



**THE CENTER FOR POPULAR MUSIC, MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY,  
MURFREESBORO, TN**

**TENNESSEE BANJO INSTITUTE COLLECTION**

**88-026; 93-013**

**Creator:**

Tennessee Banjo Institute  
Center for Popular Music staff

**Type of Material:**

Manuscript Textual Materials, Manuscript audio/visual interviews and field recordings, photographs, programs.

**Physical Description:**

.5 l.f. of manuscript material in five folders including  
7 audio cassettes  
9 video tapes  
598 photographic slides, negatives, and contact prints

**Languages:**

English

**Dates:**

1988; 1992

**Abstract (Descriptive Summary):**

This collection consists of audio oral histories, programs, photographs and manuscript materials created by the Tennessee Banjo Institute and the staff of the Center for Popular Music in 1988 and 1992.

**Repository:**

Center for Popular Music, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN 37132,  
(615) 898-2449.

**Access/Restrictions:**

The collection is open for research use. All materials in this collection are subject to standard national and international copyright laws. Center staff can assist with copyright questions for this material.

**Preferred Citation:**

(Box Number, Folder Number/Name), Tennessee Banjo Institute Collection 88-026; 93-013, Center for Popular Music, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, Tennessee

**Provenance and Acquisition Information:**

1988 material: The audio and video tapes were produced by Paul Wells, Bruce Nemerov and David Bassett of the Center for Popular Music and Pat Jackson of Middle Tennessee State University Television Services. Interview log sheets were completed by David Bassett; the "Banjo Meltdown" log sheet was done by Bruce Nemerov. The photographs were taken by Paul Wells.

1992 material: The print and near print materials and the name badge were issued to Center audio specialist Bruce Nemerov who worked as a member of the Institute staff. The photographs were taken by Center director Paul Wells.

**Subject/Index Terms:**

Tennessee Banjo Institute  
Banjo music  
Old Time Music  
Bluegrass Music  
"Banjo Meltdown" Concert  
Omer Forster  
Will Keys  
Alan Munde  
Thompson Family

**Agency History:**

Bobby Fulcher, director of the Tennessee State Parks Folklife Project (a division of the Tennessee Department of Conservation) organized the Tennessee Banjo Institute as a program of the folklife project. Wayne Ingram served as director of the Institute, which was funded in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. Other sponsors included the American Banjo Fraternity, Banjo Newsletter, the Center for Popular Music, the Country Music Foundation, Gibson Guitar Company, the Old-Time Music and Dance Foundation, Stelling Banjo Works, and Uncle Dave Macon Days, Inc.

The Institute, which was held 10-12 November 1988 at Cedars of Lebanon state park, included workshops and tutorials by a 43-member faculty, a student concert on 10 November at the park, and a concert, the "Banjo Meltdown", by Institute faculty at the Tucker Theater, Middle Tennessee State University on 11 November m1988.

The 5-6 November 1992 meeting of the Tennessee Banjo Institute, directed by Wayne Ingram and Bobby Fulcher (director of the Tennessee State Parks Folklife Project, a division of the Tennessee Department of Conservation) included workshops, tutorials, and concerts along with opportunities for informal sessions and for sale of videos, books, records and other products. All events were held at Cedars of Lebanon (TN)

State Park except for the final concert, known as the "Banjo Meltdown", which was held at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro Tennessee.

**Scope and Content:**

The collection consists of digital audio and video tapes of interviews with four Institute faculty (Omer Forster, Will Keys, Alan Munde and the Thompson Family); digital audio tapes of the "Banjo Meltdown"; an Institute handbook; a program from the "Banjo Meltdown" concert; and ca. 216 black and white negatives and contact prints, primarily of the "Banjo Meltdown" 1988. This collection also includes print material given to Center audio specialist Bruce Nemerov, who served on the staff of the Institute in 1992 and 320 black and white negatives and contact prints and 62 color slides from the 1992 event.

**Collection Contents (Folder/Box List):**

**Box # Folder # Description**

**Box 1**

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| Folder 1 | Tennessee Banjo Institute 1988 programs<br>Banjo Meltdown program, full Institute program (bios, schedule)  |
| Folder 2 | Tennessee Banjo Institute 1988 photographs<br>[descriptions and identifications included]   |
| Folder 3 | Tennessee Banjo Institute 1992 programs<br>Promo registration booklet, Banjo Meltdown II program, full Institute program (bios, schedule)   |
| Folder 4 | Tennessee Banjo Institute 1992 manuscripts<br>Volunteer schedule and instructions, video agreement and order form, Robert S. Jamieson "Murphy Gribble's "blackgrass" three-finger picking style lesson. |
| Folder 5 | Tennessee Banjo Institute 1992 photographs<br>[descriptions and identifications included]   |

**List of tapes from 1988:**

Omer Forster Interview

TCD-0076. VCT-0076.

Interview, 11 November 1988, with Omer Forster (b.1901) of McEwen, Humphries County, Tennessee, and his son Lee by Paul Wells, director of the Center for Popular Music. Topics include family history; early life and learning influences; early performances including dances; banjo and fiddle contests; and his professional career including work with the Dixie Liners, on radio station WDOD (Chattanooga, TN) and his 1977 album Flowery Girl. Tunes include Mean Mama Blues and Sally Goodin.

Will Keys Interview

TCD-0077. VCT-0077A-C.

Interview, 11 November 1988, with Will Keys (b. 1923) of Gray Station, Washington County, Tennessee, by Paul Wells, director of the Center for Popular Music. Topics include influences on Keys' banjo style, especially Bob Crawford and Clyde Dykes; banjo tunes, tuning, chording and styles, especially 2-finger and bluegrass; Keys' early

history, home life and family; and farming, hunting, bartering, and other jobs held. Among the tunes discussed/played were Buck Dance, Coal Creek March, The Dead March, Sycamore Shoals, Cricket on the Hearth, Mississippi Sawyer, Little Brown Jug, 8th of January, Little Rainbow and Silver Bells.

**Alan Munde Interview**

TCD-0078. VCT-0078A-C.

Interview, 11 November 1988, with Alan Munde (b. 1947) of Levelland, Texas, by Hub Nitchie, editor/publisher of Banjo Newsletter. Topics include early influences on Munde's playing, especially Earl Scruggs and Doug Dillard; his work on the faculty of South Plains College and with the band Country Gazette; his albums, touring and festival appearances; and the bluegrass industry and its future. The interview also includes discussion and demonstration of Munde's own style and technique including the tunes Uncle Cluny Played The Banjo But Mostly Out of Time, Darcy Farrell and Dear Old Dixie.

**Thompson Family Interview**

TCD-0079. VCT-0079A-B

Interview with Joe (b. 1918) and Odell Thompson (b. 1911) and their cousin Nate (b. 1917) Thompson, black musicians born in Orange County, North Carolina, by Paul Wells, director of the Center for Popular Music. Each family member discusses his history, including service in World War II; their performances at local dances and frolics; and the impact of World War II and rock music. Included in the interview are an example of frolic "sketches" [square dance calls] and the stories behind/learning of songs including Hook and Line, Black Annie, Corn Liquor and Soldier's Joy.

**"Banjo Meltdown" Concert**

TCD-0080A-C.

Digital audio tapes of concert 11 November 1988 by Institute faculty at Tucker Theater, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, Tennessee. The concert included narration describing the history and evolution of the banjo, styles of banjo music and of banjo playing and leading banjo stylists, past and present, as well as solo and ensemble performances in a variety of styles and time periods. The tape logs which follow contain a complete list of performers and songs. A copy of the program is filed with manuscript papers.

**Arrangement:**

These we originally created in two separate collection until reprocessing in 2023 when they were combined. This was done because both collections are artificially created by the Center for Popular Music at the time of the events. Due to the same topic and types of materials they were combined into one collection for ease. The collection is now arranged chronologically and by type of material.

**Materials Cataloged Separately:**

Posters from events promoting Tennessee Banjo Institute events at MTSU have been cataloged separately in the Center's catalog. These include: Banjo Meltdown November 11, 1988 (000437-SHOWPOST), Banjo Meltdown II November 2, 1990 (000438-SHOWPOST)

**Location:**

Transcripts, correspondence, biographical sketches, and annotated lists of musicals are filed by accession number with other manuscript collections. Audio tapes are filed by tape number in the audio-visual archives. Nemerov's staff name identification badge is stored with artifacts.

**Related Materials:**

An oversized panoramic group photograph from Tennessee Banjo Institute 1990 (GEN-PR-00198). Tom Morgan Collection (09-015), Bill Harrison Collection (97-050), Lance LeRoy Collection (14-008), Charles K. Wolfe Collection (05-023), Tennessee Valley Old Time Fiddlers Competition, Tennessee Old Time Fiddlers Convention, and Uncle Dave Macon Days Collection (21-016), and other items relating to bluegrass, old time and banjo music is searchable in the Center's catalog.

EBG October, 1988

Updated by Olivia M. Beaudry, CA, October 2023