

The Liston B. Ramsey Center for Regional Studies at Mars Hill College



Liston B. Ramsey

Established in 2002, the Ramsey Center embodies Mars Hill College's commitment to serving the region and the world. Named in honor of Liston B.

Ramsey, a Mars Hill College alumnus and four-term Speaker of the North Carolina House of Representatives, the Center encompasses the Southern Appalachian Archives, with unique collections documenting mountain religion, agriculture, and music; the Rural Life Museum, located in Montague Hall on the Quad; and the college's Regional Studies program.

Ramsey Center:

Monday through Friday 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., and by appointment while school is in session.

Southern Appalachian Archives:

Monday through Friday 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., and by appointment while school is in session.

The Ramsey Center is located in Renfro Library.



The Bascom Lamar Lunsford Collection

Southern Appalachian Archives
at the Liston B. Ramsey Center for Regional
Studies

Liston B. Ramsey Center for Regional Studies

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Bascom Lamar Lunsford, circa 1920s.

The Bascom Lamar Lunsford Collection at Mars Hill College

Who Was Bascom Lamar Lunsford?



On March 21, 1882, Bascom Lamar Lunsford was born on the campus of Mars Hill College on the spot where Cornwell Hall now stands. From his earliest recollections he was involved with the making of music, and he was well acquainted with education. Lunsford's father taught at Mars Hill College, and his mother oversaw one of the residence halls.

Lunsford became known as the Minstrel of the Appalachians, working long and hard to preserve the cultural heritage of Southern Appalachia at a time when many were running from the region and others were seeking to change it. He practiced law and other professions as a young man before returning to his first love, mountain music and dancing. Highlights of his career included a White House command performance for Franklin D. Roosevelt, a performance before King George VI and Queen Elizabeth of England, and recording his "memory collection" of some 320 songs, tunes, and stories for Columbia University in 1935 and the Library of Congress in 1949.

Lunsford maintained close contact with Mars Hill College and donated many of his manuscripts, recordings, and instruments to the school. He said he first learned banjo picking and ballad singing on the mountain campus, and allowed his name to be given to Mars Hill College's annual mountain music festival, *The Bascom Lamar Lunsford Minstrel of Appalachia Festival*.



Bryson City High School Students, 1928, Lunsford Scrapbook

Resources Within the Collection:

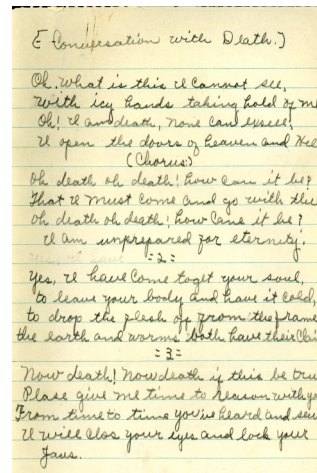
- The Handwritten Ballad and Folksong Notebooks
- The Bascom Lamar Lunsford Scrapbook
- Letters, memorabilia, and publications by Lunsford
- Pamphlets and memorabilia from the early Mountain Dance and Folk Festivals
- The Columbia University Memory Collection on Reel-To-Reel
- Reel-To-Reel Recordings of local festivals with Lunsford addressing the audience
- Films- *From Our House to the White House* and *Ballad of A Mountain Man*
- Lunsford's personal instrument collection: his banjo, guitar, fiddle, and banjorena



Photos of Cherokee, Bascom Lamar Lunsford Scrapbook

Plans for the Lunsford Collection:

The Lunsford Handwritten Ballad and Folksong Collection will be digitized for easier accessibility and preservation. Some photographs from the Lunsford Scrapbook have been scanned into a digital format. Bascom Lamar Lunsford's musical instruments are on display in a display case in the Ramsey Center, along with his oversized scrapbook. Lunsford's personal book collection is available within the Appalachian Room, and access to the archival materials is available on request.



Handwritten ballad of *Conversation with Death*, 1937, collected in *Scottsboro, Alabama*.

Regional and National Importance

Because of Lunsford's role in starting the first consecutive national folk festival in 1928, Asheville's legendary *Mountain Dance and Folk Festival*, Lunsford is known internationally known for his preservation and promotion of mountain cultural traditions.

In the western North Carolina mountains, Cecil Sharp, a British ballad collector, collected more old British Ballads than anywhere else in the Appalachians in 1916-1918 (Sharp dubbed the region a "Nest of Singing Birds"). The many mountain musicians of western North Carolina gained national attention in the early radio with legendary bands like Wade Mainer and his Mountaineers and The Callahan Brothers. The Bascom Lamar Lunsford Ballad and Folksong Collection is arguably the most representative collection of western North Carolina folksong and ballads, circa 1920s and 1930s. With a mix between ballads dating back to the 1500s and pop songs from early country music, the collection shows the relationship to the radio and local repertoires.