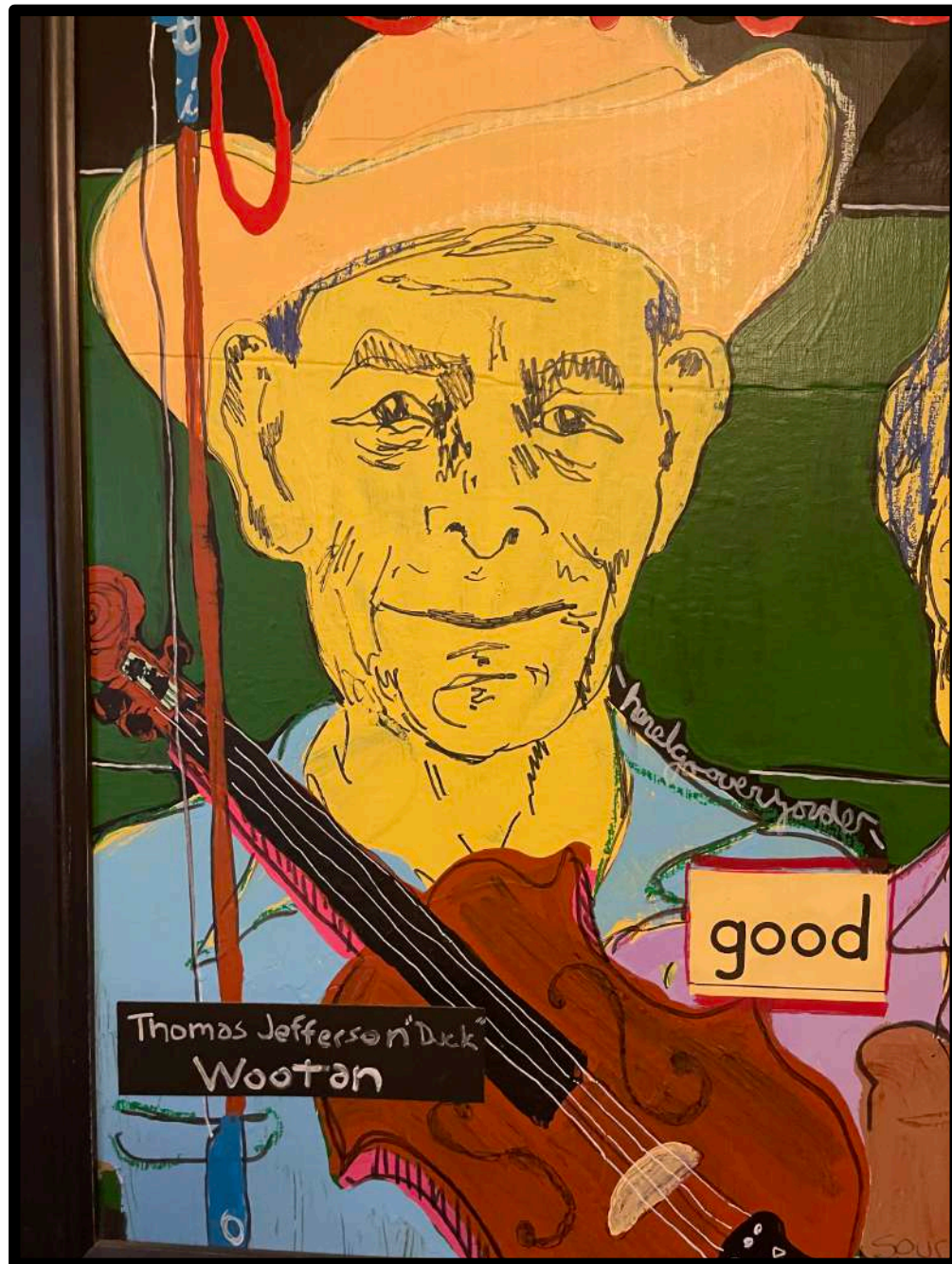




Reel Times

Newsletter of
The Austin Friends of Traditional Music
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Tim Wooten's fiddling grandfather
Thomas Jefferson Wootan (1882-1964)

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Cover painting by Tim Kerr

Upcoming AFTM Events

Saturday, April 20

The monthly AFTM Old Time Jam takes place at the wonderful Lazarus Brewing Company at 4803 Airport Boulevard in Austin from 10:00 am until 2:00 pm!

April 26 through 28

This year's edition of the very popular AFTM Camp Jam will be held at Camp Ben McCulloch, as usual. There's no admission fee whatsoever, the only cost is the camping fees that Camp Ben charges.

Thursday, May 2

World music night at Batch, 3220 Manor Rd, Austin featuring the Austin Balkan Singers, Kis Kis Maca (Serbian folk), Indrajit Banerjee (sitar), Tim Keough and Britt Irick

October 18 through 20

The seventeenth Austin String Band Festival!
Camp Ben McCulloch, Driftrwood, TX



Steven Dao, 2024 AFTM Scholarship recipient!

The AFTM is excited to announce that the recipient of its 2024 Scholarship is Austin area fiddler, Steven Dao! Steven has a background in classical music, and has been attending the AFTM Old-Time jam for some time. Steven will use the scholarship to attend the Old-Time Week of the Swannanoa Gathering, in Asheville, NC this summer.

Learn more about Steven in this video interview, conducted before the March AFTM Old-Time Jam at the Lazarus Brewing Company on Airport Boulevard in Austin.

Steven Dao interview

AFTM Camp Jam 2024



“This is the best thing the AFTM has ever done!”, a direct quote from a seasoned Austin area musician. What’s he talking about, you ask?

Well, he’s talking about the AFTM Camp Jam, the fourth edition of which will take place on April 26 – April 28 at Camp Ben McCulloch in Driftwood, TX.

The Camp Jam was conceived back in 2021, when the pandemic was still creating uncertainty about public events everywhere, and it didn’t seem responsible for the AFTM to proceed with our beloved October event, the Austin String Band Festival. So, the AFTM rented Camp Ben McCulloch for the entire weekend as usual, but we didn’t produce much of a festival stage show, or anything else. The Camp Jam was simply an opportunity to get together with musical friends, camp for the weekend, if desired, and spend a few days with no schedule and no duties.

The admission charge for the Camp Jam is the same as always – it’s free! That’s correct, there’s no charge for participating in the Camp Jam, other than Camp Ben’s usual camping fees, if you choose to camp overnight.

We will have a message center (writeboard, corkboard) in a central area where you can check for notices of organized jams or other community events.

So, mark your calendars for the last weekend in April, and make plans to join us at Camp Ben for a relaxed and joyful weekend!



AFTM Old Time Jam

For April's jam, we'll again be at Lazarus Brewing at 4803 Airport Boulevard.

They've got an inside space for us ("the casita") if needed.

Bring a jam chair just in case. Lazarus has wonderful breakfast and lunch food, coffee, tea, and -- of course -- beer.

The jam will take place on Saturday, April 20, 2024,
from 10:00 am until 2:00 pm!



Join the AFTM Board!

We are excited to announce that there are currently three openings on our board of directors, and we are looking for passionate and committed individuals to join us in shaping the future of the AFTM. As active members of our traditional music community, we believe that your unique perspective and experience would be a valuable addition to our leadership team.

Joining the AFTM board is a wonderful opportunity to contribute your ideas and energy towards furthering our mission of encouraging performance and appreciation of traditional music in our community. Board members play a crucial role in setting the direction of the organization, making important decisions, and ensuring the success of our programs and initiatives.

We are seeking individuals who are dedicated to our cause, have excellent communication and leadership skills, and are willing to actively participate in board meetings and committee work. If you have a strong passion for traditional music and a desire to make a difference, we encourage you to consider applying to join our board of directors.

Together, we can work towards a more vibrant and thriving music community. If you are interested in joining our board, please submit your application as soon as possible. We look forward to hearing from you and welcoming new members to our leadership team.

Gary Mortensen

Gary is our Festival Director and Newsletter Editor and is a fine example of the kind of person that serves AFTM. But don't worry, you don't have to do near as much as he does to really help us out!

Tim Wooten, President



Nokosee Fields Trio performing at the Hillside House Concert

Photo by John C. Kelly, review by Tim Wooten

The Hillside House Concert audience was thrilled with the silken, slippery fiddle of Nokosee Fields and the other members of his trio - Ryan Nickerson on guitar and Reed Stutz on banjo. The trio played old-time tunes, and Carter family favorites along with some original tunes. Nokosee occasionally switched to autoharp on some songs for a different and very fitting accompaniment. The trio only recently came together as a band, but the interplay of finger style banjo, guitar and fiddle was a charm to hear! This trio performed to an enthusiastic audience at the Austin String Band Festival last October, and the Hillside House Concert venue provided a very personal and intimate unamplified listening experience.

AUSTIN

STRING BAND FESTIVAL

October 18 & 19, 2024
Camp Ben McCulloch, Driftwood, TX

Though the Austin String Band Festival is more than six months away, planning has been underway for some time, and things are slowly but surely coming together! Musical performances are the heart of our festival and, so far, we have commitments from performers in several genres: two fine Old Time bands, a hot Bluegrass band, a killer Western Swing trio, an excellent Cajun band, as well as a traditional 1920's Jazz band!

Over the next weeks and months, we'll be releasing more information about this year's performers so check in with our website at www.aftm.org for the latest updates!

To make this festival a success, we need volunteers to manage several important areas and, if you're willing to devote a few hours to helping make the ASBF a success, we would love to hear from you! Send an email to gary@aftm.us for more details!



Alasdair Fraser and Natalie Haas performing at the Austin Acoustical Café

Photo by James Seppi, review by Tim Wooten

The Austin Acoustical Cafe at the Lamar Senior Activity Center was a perfect venue for the Scottish music duo of Alasdair Fraser and Natalie Haas. Alasdair is one of the premier Scottish fiddlers of his generation and Natalie is a fantastic cellist. The duo reprises an old Scottish fiddle/cello tradition with virtuosic aplomb. The first set consisted mainly of traditional jigs, reels, airs and the like while the second set added some more modern pieces written by Alasdair and Natalie loosely in the Scottish tradition. The fiddle soared while the cello alternately played rhythmic accompaniment and transporting harmony. The cello occasionally took the lead while the fiddle played harmony. This was really a great show and a treat for the ears!



My history with the Austin Friends of Traditional Music

Tim Wooten, AFTM president

This organization was founded 50 years ago, and I became a member in the mid 1980s, having moved to Austin in the fall of 1979.

I have always had a great interest in traditional music, because I was exposed to the fiddling of my grandfather, Thomas Jefferson Wootan (1882-1964) , when I was a little boy, and really loved it.

Whenever we visited my grandparents he played the fiddle, and my cousins and I danced. At home my father would occasionally play a tape of my grandfather for us to enjoy.

We called him Papa Wootan, but his long-time friends called him Duck. He got that name when he was little, by competing with the family ducks to eat their food at feeding time.

When I was 21 my father pulled Papa Wootan's old fiddle down from the high shelf in the coat closet. It was broken into a bunch of pieces. He had traded a horse for it around the turn of the last century and called it "Old Squealer."

My dad said, "I'll pay to get this fiddle repaired if you'll learn to play it." Of course I eagerly accepted and my fiddle-playing avocation began. I already knew how to play harmonica and began learning fiddle tunes on it also.

It was around 1995 when Chris Kelly, a dancer at the Hancock Recreation Center that I played for, asked if I would consider joining the AFTM board.

AFTM had become just a shell. It had no money, was hosting no events, and the board was made up of dancers who were using our non-profit status to obtain group insurance at a reasonable price.

I soon became president of the board and Angie, my beloved wife, joined me on the board. We knew we needed to raise some money if we wanted to do anything, so we revived the Midwinter Festival at the Dougherty Arts Center as a fundraiser.

The bands volunteered to play for free to support AFTM. We were usually able to book them an appreciation gig at Central Market or Cactus Café. We charged admission, sold food and started putting money in the bank. We also sold memberships and promoted our organization.

We started holding jam sessions, having occasional events and workshops, and resurrected this newsletter, Reel Times, to provide value for our members.

At that time, there were only four board members. Elizabeth Pittman suggested that we expand the board to twelve members, which we accomplished by revising our bylaws.

The AFTM board is a working board. We have no staff, so all the work is done by board members and whatever volunteers we can round up. Our thinking was that a larger board could get more done, and provide more ideas, and better ideas.

One of our good ideas was to create an annual Austin String Band Festival, because we now had the money to hire bands, rent a venue, and pay for all the necessary items to put on a good festival.

We hosted our first festival in 2006, and have held it every year since, except for the two years of COVID. We decided to set a reasonable admission price to try to just break even and make the festival accessible to as many people as possible.

We have actually lost money on the festival more often than not, but with sponsorships, gifts and member dues we have been able to keep the festival going, and still host other special events, dances, workshops, jam sessions and concerts from time to time throughout the years.

We are always looking for new board members and volunteers with fresh ideas and a willingness to work. We have a lot of fun and the satisfaction of ensuring that traditional music and dance stays alive in central Texas. I hope you will join us!

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AFTM Board of Directors

Tim Wooten, President

Lee Thomas, Vice President

Angie Wooten, Secretary

Rich MacMath, Treasurer

James Seppi, Volunteer Coordinator

Gary Mortensen, Reel Times Editor, Festival Director

Jeanne DeFriese, At Large

Dan Foster, At Large

Darrel Mayers, At Large

Austin Friends of Traditional Music

P.O. Box 49608

Austin, TX 78765

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Membership info

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