

Members of two generations of the Haynie family, African American farmers whose Virginian roots go back to the 1640s, gather on their veranda, which looks out on the family's land. Photo by Roland Freeman, 2007



# Roots of Virginia

**The Past is Present**

Betty J. Belanus, Program Curator

When a group of 120 Englishmen set foot 400 years ago on what later became Virginia, they hoped for a quick route to riches. Instead, they put in motion the creation of something much more precious—a new culture and a new country, which was to become the United States of America.

This year, the Festival explores three “roots” of Virginia’s culture—Native American, English, and African American. These groups supported the growth of a diverse, yet unified society in what would become Virginia. This summer, their descendants join delegations from Kent County, England (one of the counties from which the original settlers came and the burial place of Pocahontas) and West Africa (an area from which many enslaved Africans came to Virginia). By demonstrating and performing many parallel cultural traditions side by side, craftspeople, musicians, cooks, agriculturalists, and maritime experts prove that different cultures can have much in common and can borrow from each other to forge a nation.

Today’s Virginians include people whose ancestors have always been here, descendants of the original Jamestown settlers, the progeny of the first West Africans, and more recent immigrants from Africa, Southeast Asia, and Central America. They live and work from Virginia’s Atlantic coast to its Appalachian Mountains, from remote coal-mining towns in the southwest to bustling suburbs in the north. But no matter how deep their roots, Virginians strive with dedication and innovation to document and present their cultural heritage, adapting tradition to change and using the past to inform the present and future.





## CONTINUING THE PAST

Many traditions in Virginia; Kent County, England; and West Africa remain “unbroken” within families and communities. Although today’s cooks of Brunswick County, Virginia, prepare their rich stew over propane instead of an open fire and use chicken instead of squirrel, they still consider Brunswick stew a traditional dish. And Native American fishermen may no longer make their own nets to catch river shad, but their fishing techniques are still similar to those of their ancestors.

The ballad-singing tradition in southwestern Virginia has been well documented: Cecil Sharp (1859–1924), an English folk-song scholar, traveled to Appalachia to record traditional songs, which, in many cases, were better preserved in the mountains of Virginia than they were in their native Great Britain. Today, singers like Gin Burris from Carroll County, Virginia, still sing some of the same ballads, and modern folk-song scholars such as Dave Arthur from Towbridge Wells, Kent, England, come to Virginia to trace Sharp’s steps and record current versions of the ballads.

A number of crafts, such as pottery, blacksmithing, wood carving, and needlework, span the generations; craftspeople interpret and produce them according to their own tastes and market demand. Pamunkey and Mattaponi women create pots using local river clays and oyster shells. Their pots are treasured heirlooms

and a source of income from tourist and collector sales. Master Pamunkey potter Mildred Moore and many other Virginia-tradition bearers have participated in the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy’s Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program (see page 73). The program matches master folk artists with those eager to help preserve the past for the present and future.

## TRANSFORMING THE PAST

While tracing the roots of Virginia culture, historians find many tradition bearers who, by necessity or desire, refashion their skills. For example, in Virginia, as well as in Kent County, England, fruit farmers find it hard to keep their businesses profitable because of cheaper imports; many have quit farming and have sold their land to developers. Some farmers in Virginia have turned to Tom Burford, who comes from a fruit-growing family in the Shenandoah Valley. Burford uses his knowledge of apples to research heirloom varieties and waxes eloquently for hours about the Albemarle Pippin, an apple Queen Victoria liked so much she exempted it from import taxes. Thanks to Burford and the fruit growers he helps, gourmet cooks can find heirloom varieties of Virginia apples at farmers’ markets. The growers bring the taste of Virginia’s past to the present and make it profitable.

Horses are big business in Virginia and Kent, where they are raised for pleasure riding, shows, and racing. Well-to-do horse fanciers have created markets for everything from horse portraits to harness brasses. In Bethersden, Kent, twin brothers Tony and Marc Stevenson craft exquisite rocking horses. They learned woodworking skills from their uncle,



[Left to right] Mary Hill and her mother, Marie Hill, proudly stand in front of the Virginia Historical Marker that describes Hobson Village. Photo by Harold Anderson

A delegation representing the eight Virginia Indian tribes performs dances at an event in Gravesend, Kent County, England. Photo courtesy Jamestown UK Foundation Limited

Tony and Marc Stevenson of Bethersden, Kent, England, pose with some of their exquisite wooden horses. Photo courtesy Stevenson Brothers

James Bosworthick, an apprentice in the 1940s in the Chatham Naval Dockyard, where he made rocking horses from “off-cuts” (workable pieces of wood left over from shipbuilding). His nephews now combine the family tradition of woodworking with the English love of horses in a business that, over the past twenty-four years, has had such distinguished clients as the current Queen of England. They transform the past in ways that make sense in the everyday present in Virginia and beyond.

#### RESEARCHING AND INTERPRETING THE PAST

The ability to research and interpret the past requires years of study, determination, and “learning by doing.” Digging up the past is the professional passion of archaeologists at sites such as Historic Jamestowne. Surrounded by a room full of artifacts, Curator Beverly Straube excitedly shows visitors pieces of pottery, armor, and Native American tools. Small flags identify various pieces that originated not only in England and the Chesapeake Bay area, but also in Germany, Italy, and even Asia. The artifacts prove that, even in the seventeenth century, Virginia had a global reach—one that foretold its multicultural future.

Family and community researchers collect oral histories and search for clues in archives and databases. To apply for a permanent Virginia Historic Marker for the African American oystering settlement of Hobson Village, near Norfolk, Virginia, Mary Hill collected genealogies, oral histories, historic photos, and old oyster lease documents. “It helped that the people were still there to tell their story,” she said of the process.

At Canterbury Cathedral in Kent, England, Heather Newton heads the Conservation Stone Mason Shop. She and her fellow stonemasons work to conserve the older parts of the building; they also fix damage done by earlier restorers. At the Virginia Lime Works in Monroe, the Price family skillfully reproduces the type of mortar used in eighteenth-century homes like James Madison’s Montpelier and Thomas Jefferson’s second home, Poplar Forest. Researchers from Staunton’s Frontier Culture Museum of Virginia traveled to West Africa to study traditional building techniques, so they could recreate an African village. It should open this year.

#### CONCLUSION

With every delivery of one of their handcrafted rocking horses, the Stevenson brothers include a tree for their customers to plant. This is their way of replenishing the wood they use in their craft. Today, some of the trees are over twenty feet tall. The roots of Virginia culture, like those of the trees, have supported the growth of traditions that enrich the commonwealth, the country, and the world. By the time the 500th anniversary of Jamestown rolls around, who knows how the past will merge with new traditions to continue the legacy?

*Betty J. Belanus is a folklorist, curator, and education specialist at the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage. The Roots of Virginia Culture program is the seventh Festival program she has curated since 1988. She lives in Arlington, Virginia.*





## Virginia Indians

Karenne Wood (Monacan)

We honor our past and  
our ancestors and  
our history, and keep it close.  
But we have to move forward.  
—Debora Moore, Pamunkey Tribe

According to archaeologists, Native people have lived in the area we now call Virginia for as many as 15,000 years. However, if you ask us Virginia Indians how long our people have been here, we will say that we have always been here. Our histories, our ancestral connections, and our traditions are intertwined with the land known to the Powhatan peoples as Tsenacommacah—a bountiful land given to us by the Creator as the place most fitting for us to live.

The early inhabitants of Virginia were hunter-gatherers who followed the migratory patterns of large game, but over time, they settled into specific territories. Our people developed intimate, balanced relationships with the animals, plants, and geographic formations that characterized our homelands. History books seldom refer to the sophisticated agricultural techniques we practiced for more than 900 years or to the culturally managed landscapes we developed, where hunting and fishing areas alternated with townships and croplands along the waterways. They rarely mention that our nutrition was far superior to that of Europeans before the colonial era, or that our knowledge of astronomy informed our farming calendar and nighttime navigation. Virginia was not a wilderness to us, nor was it a “New World”; it was a known and loved home place. We shared our resources within our communities and with strangers. That is the Native way.

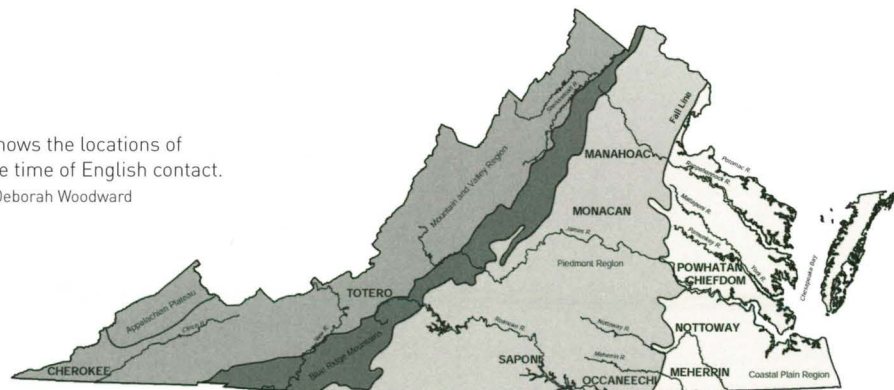
When the English colonists arrived in our homeland in the spring of 1607, some 20,000 Algonquian-speaking peoples were incorporated into the paramount

chiefdom of Powhatan, who was the tributary and spiritual leader of thirty-two tribes in the Atlantic coastal plain and Chesapeake Bay area. Approximately the same number of Siouan-speaking people lived to the west in the piedmont and mountain regions. They included the Monacan, Manahoac, Occaneechi, Saponi, and Tutelo (or Totero) tribal groups. In the southwest of what is now Virginia lived Cherokee people, who spoke an Iroquoian language. To the southeast of Powhatan’s domain lived the Meherrin and Nottoway tribes, who also spoke Iroquoian languages.

Powhatan, a brilliant strategist, probably intended to incorporate the English into his polity. He could not have known in 1607 that they intended to establish a permanent colony and usurp his lands. Within a hundred years, the Powhatan tribes were reduced to just several hundred individuals. Similar depopulation occurred among the Monacan peoples and throughout the East Coast and inland regions as European settlements spread westward. Through disease and warfare, Native peoples of this continent were decimated; their lands confiscated.

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Virginia’s Indian people found themselves policed by the colonial government, reduced to poverty as their landholdings eroded or were stolen outright. The first race laws were passed in Virginia in 1705; more followed in 1866. In 1924, the U.S. Congress passed the Racial Integrity Act, which prohibited marriage to whites by people of color, including Indians.

This map of Virginia shows the locations of prominent tribes at the time of English contact.  
Courtesy Keith Egloff and Deborah Woodward



(Right) Karenne Wood (Monacan) dances at a powwow. Like most Monacan dancers, Karenne beaded almost all of her dance regalia herself. Photo by Teresa Pollak (Monacan)

(Inset) This historic picture shows students at the Upper Mattaponi School sometime in the 1940s. Photo courtesy Karenne Wood



In Virginia Indian history, the first half of the twentieth century was dominated by the figure of Walter Plecker, who served as state registrar of vital statistics in Richmond from 1912 to 1946. He staunchly backed the eugenics movement, which advocated “human improvement.” Plecker believed that there should be only two races of people in Virginia—white and “colored”—and that white people were superior. By 1925, he developed a list of surnames of people he believed to be “mixed,” and he instructed local court clerks, hospital personnel, school administrators, and others to prevent persons with the names from associating with white people. He changed “Indian” to “colored” on numerous birth certificates.

Most of the current tribes in Virginia established churches and sometimes mission schools during the early years of the twentieth century. The schools provided education up to seventh grade. Indians were not allowed to attend white schools, and they refused to attend black schools. Many Indian children were needed at home or in the fields and could not finish elementary school. Some of the Powhatan tribes sent their children to the Bacone School in Oklahoma, and similar facilities in other states, where they could complete high school and sometimes the equivalent of a community college degree. Public education was not made available to Virginia Indians until 1963.

## WHO WAS POCAHONTAS?

Pocahontas, a daughter of the paramount chief Powhatan, was about ten years old in 1607 when the captive John Smith was brought to her father's headquarters. Opinions differ as to whether the famous “rescue of John Smith” actually happened, but if it did, it was most likely a ritual misunderstood by Smith. Over the next two years, Pocahontas, known for her intelligence and curiosity, accompanied her father's councilors on some of their trips to Jamestown.

In 1613, the teenager was kidnapped by the English and held for ransom. During her captivity, she met the

Englishman John Rolfe, who wanted to marry her. After the English made peace with her father, she agreed to accept Christianity and marry Rolfe. She took the name “Rebecca.” The peace that followed lasted for several years.

In 1616, the Rolfs went to England with their young son Thomas, and Rebecca Rolfe was presented to the English court. She died in England of an unknown disease and was buried in Gravesend, Kent. In 2006, a delegation of Virginia Indians visited her grave to honor her as one of their ancestors, one who bravely faced some difficult decisions and did her best for her people.



In 1919, anthropologist Frank Speck began visiting many Powhatan tribes to study their communities. With his encouragement, the Indians attempted to revive the Powhatan Confederacy in the 1920s. Thus, political activism began. During the 1980s, eight tribes obtained formal recognition from the commonwealth: the Chickahominy, the Chickahominy Eastern Division, the Mattaponi, the Monacan, the Nansemond, the Pamunkey, the Rappahannock, and the Upper Mattaponi. Throughout, the Mattaponi and the Pamunkey retained their reservations and observed the treaty between them. Today, approximately 4,000 indigenous tribal members live in Virginia, and more than 20,000 American Indians from throughout the nation make their homes within the commonwealth.

Among Virginia Indian tribes, traditional cultural practices thrive, along with contemporary arts. A few artists make a living solely from their arts, which include beadwork, leather crafting, wood carving, pottery, and basket weaving. Virginia Indians practice not only their own traditional dances, such as the Green Corn Dance and the Canoe Dance, but they also participate in intertribal powwow dancing. Powhatan Red Cloud-Owen (Chickahominy) said, “[dancing] draws me close to my ancestors, to my people... I’m different from somebody else, you know. I’m Indian. I’m Chickahominy, and this is what I do.”

Since the 1980s, Virginia tribes have taken great strides to retain or reclaim their cultural practices and improve economic conditions of their people. Tribal members elect their chiefs, and tribal councils meet regularly to address issues of concern and interest. Several tribes have established heritage classes for their young people and programs for elders. Almost all have purchased land in their homelands. Some are working on language reclamation. Six of the eight tribes

are pursuing federal acknowledgement through a bill introduced in Congress. Together, the eight tribes have worked to organize events for the 2007 commemoration of Jamestown’s founding. In July 2006, they completed a historical circle when fifty-five tribal delegates visited Kent County, England. It was the first time a delegation of Virginia Indians had traveled to England in almost 400 years. The tribal dance presentation was especially well received. “The people wouldn’t leave until the last drum beat had died out,” said Wayne Adkins (Chickahominy).

We, Virginia Indians are justifiably proud of our history, our traditions, our survival, and our record of contributions to our state and country. We love our homelands, and we have fought to defend them over the centuries. We teach our children that we are made of this land, and we belong here. We come from this earth, this ground, and we will always be here.

*Karenne Wood (Monacan) serves on the Tribal Council. She is a Ph.D. candidate and Ford Fellow in linguistic anthropology at the University of Virginia, working to reclaim indigenous languages and revitalize cultural practices. She directs the Virginia Indian Heritage Trail project with the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities in Charlottesville. She served as the repatriation director for the Association on American Indian Affairs, where she coordinated the return of sacred objects to Native communities. She worked at the National Museum of the American Indian as a researcher, and for six years, she directed a tribal history project for the Monacan Nation. Wood has served on the National Congress of American Indians’ Repatriation Commission and as the chair of the Virginia Council on Indians, a gubernatorial appointment.*



Virginia tribal leaders participate in the dedication of a highway marker that commemorates Opechancanough, the Powhatan chief who resisted the English in the mid-1600s. From the left are Chief Bill Miles (Pamunkey), Assistant Chief Warren Cook (Pamunkey), Chief Carl Custalow (Mattaponi), Chief Kenneth Adams (Upper Mattaponi), Chief Stephen Adkins (Chickahominy), and Assistant Chief Frank Adams (Upper Mattaponi). Photo by Deanna Beacham

# The Garden of England

## Kent, Yesterday and Today

Philip Sidney, 2nd Viscount De L'Isle, MBE DL

When commemorating the founding of Jamestown, the first English settlement in what is now the United States, a comparative examination of English and American history and culture is appropriate. Through more than the English language, Virginia and the southeastern English county of Kent have long been connected. Some of the first Jamestown settlers came from Kent. Among the first English families in Virginia were the Kentish Culpeppers, Sandys, Sidneys, and Wyatts. Their descendants in Virginia and England share agricultural, maritime, and building traditions. Most important, the people of Kent and Virginia share the desire to preserve the past and create a bright future.

### HISTORICAL NOTES

The county's history, like that of the rest of England, is quite different from the history of Virginia. "Kent" is the oldest recorded place name in the British Isles. Written records in Kent date to the first invasion of the Romans in 54 B.C.E. The Romans stormed inland to what is now Canterbury, overrunning the indigenous Britons to establish a city. Saint Augustine brought Christianity to Kent's shores in 597 C.E., and in the twelfth century, stonemasons built the magnificent Canterbury Cathedral on the foundations of a much older church. By the fourteenth century, Canterbury was a center of trade and pilgrimage, which Geoffrey Chaucer memorialized in *The Canterbury Tales*. Today, visitors see archaeological



The gardens of the Penshurst estate.

Photo courtesy Penshurst Place

evidence of the Romans and the Saxons in the cellars of buildings used for modern commerce.

By 1607, when the histories of Kent and Virginia intersected for the first time, Kent was thriving due to its proximity to the English capital, London. Pocahontas (known as Rebecca Rolfe after her marriage to John Rolfe) visited London in 1616. Unfortunately, she fell ill on her way back to Virginia in 1617 and was brought ashore at Gravesend, Kent, where she died and was buried at the local parish church of St. George. In the summer of 2006, Virginia tribal representatives visited St. George's Church to take part in a ceremony in her honor.



(Above) A stone carver works in the restoration shop of Canterbury Cathedral. Photo courtesy Canterbury Cathedral

(Right) Fishing boats docked in Whitstable Harbor. The buildings in the background were once used as fisherman's huts. Photo courtesy [www.visitkent.co.uk](http://www.visitkent.co.uk)





From 1642 to 1648, the English fought a civil war that pitted royal rule against parliament. In Kent, Royalist uprisings took place, with fighting in the streets of Maidstone, the county seat. Many Royalists (or Cavaliers) immigrated to Virginia for political and religious freedom. Between 1637 and 1662, including the war years, royal gardener John Tradescant, born in Meopham, Kent, made his own history by travelling three times to Virginia to collect plant species, some of which still grace English gardens.

Several English warships that sailed during the American Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 were built at the Royal Chatham Dockyard in Kent, which was established in the mid-sixteenth century. They included the *Raisonnable*, which in 1779 took part in an assault on Hampton Roads, Virginia, and the HMS *Guerriere*, which the USS *Constitution* destroyed during the War of 1812. Because it so affected daily life in Kent and killed so many of its citizens, World War II is fresh in people's memories. In 1940, the Battle of Britain was fought in the skies over Kent. Throughout the war, Winston Churchill, whose mother was from New York City, lived at Chartwell, Kent.

#### A BRIEF SKETCH OF KENTISH TRADITIONS

Kent has been known as the "Garden of England" for over 400 years, since the day King Henry VIII ate a particularly satisfying bowl of Kentish cherries. Despite the fact that, today, Kent is the largest

county in England with many industrial complexes and a thriving high-tech industry, its sobriquet is still very visible in the fruit orchards, produce farms, and hop gardens that cover the landscape. Sheep and cows still graze over much of the countryside, and in the summer and fall, the greengrocers' and farmers' markets of Kent abound with local apples, strawberries, pears, ciders, juices, jams, chutneys, cheeses, lamb, and wines.

Kent has 350 miles of coastline, and local fish—including the famous Dover sole and Whitstable oyster—top menus throughout the United Kingdom. The Historic Chatham Dockyard, now a popular tourist attraction, still houses traditional rope and flag makers. Sheerness and Dover are points of departure for international shipping and ferry travel, and the Medway and Thames rivers figure prominently in Kent's history and traditions.

Whether restoring Canterbury Cathedral or adapting oast houses (built to dry hops) into bed-and-breakfasts or apartment complexes, master builders and their apprentices are busy year-round. The Museum of Kent Life near Maidstone and the Kent Hop Farm in Paddock Wood preserve and interpret historic constructions, such as clay-peg roofs, oast houses, and huts used by seasonal hop pickers. There are more castles in Kent than in any other county in England. They include Leeds Castle built in 1119, which was home to the Culpeppers and Fairfaxes.



## HISTORIC ESTATES: LINKING PAST AND PRESENT

One important tradition that links Kent's past and present is the maintenance of historic houses and landed estates, many of which date to medieval times. In 1341, a rich London wool merchant built Penshurst Place, the home of the author of this essay, which is located on the Weald of Kent, near Royal Tunbridge Wells. Subsequent owners, including King Henry VIII, extended it in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Henry's son, King Edward VI, gave the house to Sir William Sidney, an ancestor of the current owner, in 1552. The estate covers 2,500 acres of farm and woodland and an eleven-acre, formal, walled garden designed in 1346. In order to maintain the estate, the current owners decided several years ago to rent out parts of the house and grounds for craft fairs, official receptions, and private functions. The family still lives in the private apartments, but the staterooms, including Barons Hall, and the restored gardens are open to visitors. Today, running and restoring the estate for the public is a two-generation family affair.

## THE FUTURE OF KENT TRADITIONS

Kent's rich history and culture inform the county's development. The land still yields traditional crops and now nourishes new plants that can be harnessed for fuel, furniture, and medicine. Immigration and travel have created a multicultural society, one linked to the world. Kent, like Virginia, faces the future by blending its proud traditions with twenty-first-century opportunities.

*Viscount De L'Isle (Philip) grew up at Penshurst Place, the Sidney family home since 1552, where he now lives with his wife Viscountess De L'Isle (Isobel). He served in the Grenadier Guards and was awarded the MBE in 1977. He retired as a Major in 1979. From 1983–1985, he was chairman of Kent CLA. From 1992–1999, he was Honorary Colonel of the 5th Bn PWRR. Philip was appointed a Deputy Lieutenant of Kent in 1994, becoming Vice Lord Lieutenant in 2002. A Trustee of Canterbury Cathedral Trust since 1992 and Chairman in 2007, he and Isobel have managed the family Estate for over twenty-five years.*

Oast houses, used to dry hops before brewing, are on the grounds of The Hop Farm in Kent. Photo courtesy [www.visitkent.co.uk](http://www.visitkent.co.uk)

## A PERSONAL CONNECTION BETWEEN KENT AND VIRGINIA

### Amanda Cottrell

My ancestors sailed to Virginia in 1608, settled in the Rappahannock region, and grew cotton and tobacco. They held a number of prominent positions in the state: the last one to live in the United States was my great uncle, General Wendell C. Neville (1870–1930), who was commander of the U.S. Marine Corps and once appeared on the cover of *Time Magazine*. My ancestors had good relations with the Rappahannock Indians, so it was a delight and a great honor to welcome Chief Anne Richardson to Kent in July 2006.

I am currently the patron of Produced in Kent, an organization that promotes fresh, local food. Because I love to cook, I find myself turning to some of the recipes that I loved when I visited Virginia as a child. The following recipe goes well with seasonal fruit, including the bounteous apples, pears, peaches, and strawberries available in Kentish farmers' markets and greengrocers' shops. My Virginia grandmother's sticky gingerbread reminds us that a blend of English and Virginia cultures is "always in season."

### AMANDA CARDWELL NEVILLE'S STICKY GINGERBREAD

#### Ingredients

- 4 oz. black treacle or molasses
- 4 oz. golden syrup or golden corn syrup
- ½ lb. butter (2 sticks/4 oz. cut up)
- ½ lb. soft brown sugar (approx. 1 cup)
- 12 oz. all-purpose flour
- Pinch to one teaspoon salt
- 2 level tablespoons ground ginger
- 3 level teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 2 large eggs
- ½ pint of milk (1 cup)
- 2 level teaspoons bicarbonate of soda  
or baking soda
- Cooking oil
- Greaseproof parchment paper

#### Directions

Grease a 7½ by 11½-inch baking pan well. Cut parchment paper to fit the base of the baking pan, and grease the paper. In a heavy saucepan, stir together the black treacle or molasses, golden syrup or golden corn syrup, butter, and brown sugar. Melt slowly over medium heat, stirring all the time. Remove the saucepan from the heat. Sift the flour, ginger, cinnamon, and salt into the mix in the saucepan. Beat the eggs and stir them slowly into the mix. Heat the milk and whisk in the baking soda. Stir the milk and soda until the soda dissolves. Add them to the saucepan and fold all of the ingredients together. Pour the folded mix into the baking pan. Cook for one hour at 300 degrees Fahrenheit.



# Africans, African Americans

## and the Roots of Virginia Culture

Diana Baird N'Diaye

For African Americans, the history of Virginia has always been replete with paradox and irony. Virginia, the place where Africans first landed as slaves, was also the place where George Washington and Thomas Jefferson dreamed a nation into being around the ideal of human freedom, even though they owed their own wealth to the appropriated labor, skills, and expertise of Africans and their descendants. African Americans availed themselves of opportunities that followed upon the bloody Civil War. But after a brief period of promised prosperity came the introduction of Jim Crow laws that denied them voting rights and access to education. At the dawn of the Civil Rights era, one Virginia county closed the doors of public schools to African American students for five years. Yet, fifty years earlier, Virginia-born African American educational pioneer Booker T. Washington helped establish some of the first African American schools and colleges.

By building strong and vibrant communities (despite the difficulties of their circumstances), participating in the give-and-take of education and expression, and re-examining history in order to set the record straight, African Americans in Virginia have made a significant contribution to the commonwealth over its 400 years. Throughout Virginia's history, African Americans have come together to create and sustain communities.

Twenty-odd Angolans—the first Africans to arrive in Virginia after a torturous Atlantic journey in 1619 on the ship *Sao Joao Bautista*—called each other *malungo*, a Kimbundu word meaning “shipmate” or “companion.” Most Africans who were brought to Virginia were taken from West Africa—from the Bight of Biafra, Senegambia, and modern-day Cameroon. They spoke many different languages, including Igbo, Efik, Ijo, Wolof, Manding, and Pular. With no common language, their first challenge was inventing ways of speaking to one another and creating community.

As fluency in African languages began to fade in Virginia, some words and phrases entered American English; for example, “goober” came from the Kimbundu word for peanut (*nguba*). Replacing identities based on language and ethnic origins, bondsmen and bondswomen began to derive a sense of community from their common conditions and their recognition of cultural similarities. What emerged in the Chesapeake Bay area were regional African American identities—new forms of cultural expression that melded African aesthetics with European and sometimes Native American influences. Virginia could not have developed without the expertise, skills, and labor that Africans brought with them. African expertise in forming work groups, agriculture, tool making, and animal husbandry was indispensable to the foundation of Virginia. Early on, African Americans founded their own churches, such as the First Baptist Church in Williamsburg, one of the oldest African American churches in the state. As some bondspersons in Virginia were set free in the wills of their captors, bought their freedom, or escaped through the perilous Underground Railroad, they began to establish villages. Land ownership was the key not only to economic success, but also to building a legacy. Israel Cross, a preacher to freedmen communities in Eastern Virginia, urged his followers to “buy some land, build a home, and get some education.”



The 54-40 African American Quilters Guild of Hampton, Virginia, has been meeting to share their love of quilts and quilting for over thirty years. © 2007 Roland L. Freeman

For enslaved and free African Americans, training and education were tantamount to freedom and independence. Education and its denial became touch points in the struggle for human rights. African Virginian activists Mary Peake of Hampton and Booker T. Washington, a Hampton graduate who became head of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, helped establish not only colleges and technical institutes, but also elementary and secondary schools, such as the “Rosenwald Schools,” so called because they were partially funded through grants from Julius Rosenwald, the founder of Sears, Roebuck & Company. (Similar “whites-only” schools were created earlier throughout the segregated South.) These schools and Virginia’s Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) taught African Americans technical and agricultural skills. Today, there are five HBCUs in Virginia: Hampton University, Norfolk State University, Saint Paul’s College, Virginia State University, and Virginia Union University. Each school specializes in different academic fields, and each one is known for particular forms of expressive culture, including stepping, show bands, gospel choirs, and glee clubs.

Music is one of the strongest examples of the cultural give-and-take: There exists a 1759 written description of an instrument called a *bandore*, which Africans played in Virginia. The presence of this stringed instrument meant that among those who came to Virginia were members of the occupational class of musicians and oral historians from the Manding, Pular, and Wolof kingdoms of the Sahel region of West Africa. These skilled musicians and storytellers were called *griots*. Usually attached to courts, they sang the history and accomplishments of rulers and their families. The *bandore* of the *griots* and other similar stringed instruments (the *xalam*, *hoddu*, *ngoni*, and *gambare*) were the ancestors of the modern banjo. First an instrument of African Americans, the banjo became, for many years, an instrument associated with Appalachian music.

Enslaved musicians from the West African Senegambian region brought to Virginia the five-string *bandore*, which they played in claw hammer-style. It helped give birth to the modern-day banjo. This photograph of a young interpreter and historian, musician, and storyteller Rex Ellis, director of the historic area at Colonial Williamsburg, recalls *The Banjo Lesson*, an iconic painting by African American painter Henry Owsawa Tanner.

Photo courtesy Colonial Williamsburg

**There is no area in American history, let alone colonial Virginian history, untouched by the hands of Africans and African Americans. With over half of the population of Williamsburg being of African descent, any story of America’s beginnings and life in Williamsburg devoid of the experience of enslaved Africans would be incomplete, incorrect, and anything but accurate. Men and women, free and enslaved, lived, socialized, loved, worked, suffered, survived and fought for freedom. —Rex Ellis**

Historian Rex Ellis, head of the historic area at Colonial Williamsburg, stresses the importance of recognizing how, in markedly different ways, enslavers and those in bondage were negatively affected by the institution of slavery. At Colonial Williamsburg, Ellis and others have reinterpreted slavery to show the complexities of the institution. And they have humanized it with interactive, “first-person presentations” throughout the historic area.





Today, recent African immigrants to Virginia, including a large number of Somalis, build community in some of the same ways as earlier Africans did. Although many Somalis live in modern high-rises in Northern Virginia, they get together as often as possible for coffee and meet for a picnic each year in George Mason Park to share stories, songs, and traditions, such as henna hand-decoration.

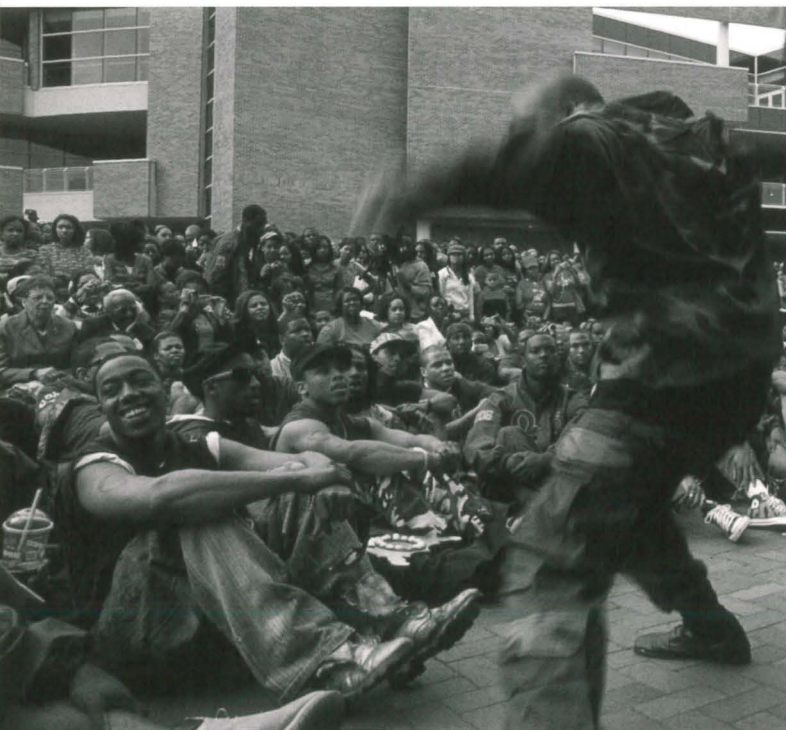
Currently, farmers on both shores of the Atlantic Ocean find themselves in similar straits. Previously engaged almost exclusively in growing one cash crop, small West African peanut farmers and Virginia African American tobacco farmers stay in business by diversifying their crops, developing pesticide-free agriculture, and saving heirloom seeds. Family farms are threatened by the flight

of young people to cities and to more financially rewarding, less physically taxing occupations.

African American Virginians have become national leaders in interpreting their past and the specific cultural and historical issues that have emerged from the African/African American presence in the state. These issues include the interpretation of slavery in Virginia, the Civil War, the Civil Rights movement, and the movement for African American self-determination. Virginia's HBCUs, churches, clubs, friendly societies, and heritage organizations document and interpret their histories and educate themselves and others about African Americans' role in Virginia's history.

The first Africans to come to Virginia and their descendants contributed their expertise, artistry, labor,

Stepping traditions, which African American fraternities developed at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), now enjoy popularity among students of many cultural backgrounds. New members of Omega Psi Phi step at Hampton University. © 2007 Roland L. Freeman



## EDNA LEWIS

Edna Lewis (1916–1996) was much loved in the U.S. culinary community for her mastery of southern cooking and her cookbook-memoirs about the rural foodways of her hometown, Freetown, Orange County, in the Piedmont region of Virginia. Lewis spread her love of fresh Virginia seasonal fare to new audiences as the chef at New York City's prestigious Gage and Tollner restaurant.

In her cookbook, *The Taste of Country Cooking*, originally published in 1976 and reprinted in 2007, Lewis describes growing up in Freetown, which was founded by her grandfather as a

*community of farming people....The name was adopted because the first residents had all been freed from chattel slavery, and they wanted to be known as a town of Free People....The spirit of pride in community and of cooperation in the work of farming is what made Freetown a very wonderful place to grow up in.... Whenever I got back to visit my sisters and brothers, we relive old times, remembering the past. And when we share again in gathering wild strawberries, canning, rendering lard, finding walnuts, picking persimmons, making fruitcake, I realize how much the bond that held us had to do with food.*

and lives to the creation of Virginia as we know it today. The impact of the Africans and their descendants is evident in the confluence of people, traditions, geography, and historical events that continue to shape Virginia's present and point to its future.

*Diana Baird N'Diaye, Ph.D., is a cultural heritage specialist and Curator of the African and African American component of the Roots of Virginia Culture program. For over twenty-five years, she has developed exhibitions, programs, and publications on African and African Diaspora expressive culture. In recent years, her work has expanded to include cultural policy, heritage ethnography, and cultural tourism. She lived in Virginia for sixteen years.*

To succeeding generations, members of West African farming communities pass on knowledge and skills that were essential to Virginia's early development. Young farmer Alioune Ba builds a fence in Ndjilassème, Senegal.

Photo by Diana N'Diaye, Smithsonian Institution



#### SWEET POTATO PIE *(Makes two 10-inch or three 7-inch pies)*

Reproduced here is Edna Lewis's recipe for sweet potato pie, part of her Sunday Revival Dinner menu. Lewis describes this event as "our most important social event of the summer season."

##### Dough

- 3 cups plus 2 tablespoons sifted flour
- 1 cup chilled, home-rendered sweet lard
- 1 scant teaspoon salt
- ½ cup cold water

##### Filling

- 2 cups mashed and sieved sweet potatoes
- 1 cup sugar
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon fresh-grated nutmeg
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 3 small or medium eggs, separated
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- ¾ cup butter, melted over hot water
- 1½ cups milk, at room temperature

Two 10-inch or three 7-inch pie pans

##### Directions

In a mixing bowl blend well together with a pastry blender the 3 cups of flour, lard, and salt. When well blended, add cold water and mix together by hand. This is a very short dough and the water has to be incorporated in by hand. After blending the water in, shape the dough into a ball. Sprinkle the dough over with 2 tablespoons flour to make it easier to handle. Divide the dough into pieces for the number of pies to be made. Leave to rest for 10 to 15 minutes. It is best to roll the dough out after resting. It is easier to handle while soft. After rolling the dough out, place it in the pie pans, trim, cover, and set in the refrigerator or freezer until needed. Remove and fill while chilled.

In a mixing bowl combine the sieved sweet potatoes, sugar, spices, salt, beaten yolks, vanilla, and melted butter. Mix thoroughly. Add in the milk and stir well. Beat the whites of eggs to the frothy stage and stir them into the batter. Pour the batter into the pastry-lined pie pans. Bake in a 350 degree oven for 40 to 45 minutes.

*Excerpted from The Taste of Country Cooking by Edna Lewis. Copyright © 1976 by Edna Lewis. Reprinted with permission from the publisher Alfred A. Knopf.*



# Blue Ridge Folklife

## Thirty Years of Fried Pies and Other Delights

Roddy Moore and Vaughan Webb

By the mid-1700s, the settlement of western Virginia was at full speed. The English and their African American slaves built large farms in the Virginia Piedmont. Germans settled much of the Shenandoah Valley, and the Scots-Irish carved out smaller farmsteads in the hollows of the Blue Ridge Mountains. People, commerce, and information flowed through western Virginia along the Great Wagon Road, the Carolina Road, and the Wilderness Road. By 1860, the railroad was crisscrossing Virginia. By 1900, the coal, timber, and farm products of western Virginia were sold throughout the eastern United States. Still, many Virginians held fast to their old cultural identities and to the music, speech, foodways, crafts, and social customs that reflected their identities.

In the early 1970s, Ferrum College created the Blue Ridge Institute & Museum to document and showcase the folklife of the Blue Ridge. The Institute's work is part of a regional collecting tradition that stretches back over a century. The field-workers of the early 1900s, however, could scarcely have imagined how folkways would change and how easy it would become to record and present so many traditions to a huge audience.



Traditions change with lifestyles and technology: these Roanoke, Virginia, "gandy dancers" now work primarily with large machinery. Photo courtesy Blue Ridge Institute

Although the Blue Ridge Institute & Museum focuses on western Virginia, it follows traditions statewide—from cane carving and apple growing to hot-rod building and quartet singing. The Institute's programs include museum exhibitions, online resources, a living history museum, and media productions. In 1986, it was designated the State Center for Blue Ridge Folklore. Each fall, on the fourth Saturday of October, the Blue Ridge Institute & Museum transforms the campus of Ferrum College into Virginia's largest celebration of regional folkways. Presenting old-time crafts, music, food, car culture, working-animal competitions, and much more.

*Roddy Moore has been Director of Ferrum College's Blue Ridge Institute & Museum for over thirty years.*

*Vaughan Webb, Assistant Director of Ferrum College's Blue Ridge Institute & Museum, has been a folklorist at the Institute since 1981.*

### FRIED APPLE PIES

Fried apple pie is a real treat at the Blue Ridge Folklife Festival. The following recipe was demonstrated at the 1995 festival. Mrs. Virginia P. Crook of Ferrum, Virginia, learned the recipe from her mother, who, before she passed away in 1974 at the age of 87, had made enough of these pies to lay end to end around the world several times. The secret is in the dried apples.

#### Filling

- 2 cups [packed] dried apples (Good drying apples are winesap, Granny Smith, or Summer Rambo)
- 3 cups water
- ¼ teaspoon cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon cloves
- Cook until tender and waterless.
- Sweeten to taste, and set aside to cool.

#### Crust

- 2 cups plain white flour
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ cup solid shortening (preferably Crisco)
- Enough ice water to make up a good workable dough

#### Directions

Divide dough into balls big enough to roll into a piecrust the size of a dessert plate. (My mother said each ball should be "the size of a goose egg.") Place two to three tablespoons cooled apples in one half of the crust, fold over the other half, and crimp the edges to seal the crust. It should look similar to a crescent. Heat oil or solid shortening in an iron frying pan, about two inches deep. Fry the pies until golden brown on both sides. Drain on paper towels or clean cloth. These can be frozen. The recipe should make about six pies.

#### Additional Notes

To test the temperature of the oil, drop a drop of cold water in the pan. If it dances all the way across the pan, it is hot enough.

Jon Lohman

The three root cultures of Virginia, which are the focus of this program, extend throughout the commonwealth and combine with many others to create the vibrant traditions of contemporary Virginia. From the old-time music gatherings of Galax to the ceremonial Hmong dances of Arlington, from the intricately hand-stitched quilts of the Shenandoah to the duck decoys of the Eastern Shore, the forms of folklife in Virginia are as diverse as the communities that create them.

Since its inception in 1989, the Virginia Folklife Program, a public program of the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, has worked to document, present, and support Virginia's diverse traditional folkways by producing and supporting educational materials and public programs. In the first years of the program, Garry Barrow conducted numerous ethnographic fieldwork surveys that helped to capture the stories of everyday people living extraordinary lives and that yielded such cultural treasures as the Buckingham Lining Bar Gang and the Northern Neck Chantey Singers. The Folklife Program also worked with communities like the Monacan Indian Tribe to document their cultural traditions, and it launched the highly successful Piedmont Guitarists Tour, which featured Virginia blues masters John Jackson, John Cephas, Daniel Womack, and others.

In 2001, Jon Lohman assumed the directorship of the Folklife Program, which has continued to document Virginia's rich cultural folkways through audio and video documentation, exhibit design, public programming, and project development. From all the various initiatives of the Folklife Program, the Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program stands out as the program's cornerstone. Now in its fifth year, the program pairs experienced master artists with apprentices for a one-on-one, nine-month learning experience.

Apprenticeships have included fiddle making, crab-trap building, and even automobile pinstriping. The program has been generously supported by the National Endowment for the Arts.

During the apprenticeship period, the master artist and apprentice enter into a mutually enriching relationship, both cultural and personal; they connect lessons and memories from the past with shared visions for the future. Through this intimate one-on-one experience, the apprentice is able to access the subtle nuances of the particular traditional form—those elusive qualities of the craft that have invested it with cultural resonance and traditional resilience.

The Folklife Apprenticeship Program helps ensure that Virginia's treasured folkways not only continue, but also receive new life and vibrancy, engaging new learners and reinvigorating master practitioners. This photo essay introduces a number of participants in the program, which truly allows the past to be passed on to the present in Virginia.

*Jon Lohman is Director of the Virginia Folklife Program, at the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. He earned a Ph.D. in folklore and folklife from the University of Pennsylvania. As the Virginia state folklorist, he works to document, present, and support Virginia's rich folkways through audio and video documentation, exhibit design, public programming, and project development. Jon works closely with Ferrum College's Blue Ridge Institute, and other organizations and communities. He has produced numerous recordings, including the Paschall Brothers' On the Right Road Now, for Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, and bluegrass, old-time, and gospel releases for the Foundation's own Crooked Road Series.*





#### MILDRED MOORE

The Pamunkey Indian potters created their distinctive blackware pottery long before their first contact with Europeans in 1607. Born and raised on the Pamunkey Indian Reservation, **Mildred Moore** learned the art of traditional Powhatan Blackware as a child from the Elder Woman at the pottery school. Mildred is now one of the few elder women still practicing this important tradition. She teaches her apprentice to make the pottery using the hand-coil method, which does not require a pottery wheel. The women dig their clay from the same vein in the Pamunkey River as their ancestors did.

#### THORNTON AND MARTHA SPENCER

Grayson County master fiddler **Thornton Spencer** learned to play in the 1940s from his brother-in-law, the revered fiddle maker and player Albert Hash. Thornton's daughter, **Martha Spencer**, has been immersed in old-time music her entire life. Already a gifted multi-instrumentalist, Martha has used her apprenticeship opportunity to focus on the nuances of the fiddle.

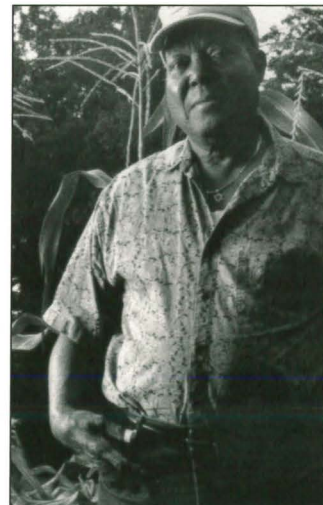


#### FLORY JAGODA

**Flory Jagoda**, "the keeper of the flame" of a once thriving Sephardic Jewish song tradition, mentored singer **Susan Gaeta**. Flory's songs, passed down in her family since they fled the Spanish Inquisition in 1492, were learned from her *nona* (grandmother) as a child in pre-World War II Sarajevo. She sings all of her ballads in Ladino, or Judeo-Spanish, a language that dates back centuries. Sadly, Flory is the lone member of her acclaimed singing family to survive the Holocaust. She has almost single-handedly kept the Sephardic ballad tradition alive. In 2002, Flory was awarded a National Heritage Fellowship.

#### JOHN CEPHAS

The most distinctive feature of the Piedmont guitar style is its fingerpicking method in which the thumb lays down a rhythmic bass-line against which one or two fingers pluck out the melody of the tune. **John Cephas**, of Bowling Green, Virginia, is considered the world's foremost Piedmont bluesman. John learned to play guitar from family members and neighbors in Caroline County at the many "county breakdowns" and house parties that were a staple of social life in the region. His collaborations with harmonica master Phil Wiggins have been delighting audiences throughout the world for decades. In 1989 John was awarded a National Heritage Fellowship, the highest honor the United States government bestows upon a traditional artist.



### JOHN D. CLARY

According to legend, Brunswick stew began as a communal meal prepared for a hunting expedition on the banks of the Nottoway River in 1828. Cooking Brunswick stew has since become a time-honored tradition—a staple at community gatherings, a source of regional pride, the focus of spirited competition, and a true Virginia culinary art. When he joined the Lawrenceville Volunteer Fire Department in the fall of 1973, **John D. Clary** began cooking Brunswick stew under the watchful eye of Stewmaster McGuire Thomas. John eventually ascended to the level of Stewmaster in 1988. He continues to cook for the Fire Department, the local Lions Club, the Virginia Tech Athletic Department, and the Capitol and State Fair in Richmond, where he met his apprentice, **Chiles Cridlin**.

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### PENNY STILLWELL

Canning was the only way to preserve jams, jellies, relishes, and pickles before refrigeration. Master canners such as **Penny Stillwell** have elevated canning to an art form. Since she was six years old, canning has been nothing short of a way of life for Penny. She cans everything from beets to okra, from apple butter to roasted tomatoes. Penny used her apprenticeship to teach her daughter many of her unrecorded recipes and share some of her most cherished canning secrets.

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### OLEN GARDNER AND ROSS MATHEWS

**Olen Gardner** was exposed to a host of instrument makers as a child and has been developing his craft ever since. Olen constructs bluegrass and old-time banjos, as well as guitars and the occasional violin. Olen is a fine banjoist in his right and worked with Charlie Monroe in the early 1950s. A former tool maker, Olen has developed numerous tools specifically designed for the construction and repair of stringed instruments. For the past two years, Olen has been mentoring **Ross Mathews** in the art of fine instrument repair and construction.

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### GRAYSON CHESSER

Eastern Shore native **Grayson Chesser** learned to carve from legendary Chincoteague Island carvers Miles Hancock and "Cigar" Daisy and has gone on to become one of carving's true living legends. Grayson's family roots on the Eastern Shore date back to the mid-1600s. Like his forbearers, he is deeply immersed in the maritime traditions of the area, as a carver, hunting guide, and conservationist. Always eloquent, Chesser sums up the feelings of most of the Apprenticeship Program participants in the following statement:  
*"...All I ever wanted to be was a decoy carver. I learned at the feet of master carvers, and now most of them are passed and gone. There's nothing I can give back to those guys now, but I always thought that maybe if I can teach someone, then that could sort of be my way of repaying them. So this apprenticeship is really a continuation of what those guys have done for me."*



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Ken Custalow (Mattaponi), who lives on his tribe's reservation in the Tidewater region of Virginia, makes beautiful flutes from alder and cedar wood.  
Photo by Karenne Wood

## RECOMMENDED RECORDINGS

VARIOUS ARTISTS. 2006-07. *The Crooked Road Series*. Virginia Folklife Recordings. VFHCR 101-109.

A 9-CD series that showcases the bluegrass, old time, and gospel artists of southwestern Virginia.

VARIOUS ARTISTS. 1998. *Black Banjo Songsters of North Carolina and Virginia*. Smithsonian Folkways Recordings. SFW 40079.

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