

# Fries

America's commercial country music began in a cotton mill in Fries in 1923. Mill hand Henry Whitter traveled to New York and recorded a hit, "The Wreck of the Old '97". In 1924 a second mill hand, Ernest V. Stoneman, went north to record. They were followed within months by two bands assembled by singer Kelly Harrell and banjoist John Rector ("The Hill Billies"). As a result, by 1926 these four mill hands had recordings issued on ten major labels. In 1935 a brilliant and influential band was assembled in the mill. This was the Patton Brothers, composed of influential fiddler Glen Neaves, brothers Bill and Everett Patton, and their half-brother, seminal three-finger banjoist Raymond Swinney. This band evolved into Neaves' Grayson County Boys. Their first recordings were in 1941 for the Library of Congress. Another mill band was the Zeedeers (named for zero defects). Other fine musicians from Fries were oldtime banjoist and fiddler Glenn (Pap) Smith and innovative bluegrass banjoist Jimmy Arnold. The great ballad singer Evelyn Farmer lives here.

The mill stood on the bank of the New River from 1901 until 2005. The New River is in fact the nation's oldest stream, and flows north into the Ohio. It is well suited to floating, and has 57 miles of trails for walking, biking, and horseback riding. While here visit the State Forest and hike along one of the many birding trails. Nearby is the Matthews Living History Farm Museum where you can get a glimpse of early American farm life.



The Zeedeers



Henry Whitter



Washington Mills

# The Crooked Road

## Virginia's Heritage Music Trail

From the Blue Ridge Mountains to the Coalfields region, Southwest Virginia is blessed with historic and contemporary music venues, musicians, and fretted instrument makers. Historically isolated, the region retained its strong musical legacy by passing traditions down through musical families to an appreciative community.

Old time mountain music, bluegrass, and gospel can be enjoyed all year long and several museums are devoted to showcasing the area's rich musical heritage.

The Crooked Road winds through the ruggedly beautiful Appalachian Mountains and leads you to the major hotspots of old time mountain music, country music, and bluegrass. Alive and kickin' for today's fans, these venues preserve and celebrate musical traditions passed down through generations. Annual festivals, weekly concerts, radio shows, and jam sessions ring out to large audiences and intimate gatherings. Please visit the Crooked Road website to plan your trip to coincide with the current entertainment events.



The Carter Family



Dr. Ralph Stanley

[www.thecrookedroad.org](http://www.thecrookedroad.org)



### MAJOR VENUES

- ★ Blue Ridge Institute & Museum
- ★ The Floyd Country Store & County Sales
- ★ Blue Ridge Music Center
- ★ Rex Theater & Old Fiddlers Convention
- ★ Heartwood
- ★ Birthplace of Country Music
- ★ Carter Family Fold
- ★ Country Cabin II
- ★ Ralph Stanley Museum

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