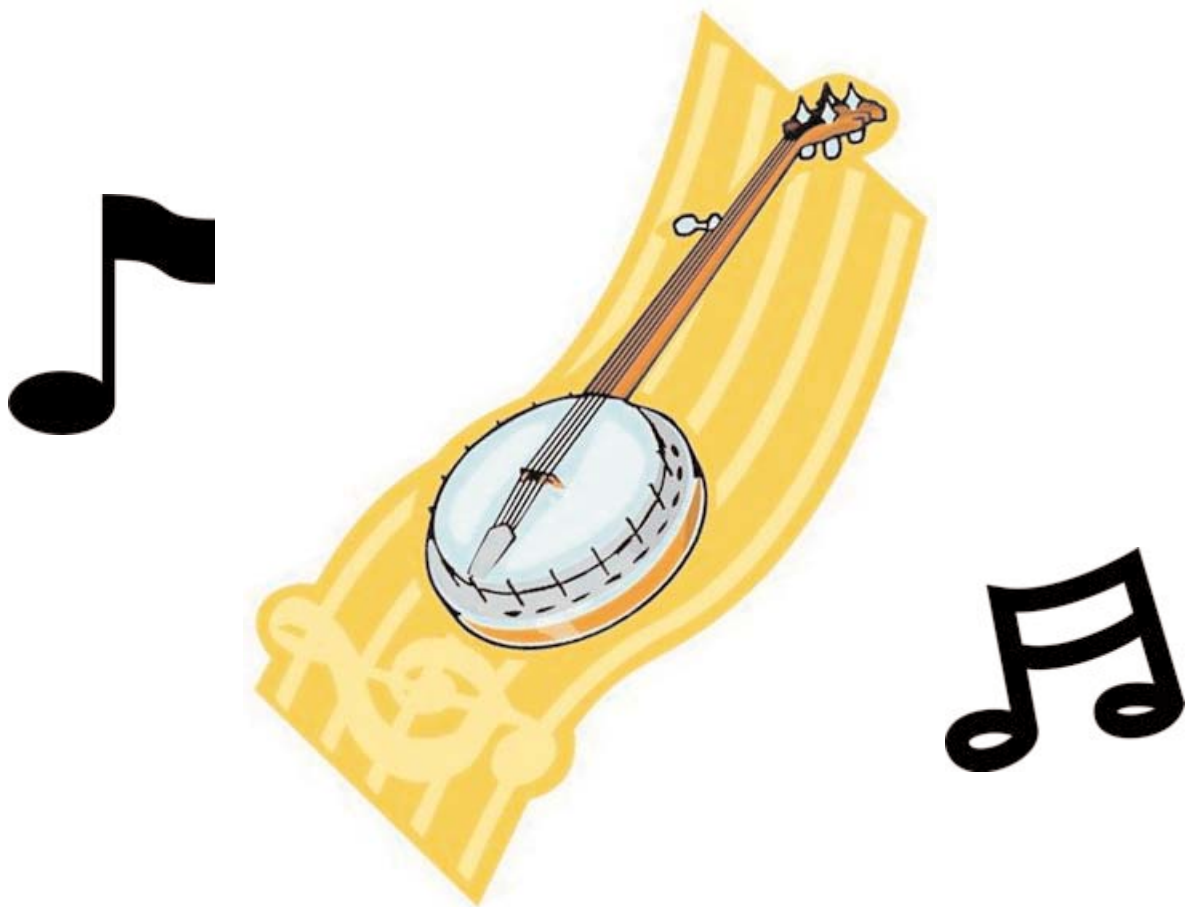


Making Music Discovery Tour

Resource Guide



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Office of Archives and History
Department of Cultural Resources

String Band Music

Introduction

The music of North Carolina that we hear today owes its origins to the different ethnic and cultural groups that have populated our state over time. Many folk songs, ballads, and reels were brought by English, Highland and Lowland Scots, Scots-Irish, and Welsh settlers, who began arriving in the early 1700s. These groups also brought with them pipes, drums, and stringed instruments, notably the violin. Enslaved Africans transplanted their vocal and percussive traditions, from which evolved gospel, blues, and jazz music. They also introduced an instrument important to North Carolina's folk, country, and bluegrass traditions—the banjo. The songs, chants, and drumming of ancient Indian communities have been handed down through the generations and remain vital cultural expressions today.

String Band Instruments

Fiddle

Some people call this instrument a violin and some people call it a fiddle. This instrument was brought to North Carolina by people who moved here from England, Ireland, and Scotland. The fiddle has strings and is played with a bow that moves up and down across the strings to make a sound.

Banjo

Versions of this instrument were first made in Africa. The banjo has a hollow body and a long, skinny neck. The banjo has four strings with a short fifth string played by the thumb.

Guitar

String band musicians added other instruments over the years. The guitar, mandolin, and bass fiddle are some of those instruments. The guitar has a hollow body, long neck, and six strings.

Mandolin

A mandolin is similar to the guitar, but it has a pear-shaped sound box and four sets of paired strings for a total of eight strings.

Bass Fiddle

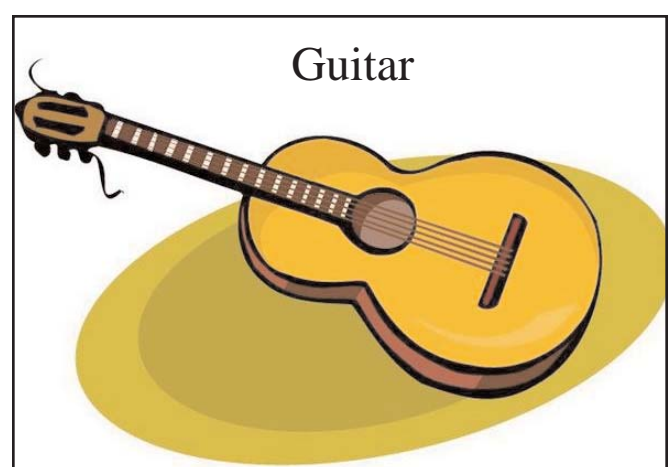
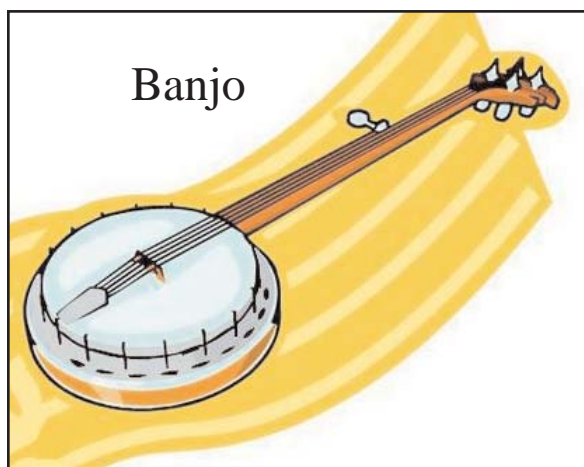
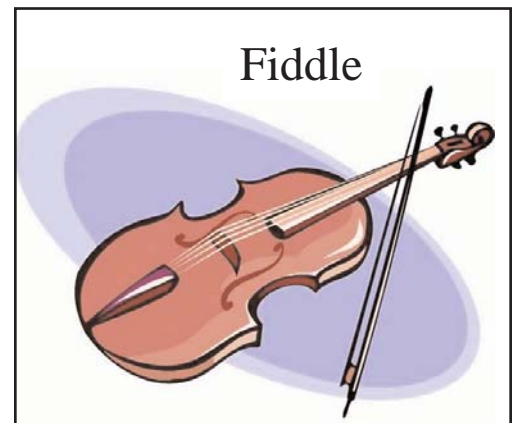
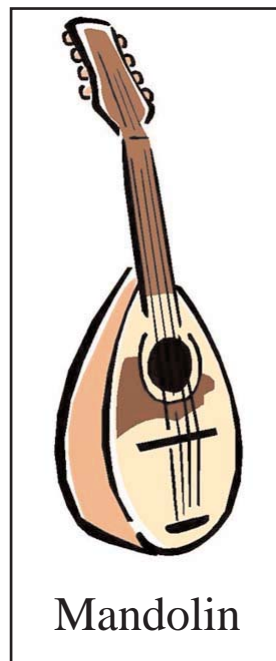
The bass fiddle is similar to the regular fiddle, but it has a deeper sound. The strings can be plucked or played with a bow.

Voice

Singing, or the human voice, is the final instrument in a string band. It is the only musical instrument we all share!

String Band Instruments

There are many different kinds of instruments in a string band.
Can you find the instrument that everyone has?



Craft Activity

Make a Banjo

Materials

7 inch plastic plate
Piece of paper cut into a 7 inch diameter circle
2 inch strip of construction paper
3 long rubber bands
1 paint stirrer
Heavy duty stapler
Regular stapler
Tape
Markers

Directions

- 1) Using construction paper, cut a 7 inch diameter circle for the banjo's front.
- 2) Color or decorate the banjo's front.
- 3) Tape the paint stirrer to the center of the construction paper.
- 4) Staple the paper to the plate, with the paint stirrer in between—use the heavy duty stapler to attach the the paint stirrer on each end and the regular stapler on the sides.
- 5) Roll a strip of construction paper into a sturdy tube or “prism” for the bridge.
- 6) String 3 rubber bands onto the paint stirrer and slip the bridge underneath the rubber band strings.



Oh! Susanna

by Stephen Foster

I come from Alabama
With my banjo on my knee
I'm going to Louisiana,
My true love for to see

It rained all night
The day I left
The weather it was dry
The sun so hot,
I froze to death
Susanna, don't you cry

Oh, Susanna,
Oh don't you cry for me
For I come from Alabama
With my banjo on my knee

I had a dream the other night
When everything was still
I thought I saw Susanna
A-coming down the hill

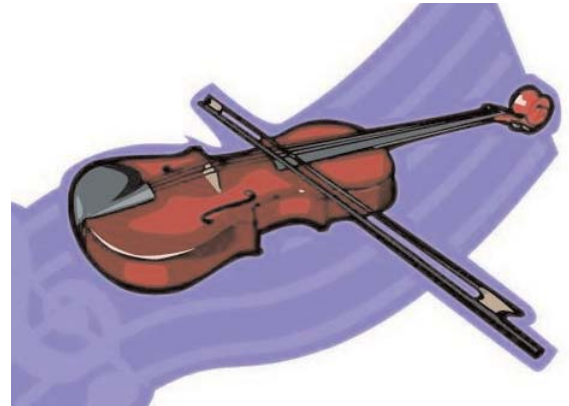
The buckwheat cake
Was in her mouth
The tear was
In her eye
Says I, I'm coming from the south
Susanna, don't you cry

Oh, Susanna,
Oh don't you cry for me
For I come from Alabama
With my banjo on my knee

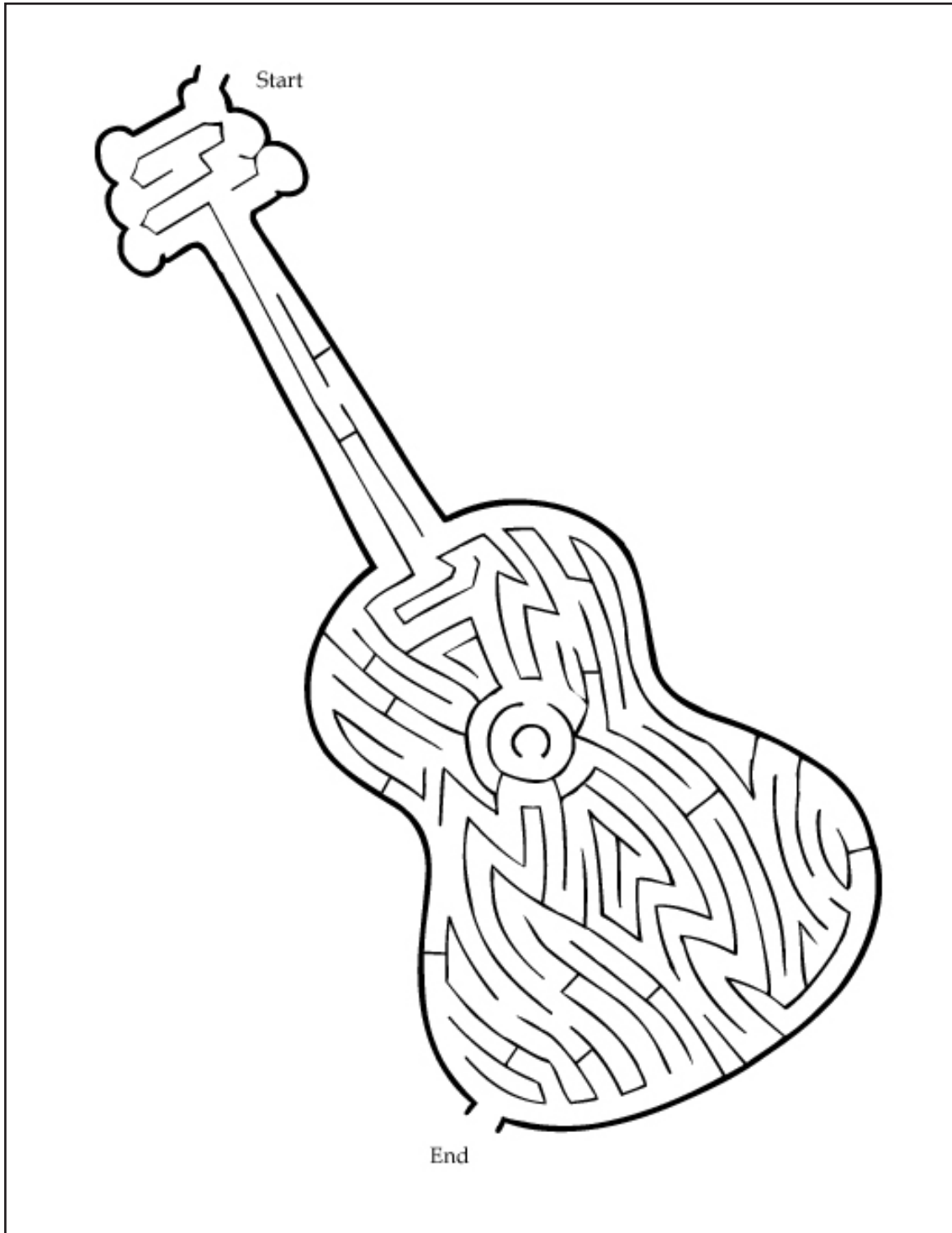


Match the Instruments!

Match the instrument in the right column to the musician playing that instrument in the left column. Can you identify the instruments in the right column?



Guitar Maze



Make an Instrument

Washtub Bass

History

The washtub bass—known also as a tub, sometimes a gutbucket—is used to provide the bass tones for the group. It is an inverted washtub (or appropriate substitute e.g. tea-chest), to the center of which is attached a cord; the other end of the cord is attached to a broomstick, the free end of which is braced against the lip of the tub so the string is taut. Plucking, or slapping the string produces a musical tone, with the tub acting as a resonating chamber. Pressure against the stick varies the tautness of the cord and produces different tones. The tub player usually stands with one foot on its edge to keep it firmly on the ground. Sometimes a second player beats a rhythm on the metal “drum-head.” The ancestor of the washtub bass is found not only in West and central Africa but also in Afro-American communities in the West Indies.

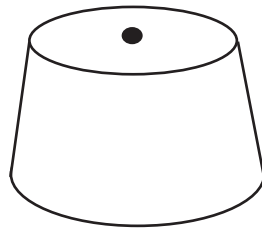
The African device was an apparent development of the spring snare, used for capturing small game. In its more primitive form, the resulting instrument was an earth-bow, constructed in the following manner. A hole was dug in the earth next to a small green sapling, or a green was embedded in the ground next to the hole. The hole was then covered with a bark or hide membrane, which was pegged down at the edges. The sapling was bent over the hole and fastened by a cord to the centre of the membrane covering. The taut cord was played by rubbing, plucking and tapping, and a second player sometimes beat a rhythm on the membrane with sticks. A portable version used a wooden box instead of a hole in the ground for a resonating chamber.

Materials

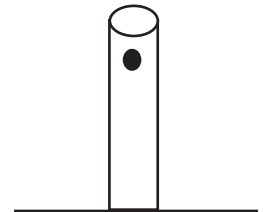
- 1 galvanized steel washtub found in hardware stores
- 2 metal washers (size 1 5/8")
- 1 wooden dowel or pole (1" diameter and 4' long)
- 1 large eye screw (the eye opening should be one inch and the screw should fit the washer)
- 2 nuts to fit the eye screw
- 1 bolt (1/4" X 2 1/2")
- rope (about 1/4" thick)
- handsaw
- drill and drill bit, to drill a hole for the eye screw

Directions

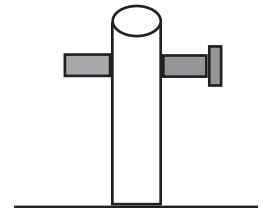
1) Drill a hole in the center of the washtub big enough for the eye screw to fit through.



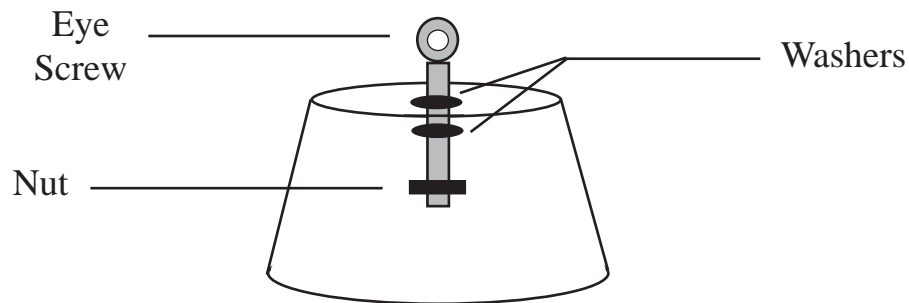
2) Drill a hole in one end of the pole big enough for the 1/4" bolt.



3) Screw the bolt through the hole so the bolt extends out on each side.



4) Assemble the eye screw, washers, nuts and washtub as shown in the diagram below.



5) Cut a 10' length of rope.

6) Tie one end onto the eye of the eye screw.

7) Wrap the other end of the rope around the bolt on the end of the pole. When you have it tight enough so that the angle looks like the diagram, tie it. If the rope stretches, you can wrap more around the bolt on the end.

8) Cut a groove in the end of the pole opposite the bolt. This is to hold the pole in the lip around the edge of the washtub when you play.

Coloring Page

Hey Diddle, Diddle

Hey diddle diddle, the cat and the fiddle,
The cow jumped over the moon,
The little dog laughed to see such sport,
And the dish ran away with the spoon!



Additional Resources

Web Resources from the North Carolina Museum of History

<http://www.ncmuseumofhistory.org/collateral/articles/S04.americas.music.1920s.pdf>

“America’s Music in the 1920s.” Before there were CDs and MP3 players, people listened to the radio and phonograph records and heard live music. Explore the music styles that entertained North Carolina audiences in the twenties. This article originally appeared in the spring 2004 issue of *Tar Heel Junior Historian* magazine.

Children’s Books

Banjo Granny by Jacqueline Briggs Martin and Sarah Martin Busse

Baxter Barret Brown’s Bass Fiddle by Tim A. McKenzie

In the Fiddle Is a Song: A Lift-the-Flap Book of Hidden Potential by Durga Bernhard

The Old Banjo by Dennis Haseley

The Old Man and the Fiddle by Michael McCurdy

Rosie’s Fiddle by Phyllis Root

When Uncle Took the Fiddle by Libba Moore Gray and Lloyd Bloom

Web Sites

<http://www.fiddle.com/>

Site of *Fiddler* magazine, which offers articles and web resources relating to the fiddle.

<http://www.stringband.com/>

Fan site offers information for string band music lovers and musicians. It contains music reviews, festival information, and the latest string band news.

<http://bluegrassbanjo.org/banhist.html>

Site offers a history lesson about the banjo.

<http://www.banjolin.supanet.com/>

Site features information about the mandolin and its various designs and musical styles.

<http://www.bluegrassmusic.com/>

Site of *Bluegrass Unlimited* magazine offers new feature stories and bluegrass music reviews each month.