

**At Home in the Blue Ridge Mountains:**

***Memory, Music, and the Front Porch***

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## ABSTRACT

Music is often overlooked when it comes to historical, architectural, and other physical and cultural analyses. This is unfortunate, as the analysis of music can offer excellent insight into community development through the group participation that performance entails—on the part of both artists and audience. The locations of these participatory interactions and their usage during concerts and at other times are indicative of their roles in community development, particularly the front porch in relation to the interiors of the homes themselves, the local churches, barns, and other community centers such as small country stores. Understanding the role of old-time music performance and lyrics in community development and the definition of “home” to mountain-dwelling Americans from 1880 to 1910 (with interest in their earlier 1700 Ulster-Scot heritage), helps the importance of the front porch in communities and the roles of family, genders, and landscape become apparent. Looking at the South-Central section of the Appalachian Mountains, along the Blue Ridge Parkway leading from the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia into the Great Smoky Mountains of Tennessee and North Carolina, the particular culture of these Scots-Irish Americans, their memories, and their roles in the development of American Folk music will emphasize exactly how important learning the music of a community can be in understanding and interpreting its architecture as well as its people. The movement of these songs across the Atlantic and into the mountains demonstrates a cultural movement as well, resulting in the architecture seen there today. Though many different scholars have looked at the music, the region, and the culture of the Appalachias separately, combining them has yet to become a real focus. This essay hopes to bring together those previous pieces of scholarship in a discussion about the constructed memory of Appalachia through the architecture of the log cabin and the front porch.