



Highlands Historical Society



Spring 2024

To preserve and promote the rich heritage of Highlands

Highlands, N.C.

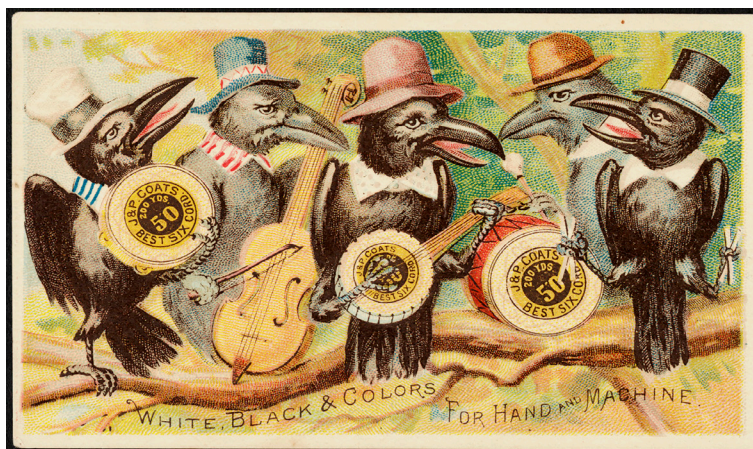
The Ballad of Kidder Cole by Felix Eugene Alley

The story behind how the Ballad of Kidder Cole came to be written involves aspects of old-time music traditions, the history of folk art instruments and the wide range of music venues on the Highlands Plateau, all in one boy's amazing tale. Born in Whiteside Cove in 1873, Felix Eugene Alley was a boy of nine when his brothers made him a banjo from a cheese hoop, ground-hog skin and wood fashioned into a banjo neck. The banjo was then strung with "J & P Coat's Spool Cotton" by twisting the thread into the necessary string sizes and coating them with beeswax. Alley learned to play his

Subject And Author Of Ballad



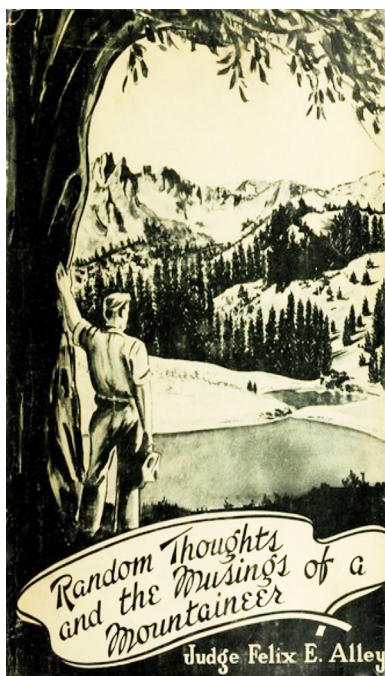
Above are shown Judge Felix Eugene Alley, of Waynesville, and Mrs. Kidder Cole Nichols, of Asheville. She is the subject of the famous ballad, "Kidder Cole," which Judge Alley composed when he was a boy of 16 years in Jackson county many years ago. Mrs. Nichols is the former Miss Kidder Cole, daughter of George M. Cole, Jackson county merchant.



J&P Coates Banjo Ad

homemade banjo so well that he played in Jackson and Macon Counties, and as far away as South Carolina and Georgia.

One day, a flood occurred which filled the valley his family lived in and stranded a traveler by the name of Childs who was forced to stay in the Alley home for several days. Observing Alley's banjo, Mr. Childs inquired if Felix would play a tune for him and he responded that he needed to fix a broken string. After grabbing the thread, waxing it and restringing his banjo, Alley's curious guest asked to see the spool. Following his inspection, Childs proclaimed he was



Felix Alley Book Cover

the chief stockholder of the company and promised Felix that he would send him new banjo strings upon his return to New York.

Not only did he receive the promised strings, but Felix was surprised to be sent a very expensive new banjo that he played for years at mountain dances in the area. In addition, Mr. Childs persuaded the company's board of directors to use an image of Felix playing his banjo in future advertisements as a testament to the strength of the thread.

Felix composed the Ballad of Kidder Cole when he was sixteen as a result of his disappointment experienced at one of these mountain dances, as fully described in the lyrics of the song, itself. His nemesis in



Charlie Wright, rival of Felix Alley

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*"My name is Felix Eugene Alley,
My best girl lives in Cashiers Valley;
She's the joy of my soul
And her name is Kidder Cole.*

*I don't know – it may have been chance,
'Way last fall when I went to a dance,
I planned to dance with Kidder the live-long night
But I got my time beat by Charlie Wright.*

*So, if I ever have to have a fight,
I hope it will be with Charlie Wright,
For he was the ruin of my soul
When he beat my time with Kidder Cole.*

*When the dance was over I went away
To bide my time till another day,
When I could cause trouble and pain and blight
To sadden the soul of Charlie Wright.*

*I thought my race was almost run
When Kidder went off to Anderson;
She went to Anderson to go to school,
And left me at home to act the fool.*

*Kidder came home the first of June,
And I sang my song and played my tune;
I commenced trying with all my might
To 'put one over' on Charlie Wright.*

*When the speaking was over we had a dance,
And then and there I found my chance
To make my peace with Kidder Cole,
And beat Charlie Wright; confound his soul!*

*Charlie came in an hour or so,
But when he saw me with Kidder he turned to go
Back to his home with a saddened soul,
For I'd beat his time with Kidder Cole.*

*Oh, yes, my Kidder Cole is sweet,
And it won't be long till we shall meet,
At her home in Cashiers Valley
Where she'll change her name to Alley.*



These abbreviated lyrics to the song reveal how Alley's courtship of Kidder Cole unfolded:

the song was his cousin, Charlie Wright, the same man who was later awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for miraculously rescuing Gus Baty from certain death on Whiteside Mountain. Yes, and the same Charlie Wright whose widow, Helen Wright, later opened Helen's Barn with the award money received following Charlie's death.

According to Alley, later a Superior Court Judge for the State of North Carolina, the lyrics are completely accurate, with one major exception. In a 1933 article in the Asheville Citizen Times, Alley admitted that he never married Kidder Cole, despite the song's ending. But, he also pointed out that Charlie Wright did not, either. The ballad was first recorded and made popular by Bascom Lunsford in 1928 and has been re-recorded recently by the bluegrass band, Appalachian Roadshow. Both versions can be heard by following the link at the Historical Society's website: www.highlandshistory.com

'Kidder Cole', Mountain Song, Recorded By Firm

Composed By Felix Eugene Alley and Sung By B.L. Lunsford

BY GEORGE W. MCCOY
"My name is Felix Eugene Alley,
I've got a girl in Cashiers Valley"

"Kidder Cole," one of the best known of the Carolina mountain songs, begins with the above lines.

In the counties through which the "Murphy Branch" of the Southern Railway passes West of Asheville, the song has been frequently upon the lips of mountain singers since it was composed by Felix Eugene Alley when a young man.

It makes the song a great deal more interesting if the facts surrounding its composition are known. Felix Eugene Alley, now a prominent lawyer of Waynesville, and formerly a candidate for the Democratic nomination for Congress from the Tenth North Carolina District, really

fell in love with a Kidder Cole, of Cashiers Valley, and it was while thinking of her that he was inspired to write the song. The romance did not have the traditional ending, however, for Kidder Cole and Felix Alley did not marry.

Makes Record

Of interest now is the fact that "Kidder Cole" has been recorded on a Brunswick record and is now on sale in this city at the Studer Brothers Furniture company on Broadway.

This Western North Carolina song was sung for the recording company by Bascom Lamar Lunsford, well known lawyer of Asheville, who is popularly known far and wide as "the Minstrel of the Appalachians."

The record "Kidder Cole" will doubtless be broadcast over radio station WWNC, of The Asheville Citizen, sometime the first part of the week during one of the periods when recorded music is sent out over the air.

The song was learned by Mr. Lunsford in 1903 while visiting the flats of Middle Creek in Macon county. It is considered a fine type of mountain banjo song and dance music. When Mr. Lunsford sings it, he accompanies himself on the banjo.

Highlands Historical Society Joins the Parade

The Historical Society entered a float in Highlands' Olde Mountain Christmas Parade this past December. Peter and Joan Worthy did their best to stay warm while portraying Samuel and Katie Kelsey on the float rocking in front of the famous Kelsey chimney. Alas, the fireplace was fake and the rain was not. Board Member, Kim Daugherty, organizer of the Dazzling Dahlia Festival, and HHS were recognized as the Robert B. Dupree Award winners for Outstanding Community Service by the Highlands Chamber of Commerce. Kim and President Harry McDonald represented HHS in the parade. Thanks to all of the volunteers who braved the elements to offer a very Merry Christmas to the Highlands community!



HHS Volunteers stay "warm" by the Kelsey Chimney



Kim Daugherty and Harry McDonald



President's Letter April 2024

As we enter 2024, I am excited about the plans we are making for the Highlands Historical Society. As the new President, I have the great privilege of following in the footsteps of Harry McDonald and Obie Oakley - two men who have cast a great shadow. I want to express my appreciation for all that they have accomplished for HHS and for their continued support, which I know I shall need. We have an outstanding board that is excited to lend their time and talents to "preserving and promoting the rich heritage of Highlands".

Our grand opening in May will feature live music by Laney and Bishop, hot dogs and refreshments. If you have not made it by the museum in the past few years, please make it a point to come by for the celebration. You will be impressed with our wonderful exhibits which include an interactive exhibit - the Mountain Music of Highlands - and an exhibit featuring golf on the Plateau. Work is already ongoing for a new exhibit featuring the hospitality industry in Highlands which we hope will be in place later this year.

Please make note of the 2024 schedule of events elsewhere in the newsletter and mark your calendars accordingly. Of note, there will be a hiatus for Big Hats and Bow Ties, as we explore other fundraising models for the year. Favorite events like Walk in the Park, the Descendant's Reception on Heritage Day and, of course, the Dazzling Dahlia Festival will be the cornerstones of our offerings for the year. The theme for the festival this year will be Flower Power. As a lead up to the festival there will be a Dahlia Patron's Celebration Party with an "Elevated" Woodstock theme to set the appropriate tone for the incredible week to come.

Two major projects are anticipated at this time. First, one that is rather mundane, but necessary - the roof of the museum is in need of some attention. The second, much more exciting project is a smart-phone based audio tour of the Prince House which we hope to one day expand to many of the historic homes and buildings in the Town of Highlands.

Your past support of HHS is greatly appreciated. I would like to encourage you to continue your support financially, by attending the events scheduled and by visiting the museum regularly. Bring your family and friends, too, so that they can also discover what a wonderful and interesting community Highlands has been in the past and continues to be today!

Fondly,
Tracy

Tracy Foor, President

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Renew your membership for 2024

We hope you will financially support HHS

| | |
|------------|------------|
| Membership | \$100.00 |
| Promoter | \$250.00 |
| Preserver | \$1,000.00 |
| Protector | \$2,500.00 |
| Highlander | \$5,000.00 |

Thank you for your support you have so generously done in the past. To join or renew membership by check please mail to:

Highlands Historical Society
P.O. Box 670, Highlands, NC 28741

or via credit card online using the "donate" tab on www.highlandshistory.com

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT!



The Exciting Year Ahead

Saturday, March 25

The Historical Society Museum 2024 Season Opening

Join the Highlands Historical Society for the opening of the museum for the season from 11:00 - 1:00 on Saturday, May 25th. Music will be performed by Laney and Bishop. Free hot dogs, chips and beverages will be available while they last. Come explore all of our exhibits and tour the Prince House - Highlands' oldest standing residence.



photo by Greg Clarkson

Saturday, October 12

The Heritage Day Descendant's Reception

Join the Highlands Historical Society in a reception to honor multi-generational descendants of early Highlands settlers. Hear the stories from families that date their ancestry to the beginning of Highlands and share in the family histories which make Highlands so unique



Tuesday, August 27

The Dahlia Patron's Party an "Elevated" Woodstock

Put on your tie dyed outfits, fringed vests and bell bottoms and join us at this fun fundraising party that will be co-hosted by the Davis Family at High Country Wine and Provisions and the Highlands Smokehouse. A live band will be rocking your favorite 60's tunes and wine, beer and great food will make



for a groovy evening as we prepare for the upcoming Dazzling Dahlia Festival. Ticket prices and other information to come!

**Thursday, September 5 thru
Saturday, September 7**

The 14th Annual Dazzling Dahlia Festival



This annual festival celebrates the dazzling dahlias of the plateau with this year's theme "Flower Power" and features the Single Bloom Competition at the Bascom, stunning vignettes throughout town and special entertainment and food on the HHS campus.

The festival hits its peak with the band Steel Toe Stiletto in Kelsey Hutchinson Park on Saturday night.

Saturday, October 26
Walk in the Park

Join the Highlands Historical Society as we visit our forefathers in Highlands Memorial Cemetery by highlighting the movers and shakers who made Highlands what it is today. History comes alive as these "ghosts of the past" tell their fascinating stories about Highlands long ago.

