

John D. Morris

Born in Ivydale, Clay County, into a family steeped in traditional music, David and John Morris learned from family and neighbors that included banjo player Jenes Cottrell and fiddler French Carpenter. After David returned from Vietnam in 1968, the brothers began organizing musical get-togethers and, in 1969, held the first Morris Family Old-Time Music Festival that same year. The festival became a major traditional music event in Clay County and filmmaker Bob Gates documented the 1972 festival in his film *The Morris Family Old-Time Music Festival*.

Members of The Morris Brothers band included Pocahontas County old-time banjo player Dwight Diller and the late North Carolina harmonica player John Martin. Playing a mix of old-time, bluegrass, and country styles, including some of David's original music, the group played together through the mid-'70s, releasing an LP in the late '60s, *Music As We Learned It*, and two live shows on eight-track tapes. John, a traditional fiddler, and David, a singer, songwriter and guitarist, were involved in union and environmental activities from the late 1960s through the 1970s. They were also instrumental in establishing the first Vandalia Gathering at the Cultural Center in 1977.

The Morris Brothers music was featured in Barbara Kopple's 1976 film *Harlan County, USA*. David, who passed away in 2016, contributed music to Kopple's 2015 film about Vietnam vets, *Shelter*. John lives in Ivydale and plays fiddle at music events across West Virginia. He is a rich source of information about the history of old-time music in central West Virginia, and one of the few native fiddlers of his generation to continue the older style of playing.

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Jen Iskow

Jen Iskow is an artist, designer, musician, and community organizer based in Thomas, West Virginia. Born and raised in Rockville, Maryland, Jen grew up learning to play blues and punk music. It wasn't until she moved to Morgantown in 2009 for college that she was introduced to old-time music at the weekly Brew Pub jam hosted by Stewed Mulligan. After graduating from WVU, she finally settled in Elkins, West Virginia and accepted a position as the Marketing Coordinator for the Augusta Heritage Center. Suddenly being surrounded by so many talented traditional artists, Jen was immersed into the music and inspired to learn to play fiddle. After studying under talented fiddlers such as Scott Prouty, Erynn Marshall, Jesse Wells, Ben Townsend, John Harrod, and more, Jen met John Morris at his house in Ivydale, and the rest is history...