

**Exploring Rural Kentucky Through Documentary Art:
Irvin Store, 1920s - Documentary Art Interactive
Unit 2 - Lesson Set 3 - Jammin' on the Porch
- For the Student -**

BACKGROUND READING

Soundtracks add to our enjoyment of movies and videos. The documentary *Creelsboro and the Cumberland: A Living History* features “old-time” music created for the documentary’s soundtrack by musician Eli Bedel.



Fiddle, banjo and guitar players “jammin’” on the Irvin Store’s front porch on a fall Saturday in Creelsboro – a detail from Irvin Store, 1920s by Dennis Thrasher (2018).

Bedel and the production team researched traditional, old-time songs from the Appalachian region for use in historical sections of the documentary. Bedel arranged and played fourteen old-time songs. He also played a series of short “mood” instrumentals for transitions in the documentary.

The musicians on the front porch of the Irvin Store in Dennis Thrasher’s painting might very well have been playing one of the old-time Appalachian songs that Bedel recorded. When we see musicians playing a fiddle, banjo, and guitar, we tend to think of bluegrass music, but bluegrass as a genre did not emerge until the 1940s. That is when Bill Monroe added a mandolin to the mix. These

musicians in the 1920s likely would have been playing old-time mountain music, the precursor to bluegrass.

Few families in rural communities had radios or phonographs at that time. Live music was a real treat. It was also a treat for the musicians to get together with other musicians and “jam.” Whether they were practicing for a community dance or just enjoying playing together, musicians were often found “jammin’ on the porch.”



Eli Bedel played the fiddle, banjo, guitar, and dulcimer on the soundtrack for Creelsboro and the Cumberland: A Living History. Credit: Voyageur Media Group, Inc.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why would it be a “treat” for musicians to play together?
2. Do you think the musicians in this vignette are practicing for a dance or “just jammin’” for enjoyment? What makes you think that?
3. Is there a place in your community where people gather to play music together?
4. Is there a place where you can hear live music?
5. How is the experience of hearing live music different from the experience of listening to recorded music?