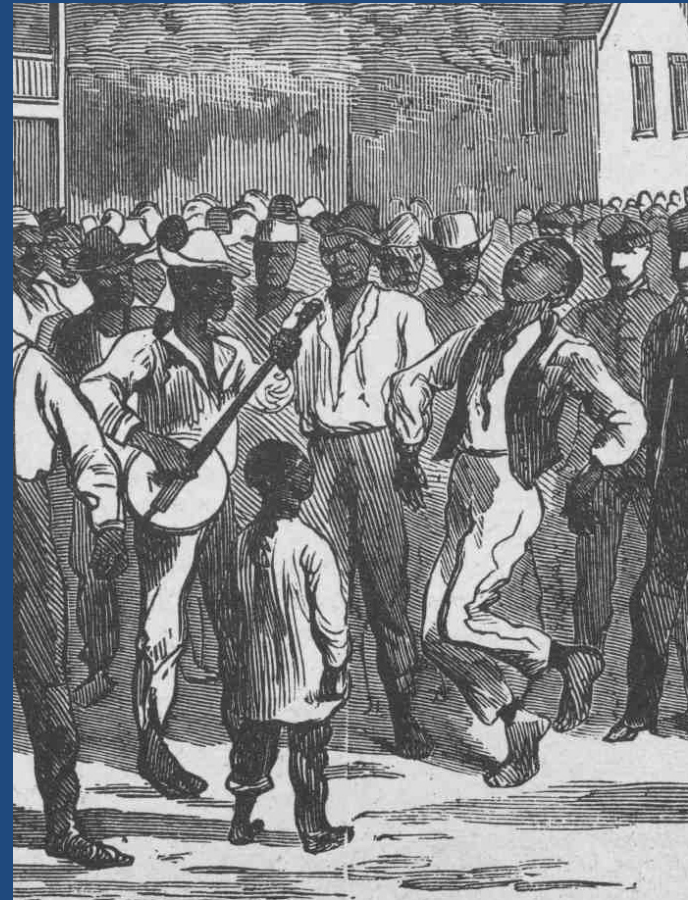
The Fiddler.

Frances Tiernan, *The Land of the Sky* (1875)

The Banjo



Musical Instruments of Africa
(1796)



Asheville, NC (1867)

The Guitar



Lesley "Esley" Riddle (1905–1980)
Yancey County, NC

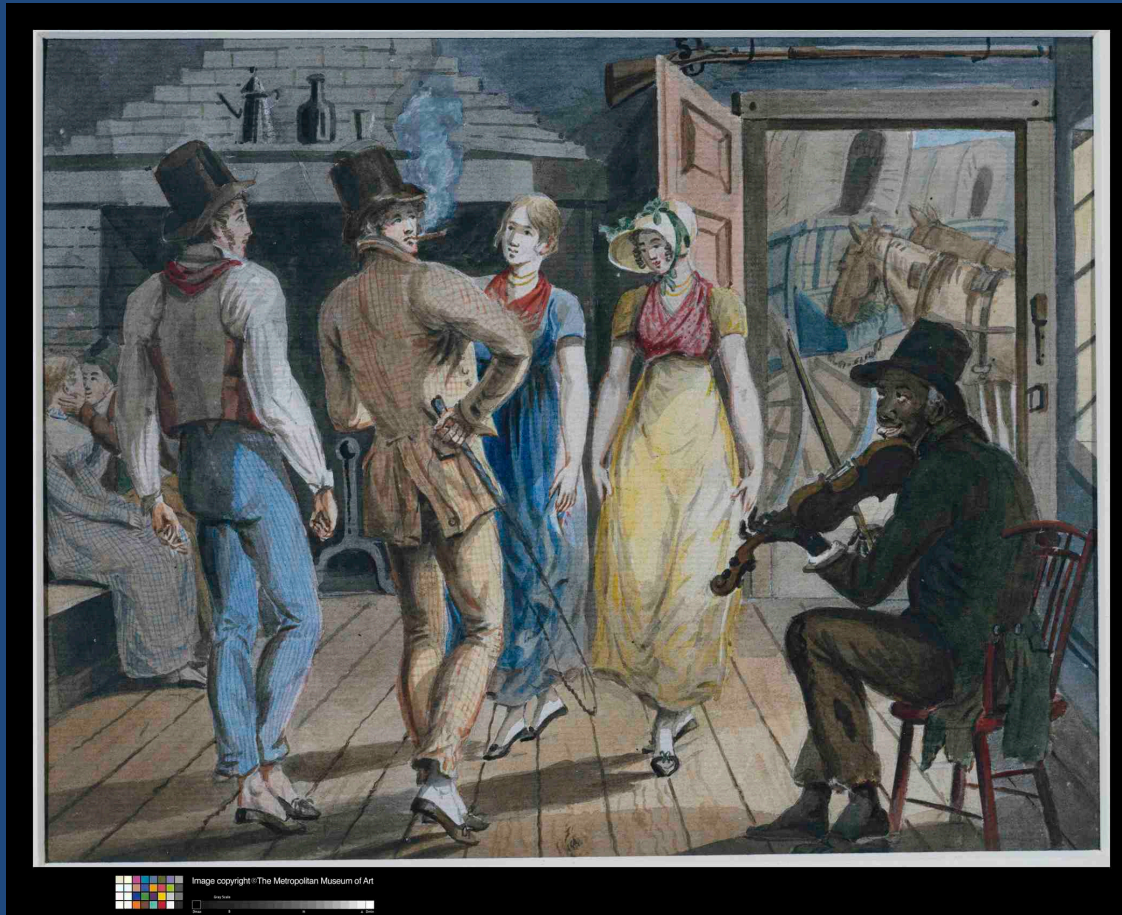
Where did the mountain dances
come from?

Where did the mountain dances come from?

“The mountain square dance” was brought to America by “our ancestors from the British Isles,” and it has been “handed down from generation to generation for many centuries.”

– Frank Smith, Berea College (1955)

Scottish and Irish Reels



“Merrymaking at a Wayside Inn”
John Lewis Krimmel (c. 1811)

French Cotillions and Quadrilles



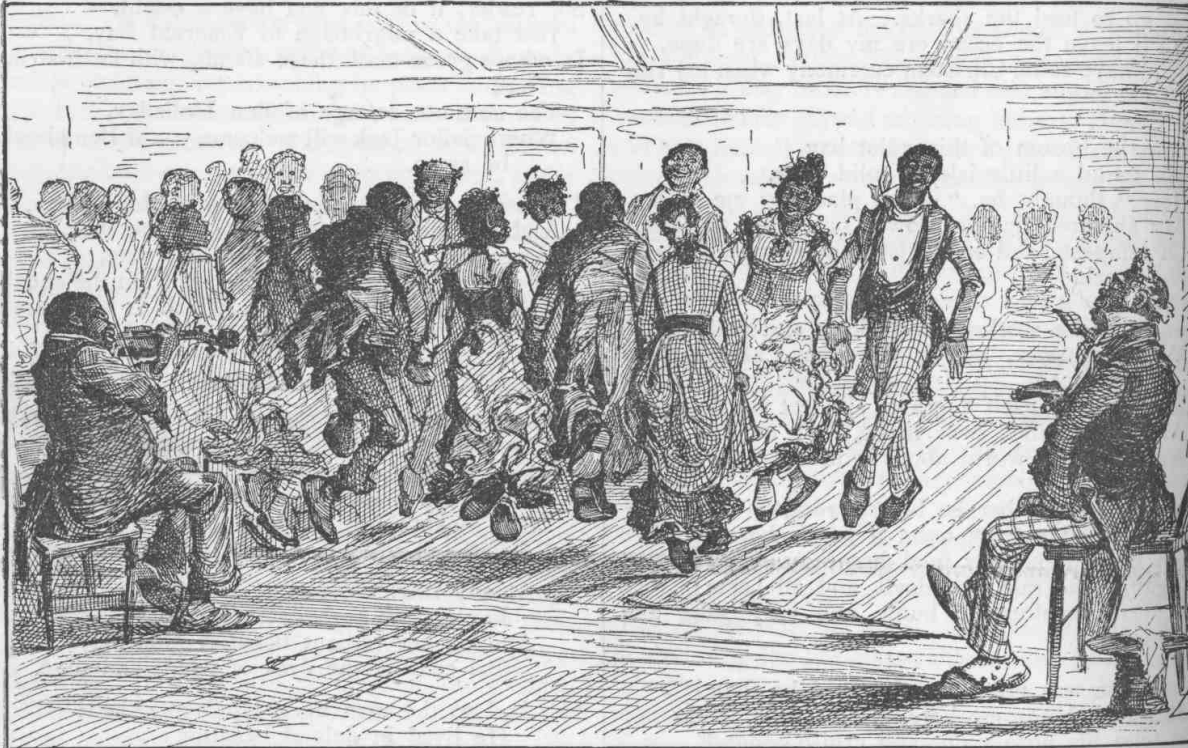
The Quadrille and Cotillion Panorama (1822)

African American Ring Dances



“Evening at the Quarters” (1887)

The First Dance Callers



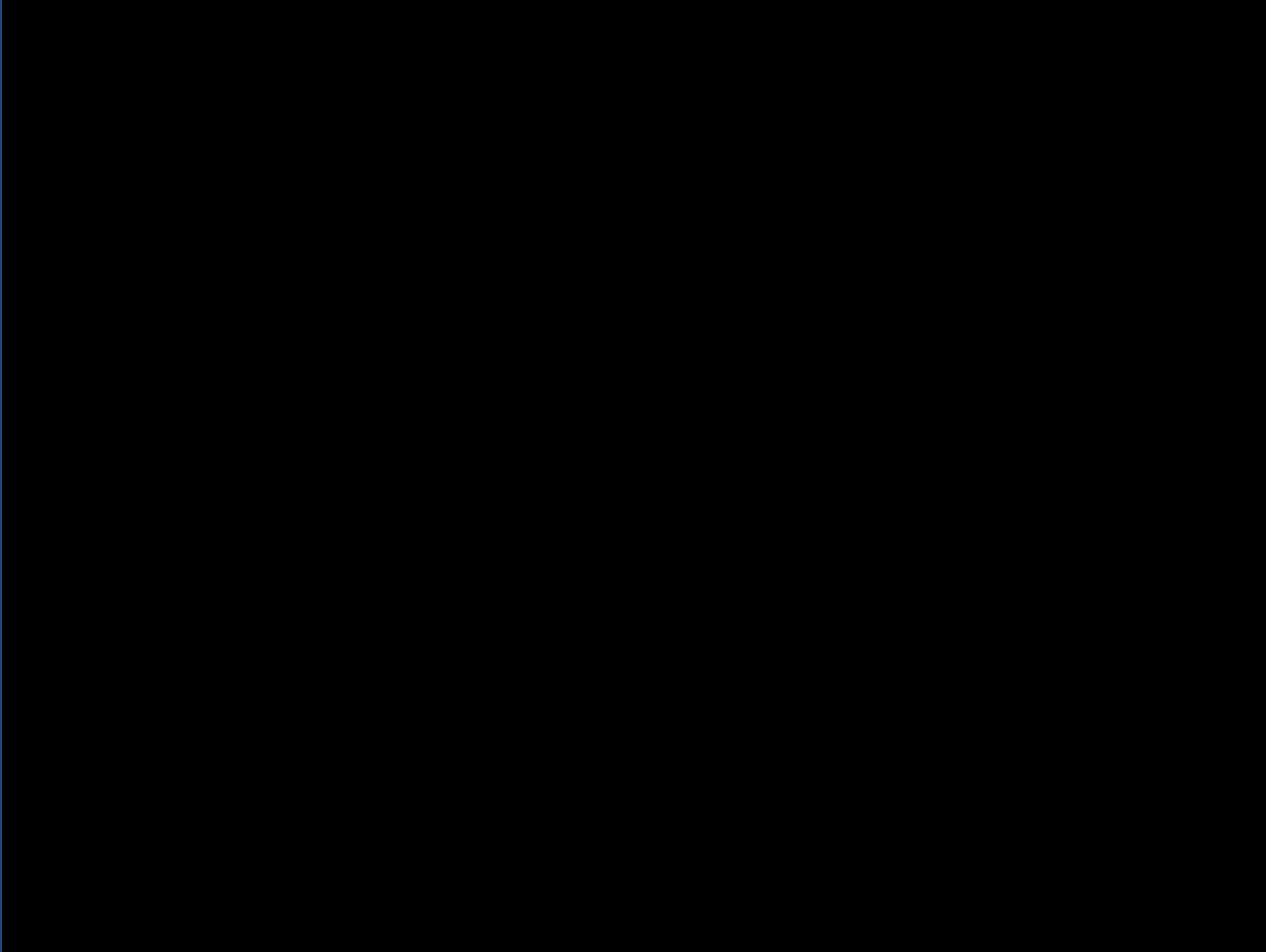
Terpsichore in the Flat Creek Quarters.

(Alabama, c. 1860)

African American corn-shucking frolics:
“The dance of late years
is a modification of the
cotillion.”

– David Barrow,
northwest Georgia, 1882

African American Quadrille (1914)



Southern Appalachian Step Dance



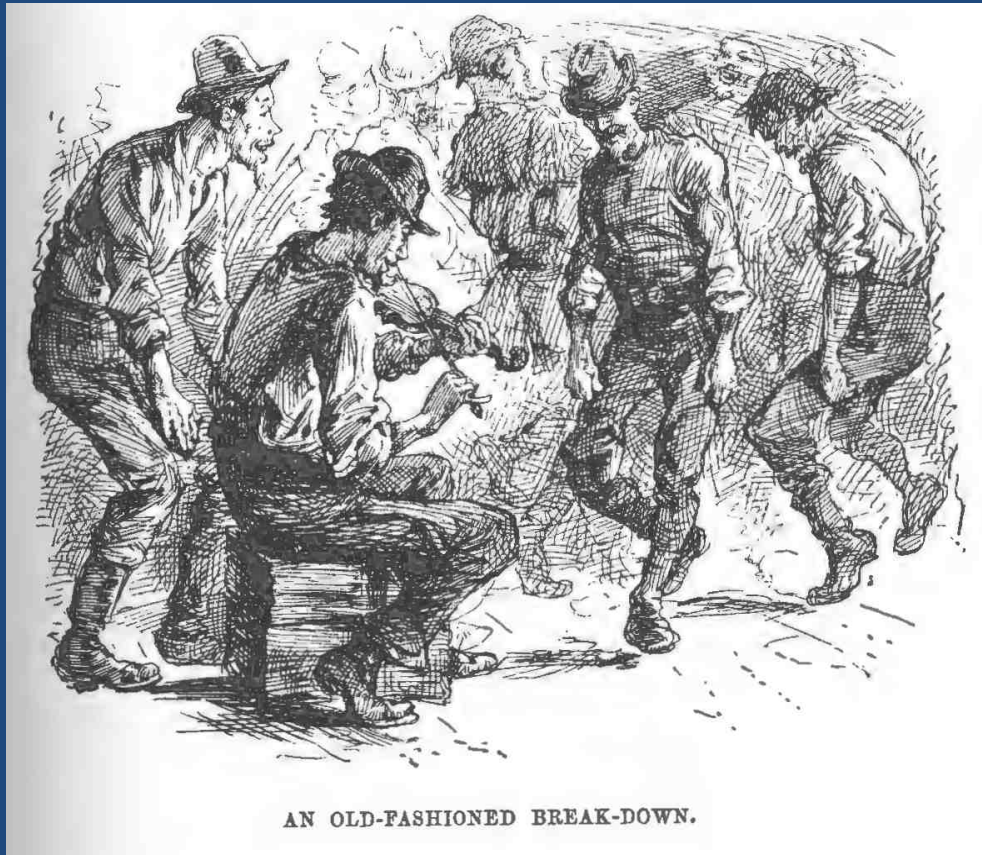
Cumberland Gap, Tennessee, 1940s

Jig Dancing



“Dance of the Haymakers” William Sidney Mount (1845)

Breakdowns and Hoedowns

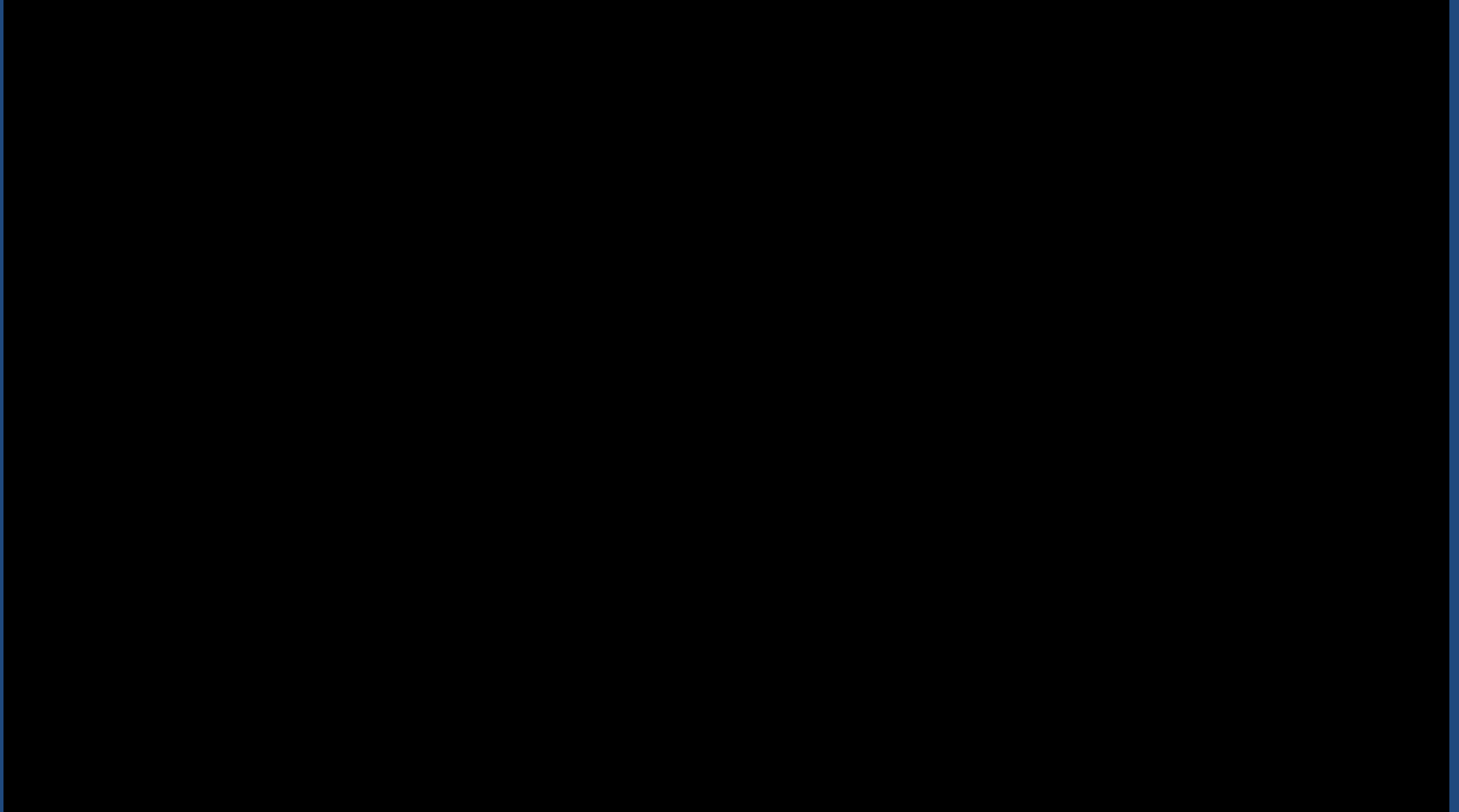


Life on the Mississippi
(Mark Twain 1883)

Breakdown: “a riotous dance . . .
in the peculiar style of the
negroes”

– John Russell Bartlett,
Dictionary of Americanisms
(1859)

Buckdancing



Fris Holloway and John Dee Holeman
Durham, NC

Mountain Dance and Folk Festival (1930s)



Sam Queen and the Soco Gap Square Dancers
Haywood County, NC

Whitewashing of the Mountain Traditions

Anglo-Saxon “racial inheritance”

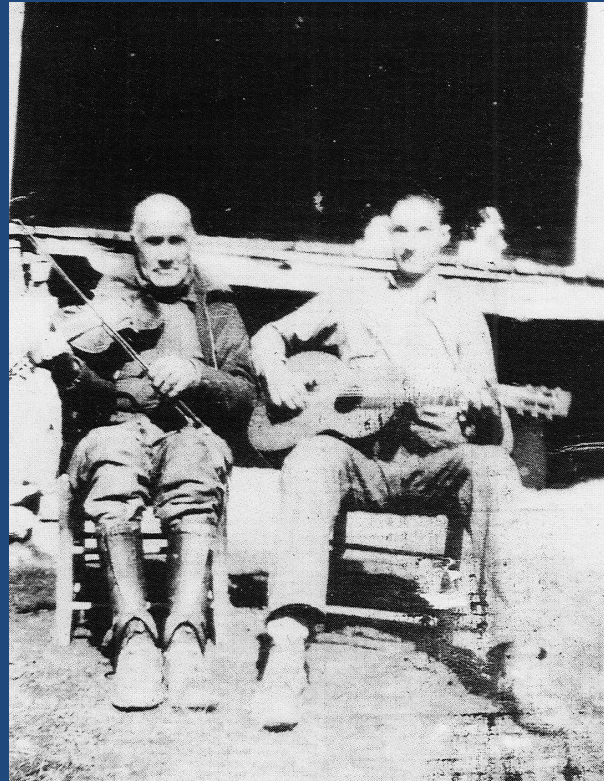
– Cecil Sharp, quoted in *Asheville Citizen* (June 14, 1917)

The “invisibility” of blacks in Appalachia

– Edward Cabbell, 1985

Mountain Dance and Folk Festival

No African American
performers

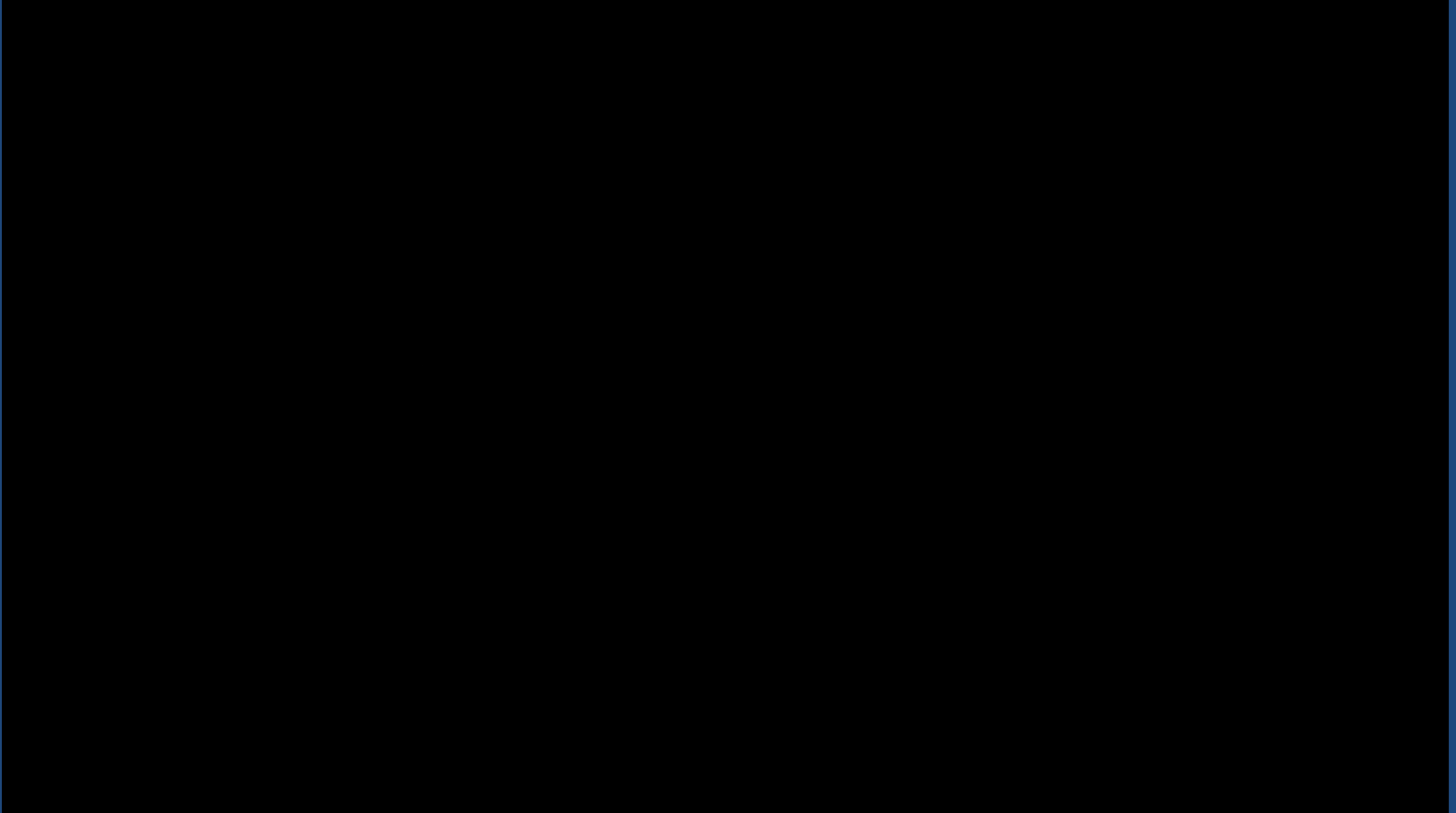


African American fiddler George Buckner
Madison County, NC (1930s)

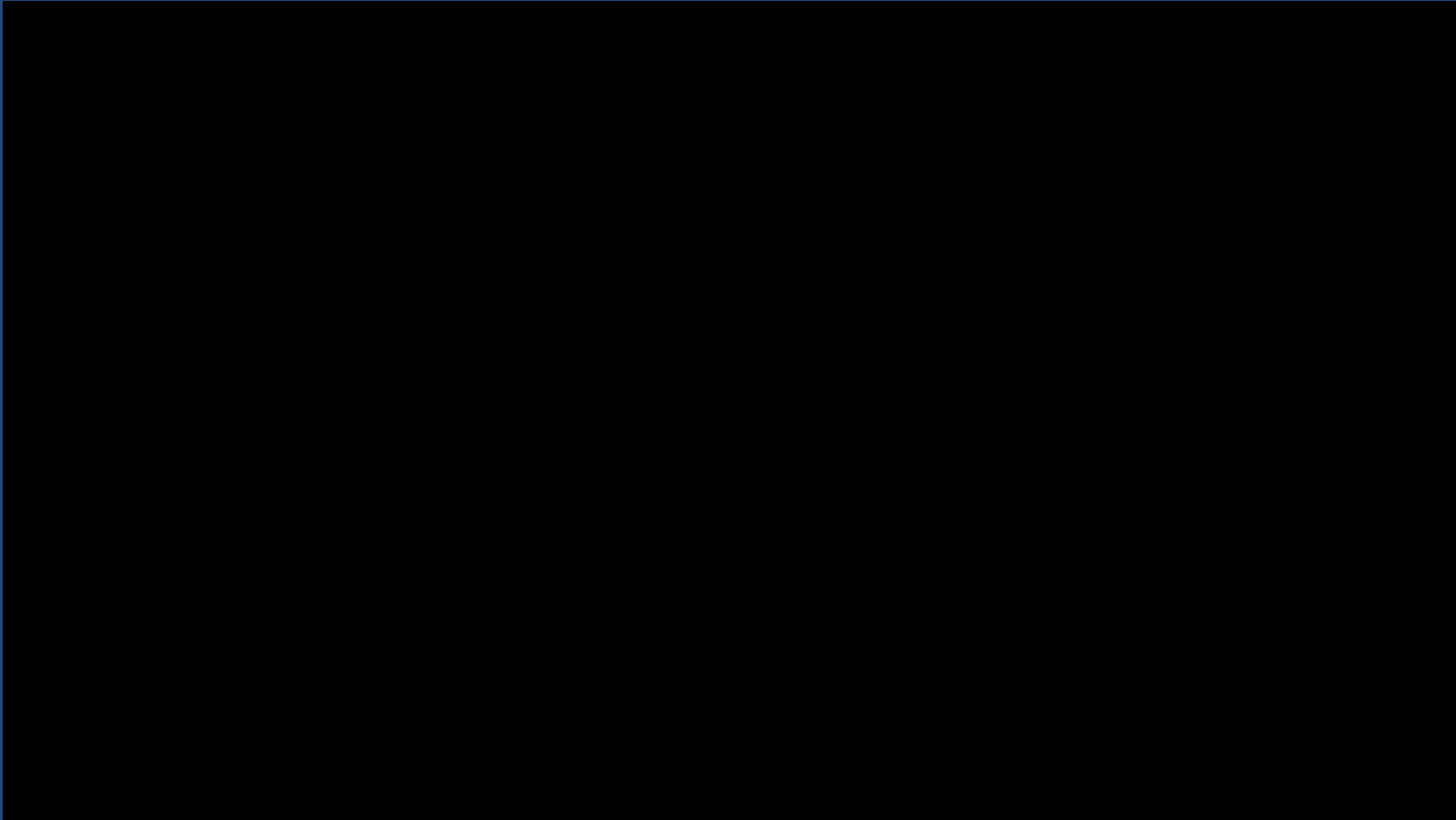
Race and Hillbilly Records (1920s)



Grove Street Senior Center, Asheville, NC



Hattie Tribble
Asheville, NC (May 1993)



Ruth Mosteller
Jackson County, NC (February 1993)

Carolina Chocolate Drops (2005)



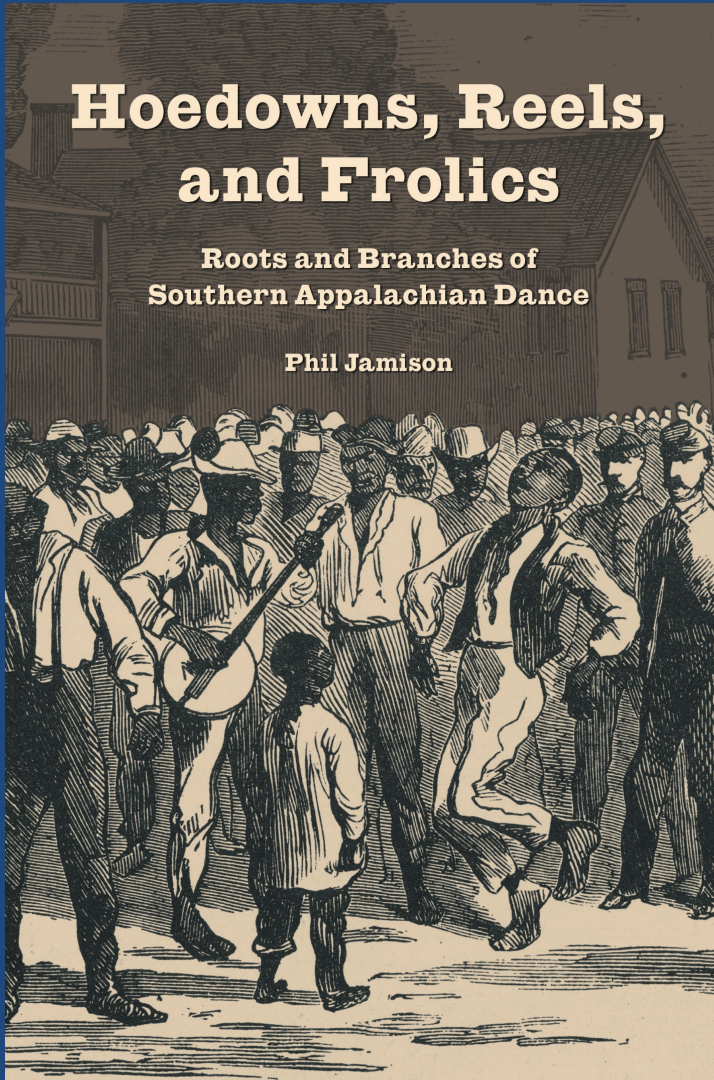
with Joe Thompson (NC fiddler)



Hoedowns, Reels, and Frolics

Roots and Branches of
Southern Appalachian Dance

Phil Jamison



www.philjamison.com

- Dance illustrations
- Dance videos
- 78-RPM recordings (1924-33)

University of Illinois Press 2015