

Asset-based Opportunity: Cultural Resources

America is now recognizing some of the cultural talent that Appalachia has nurtured for centuries. Adding to its list of accolades Asheville was named one of five American “Cities that are Special” by *USA Weekend* in July 2004. Ralph Stanley’s music was recognized with Grammy Awards for the “O Brother Where Art Thou” soundtrack. *U.S. News & World Report* just named Berea College in Kentucky the “Best Comprehensive

Association (CODA) revealed that national craft sales are approximately \$13 billion per year. The study showed that the median household income of full-time craftspeople is \$50,000, 26% above the national median of \$39,657.

Other studies support the strong economic impact of craft in Appalachia:

- A June 2003 Marshall University study on the Craft Industry in West Virginia reports that 2,539 craftspeople in the state generated a direct economic impact of \$54 million, with a total economic impact (including the wholesale sector) of over \$81 million in 2002.

The wine country of Northern California became so (valued) because generations discovered what grew best in the soil and the climate of the community. The same lessons hold true for the arts in Appalachia.

-- Dana Gioia, Chairman,
National Endowment for the Arts

College for a Bachelor’s Degree in the South for 2005.” The rich cultural heritage of the region is unparalleled in its music, craft, performing arts, historic sites, time-old traditions, cool towns and hot entertainment.

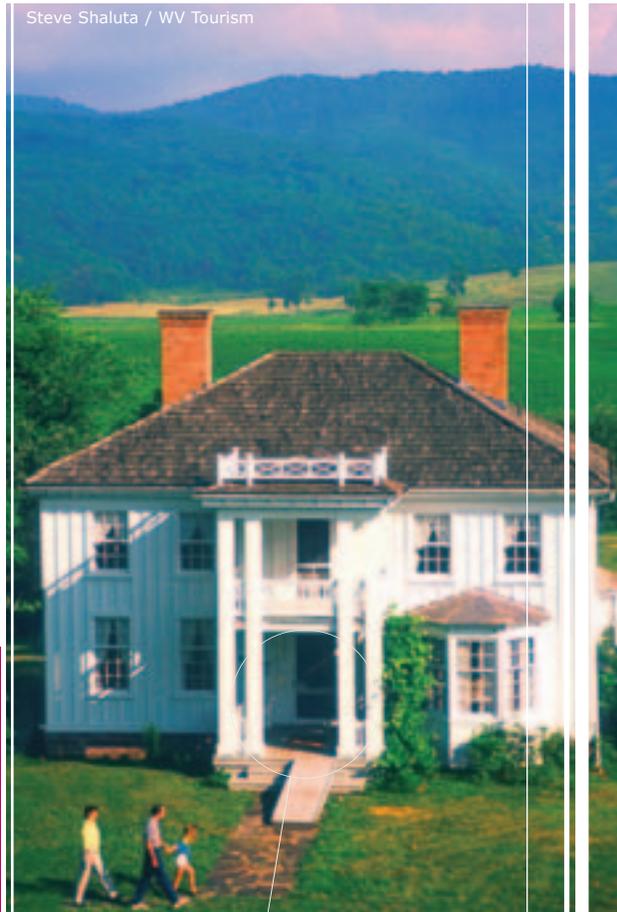
Hand-made objects, such as pottery, glass, metal work, textiles and jewelry, are a major source of income and employment in Appalachia. Artists are part of the **creative economy**, the rapidly growing sector now replacing or supplementing extractive industries and manufacturing. A national economic impact study of 80,000 craftspeople in 2001 by the Craft Organizational Directors

- A University of Kentucky study estimates total annual sales of Kentucky craft producers in 2000 at \$252.4 million, with out of state sales of \$148.7 million.
- HandMade in America’s economic impact study finds that craft contributes \$122 million to Western North Carolina’s economy on an annual basis.
- 170 buildings (47%) in downtown Asheville, North Carolina are occupied by members of the creative economy, according to a May 2004 survey by HandMade in America. In total, the creative economy occupies 1.7 million square feet

of commercial space. Taxable value of the space amounts to \$39.3 million. Total annual real estate value of creative economies in downtown Asheville is \$61.7 million.

Famous authors and entertainers, from classic to contemporary, contribute to the cultural wealth of the region. The Appalachian settings of great literature can also become cultural attractions for visitors.

Steve Shaluta / WV Tourism



Forging Ahead on a Crooked Road

In August 2004, Governor Warner officially dubbed the winding 200-mile stretch from Galax to Clintwood as Virginia's Heritage Music Trail. Encompassing eight counties, three cities and nine towns, "The Crooked Road" has high hopes for turning its culture into cash. Planners have two basic project objectives:

1. within three years, to be a nationally recognized heritage tourism destination.
2. within four years, to triple the current revenues from tourism.

The road highlights the musical heritage of the region by connecting six major music venues. Plans are underway to erect 20 radio "listening posts" and informative signs along the route, allowing visitors to learn about the region's history and significant landmarks. Already, planners have:

- Established a collaborative framework and plan for government officials, tourism professionals and music venue owner/ operators to promote the trail.
- Opened the Ralph Stanley Museum and Traditional Mountain Music Center in Clintwood in October 2004.
- Created a dedicated travel guide, website and CD for trail visitors.
- Recorded a new audio CD featuring musicians from the area.

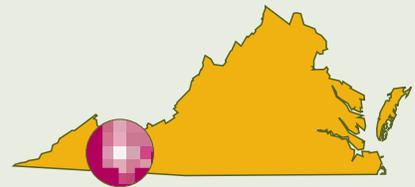
"The Crooked Road" is funded by ARC with additional support from the US Department of Agriculture Rural Development Program, the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, the Virginia Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission, the Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority and the Virginia Tourism Corporation.

To learn about Virginia's Heritage Music Trail call the Heart of Appalachia Travel Association at 1-866-686-6874 or visit www.thecrookedroad.org



"This project is an excellent example of 'making do with what we have.' We've taken one of the greatest assets that our region has, our music, and tied it all together to offer tourists a unique product that will provide much needed economic revenue along the trail. Visitors will be surrounded by the songs, the stories and the people that created country and bluegrass music."

-- Geneva O'Quinn, Heart of Appalachia Travel Association



One Teacher's Vision

Listening to the radio has paid dividends for a small town in Northeast Tennessee. A high school journalism teacher was in his car with a group of students when he heard Grand Ole Opry veteran, Jerry Clower, share a funny tale about raccoon hunting in Mississippi. This experience inspired Jimmy Neil Smith to start the local storytelling

festival in his hometown of historic Jonesborough. Around 60 people showed up the first year. It was 1973.



Three decades later, the **National Storytelling Festival** attracts more than 10,000 visitors every October and has been heralded as one of the *Top 100 Events in North America* by the American Bus Association. The festival is also credited with igniting an international revival in storytelling art. In June 2002, the organization that plans the annual festival and perpetuates the storytelling movement found a new home at the International Storytelling Center and Gift Shop,

billed as “the only facility anywhere in the world devoted exclusively to the power of storytelling and its creative applications.” The Center complex includes a 200-year-old country inn, a new 14,000 square-foot education and interpretation building, and a surrounding three-acre park.

For more information contact the International Storytelling Center at 423-753-2171 or www.storytellingcenter.org



“Through our work, the International Storytelling Center is advancing the performance, preservation, and practice of storytelling to enrich our lives and work—at home, at work, and in our community. Storytelling can be used to produce positive change in education, healthcare, business and industry, public services, and arts, culture, and media.”

-- Jimmy Neil Smith, Founder



Crafting Experiences

Berea has a long-established reputation as the Folk Arts & Crafts Capital of Kentucky. Its tradition in crafts began in the late 19th century when Berea College started a crafts production program to help students pay for their education. The skills learned during work-study have led to generations of quality craftspeople, many staying in the area. As Berea became known as a haven for craftspeople, other artists located here

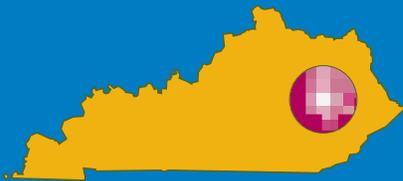
and built a diverse craft community. Today, visitors to Berea find a wealth of craft experiences including studios and galleries where artists demonstrate — and sell — their work. Churchill Weavers has produced quality hand-woven items for over 80 years and now welcomes visitors to its facility. It's one reason why *Southern Living* calls Berea one of its "favorite small towns in America."

Last year, the Kentucky Artisan Center (KAC) opened to encourage visitors to learn more about the

Commonwealth's crafts. Like Tamarack in West Virginia, the KAC features local artists through retail displays of their work. Music, books, specialty food products, visual arts and crafts and other hand-made objects by Kentucky artists are the foundation of the KAC. Another major objective of the center is to provide visitors with information on Berea and area craft excursions. The Kentucky Artisan Heritage Trail (www.kaht.com) weaves through the town and surrounding areas, reconnecting with I-75 at the southern end of Berea. Since opening in July 2003, the KAC has hosted 97,000 visitors.

"The Kentucky Artisan Center at Berea provides a stable, high volume sales venue for Kentucky-made products. When the craft marketing function is combined with the Center's mission to serve as a gateway to Kentucky through tourist information services and a product marketing approach that links maker/place/object, the KAC becomes a generator of local, regional and statewide economic opportunity. Economic benefits are generated in at least two sectors: the artisan industry and the tourism industry."

-- Cheryl Moorhead Stone,
Center for Economic
Development, Entrepreneurship
& Technology, Eastern
Kentucky University



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The KAC complements the award-winning "Kentucky Crafted: The Market" program by offering a year-round in-state location to purchase Commonwealth-made crafts. "Kentucky Crafted: The Market" was the nation's first wholesale/retail handcrafted gift market, and has become the model for Montana and other states interested in showcasing — and selling — their own distinctive craft.

For more information on the
Kentucky Artisan Center, visit
www.kentuckyartisancenter.ky.gov

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