

# Musical heritage group puts out detailed overview of local music

BY PAUL COLLINS  
THE CHRONICLE

A diverse group of European-Americans came to the Northwest Piedmont via the Wagon Road during the Colonial period, which was followed by a large influx of African-Americans during the post-Civil War industrial boom, according to Kudzu's newly completed "Musical Heritage Overview & Music Inventory of Davidson, Davie, Forsyth and Stokes Counties, North Carolina." Kudzu is Winston-Salem's Musical Heritage Resource Group.



Carlson

The book says: "European Americans brought with them their fiddles, hymns, chamber orchestras and brass; African Americans their banjos, rhythms and spirituals. From these early musical traditions emerged hillbilly and early country music, as well as blues, gospel, jazz, and rhythm and blues. Eventually, radio and phonograph recordings catapulted these music traditions into the broader American scene."

The musical traditions influenced both rural and urban folks in the region. Musical pioneers ranged from early Moravian songster Gottlob Konigsdorfer, to string band and blues musician Preston Fulp, to early hillbilly recording artist Ernest Thompson, to rhythm and blues performer John Tanner Sr.

Fulp, the book says, was born in Stokes County in 1915. "Rooted in a family string band tradition, Fulp represents an archetype of the transitional African American secular folk musician who moved from string band to blues."

Fulp - who played guitar, fiddle and banjo - supplemented income earned at local sawmills by playing at house parties for both blacks and whites.

According to "Musical Heritage Overview & Music Inventory": "Fulp's musical horizons began to broaden when he became part of a pool of street musicians who played for clientele of tobacco warehouses in Winston-Salem. In Fulp's own words, 'In 1937, I started to go to Winston and play at the tobacco warehouses and would pass around the hat, and I would get a little change. Sometimes I would make \$100. I would go about once a week.'"

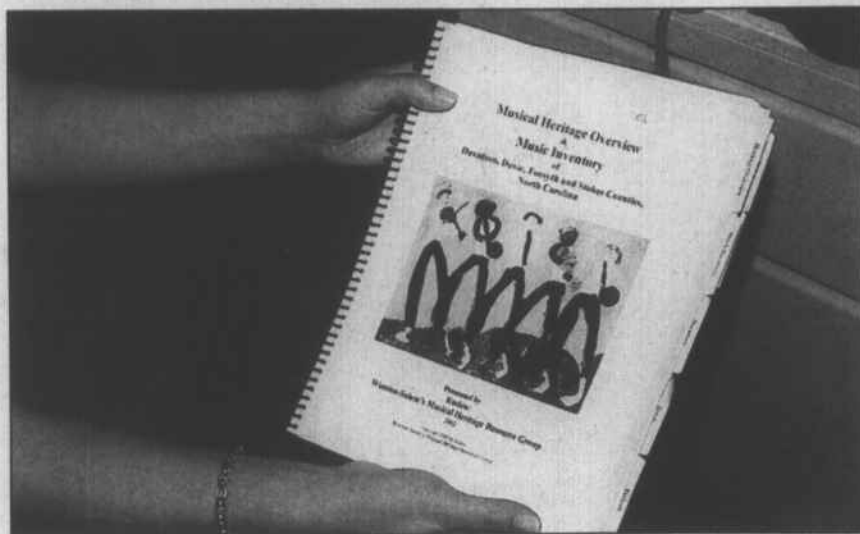


Photo by Paul Collins

Kudzu, Winston-Salem's Musical Heritage Resource Group, commissioned the inventory.

Fulp was influenced by the blues music in Winston-Salem. He became familiar with recordings of Blind Blake, a N.C. blues giant, and Fulp learned to play in the key of C from watching Blind Willie McTell. In Winston-Salem, Fulp also came in contact with hillbilly artists such as Ernest Thompson and Matt Simmons.

Among other musical traditions of the region, "Musical Heritage Overview & Music Inventory" talks about "later African-American transitional music: from gospel to rhythm and blues" (ca. 1920-1960) that was occurring all over the South and certainly in cities such as Winston-Salem with its large African-American community.

"In the early 20th century, many African American families in the Northwest Piedmont were rooted in the community quartet tradition that would act as a predecessor to early gospel traditions. This a cappella quartet was based on the singing of the Fisk Jubilee singers, and the gospel quartet groups were originally labeled 'jubilee quartets,'" the book says.

This smooth, restrained, choral style of singing experienced considerable change over time. Recording artist Bernice Johnson Reagon is quoted as saying: "In the 1930s, solo leads evolved that mirrored the preaching tradition, and the jubilee quartet became the gospel quartet. This change saw the prolific creation of new songs and arrangement techniques."

During this period, brothers John, David, Purnell, Eugene Jr. and Fred Tanner of Winston-Salem were among the quartets and quintets singing the new sounds of gospel music. The Tan-

ner brothers grew up in a very religious and musical family and performed gospel songs with their parents, E.E. and Marie Tanner, in church and on the road.

John Tanner, the eldest son, sang with the local quintet Royal Sons, which sang in African-American churches, gatherings for white Winston-Salem residents, and on radio stations WSJS and WAIR. The group - which also included Lowman Pauling, Johnny Holmes, Jimmy Moore and Otto Jeffries - landed a contract with Apollo Records of New York and recorded gospel and R&B songs.

The Royal Sons became the Five Royales. The Five Royales - described by Juke Blues as "one of the most important R&B vocal groups of the 1950s" - recorded five top-10 R&B hits during the group's 14-year career.

The heritage overview conclusion says: "Though clearly separation existed between black and white, urban and rural in the Northwest Piedmont, in reviewing the musical heritage of the region, one is struck not only by the variety of musical experience, but also by the commonality of musical experience. In essential ways, the cast of musical characters presented in this overview is connected by a common bond over time."

"What Brother Konigsdorfer, Preston Fulp, Ernest Thompson and John Tanner Sr. all share is a deep connection to music and its integral role in community life. Whether settling the wilderness, playing the blues on the streets at tobacco auction time, plucking out a tune on the front porch of a farm, or performing gospel quintet harmony with family in church, musicians and their

music have been wedded to daily life in the Northwest Piedmont for centuries.

"At present, the region is in a period of significant flux, and no longer can we look at the area in simple terms of blacks, whites, farmers, and factory workers. As the economy of the region continues to diversify, new people from all over the country and world come here to work and live. One can only imagine the new musical experiences, and bonds, that await us."

The music inventory section of the book focuses on the gospel, Moravian, old-time string band, bluegrass, jazz, blues and early rhythm and blues traditions of Davidson, Davie, Forsyth and Stokes counties. It includes brief county overviews, followed by events organized by county that occur on a recurring annual, monthly or weekly basis.

Elizabeth Carlson, Kudzu's coordinator, said she feels "Musical Heritage Overview & Inventory" "helps create awareness and enthusiasm for the rich and diverse musical heritage and living musical traditions" of the region. "We think it will give people information on where to go to hear these traditions."

She said Kudzu has hired an advertising firm and will create a Web site (in late spring or early summer) based on the information in the inventory.

Kudzu will have a celebration of the completion of "Musical Heritage Overview & Inventory" Oct. 14 from 7 to 8:15 p.m. in the downtown public library on Fifth Street. There will be a musical heritage revue, with performers throughout the region. The public is invited.

## Parker

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York and Los Angeles - lets people know what he's about.

"They see that I'm not in the business for the glamour but to serve their interests in the best way possible," Parker said. "Being from the Midwest signifies a certain work ethic, and our clients feel comfortable with that. They know they can rely on us and

trust us."

Parker and his wife, June, grew up in the Fort Wayne area, where they chose to raise their five children. The Parkers helped create the Summit City Christian Center 18 years ago and remain active in programs that teach life skills based on biblical principles to the young and old alike. Parker also sponsors the local AAU basketball program and a new YMCA being built in

Fort Wayne.

And Parker preaches what he practices: He wants his clients to give back to the community and have well-rounded lives.

"What we want for these guys is successful, happy and productive lives," he said. "Even a long pro football career is relatively short compared to a person's whole life. We want our players to be successful after sports, as well

as in other areas of their lives during their football careers."

That philosophy is not lost on Parker's players.

"I always tell people, if I could be anyone else besides myself, I would be Eugene Parker," said Curtis Martin, star running back for the New York Jets. "Not only is he my agent, he's my friend, and I look up to him for the wisdom he provides on the field and off."

# WSSU again named one of South's best

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

For a consecutive year, Winston-Salem State University is tied for first place among Top Public Comprehensive Colleges-Bachelor's (South) category in the latest issue of U.S. News and World Report Magazine.

The rankings are part of the magazine's 2003 annual ranking of top universities in the nation. To compile the rankings, the magazine used several criteria, including an institution's academic reputation, retention, faculty resources, student selectivity, financial resources, graduate rate performance and alumni

giving rate. The ranking marks the third showing by WSSU in the publication's Best Colleges rankings in the past five years.

In 1999, WSSU was ranked second among public liberal-arts colleges in the Southern region by U.S. News and World Report's 1999 America's Best Colleges issue.

"We are very pleased about this year's U.S. News ranking. This honor confirms our commitment at Winston-Salem State University to becoming a premier regional institution," said WSSU Chancellor Dr. Harold L. Martin Sr.

## BE

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tutions. Seventeen, including Ariel Capital Management CEO John W. Rogers Jr. and Williams Capital Group CEO Christopher Williams, are entrepreneurs who run the largest black-owned investment banks or asset-management firms in America.

Women make their mark, holding six of BE's top 50 slots.

Highlighted for achievement are cover subjects Edith W. Cooper of Goldman Sachs & Co., and Melissa James and

Carla A. Harris, both with Morgan Stanley Dean Witter. One notable, Vernon E. Jordan Jr., senior managing partner of investment banking powerhouse Lazard Freres, dominated Washington power circles and served as a confidant to former President Bill Clinton.

The top 50 range in age from 36 to 67 and have built their reputations at the world's most prestigious and powerful financial-service companies and investment houses.

For the complete list of the top 50 African-Americans on Wall Street, visit [www.blackenterprise.com/press.html](http://www.blackenterprise.com/press.html).

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