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At Home at the Down Home: Building and Sustaining a Musical Community

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At Home at the Down Home:

Building and Sustaining a Musical Community

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by

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ABSTRACT

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The Down Home is an eclectic music venue in Johnson City, Tennessee. Established in 1976, it has since become a noteworthy club and the center of a mutually supportive community of people who keep the venue going while it in turn holds the community members together. Through the use of community theory, oral history theory, memorabilia, and oral history interviews, this thesis examines the way the Down Home community formed, and how it has continued to grow, develop traditions, and engage people both local and from afar. It also explores what the venue's future may look like. While several influential figures in the club's history have passed away, it is important to acknowledge the memories of those still living. This project documents some of the Down Home's story as told by the venue's community members, and it begins to fill the void where literature about the Down Home is scarce.

DEDICATION

I am dedicating this thesis to the past owners of the Down Home: Tank, Danny, and Phil. You created something wonderful, and your lasting contribution to the music and culture of East Tennessee does not and will not go unrecognized.

This work is also dedicated to my little family: John, Mary, Mike, Keegan, and the kids. You all have listened to me go on about this project for years and you never seemed to mind. I cannot thank you enough for the love, support, and encouragement you have shown me every day.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT DESIGN

"And remember it's the power of us all that make[s] a place cool,

It ain't one and it ain't two.

And something that lasts means a lot these days,

And there's still a lot of rebel in the Down Home way."

-Ed Snodderly, "Down Home"

The Down Home is a music venue that was founded in 1976 in Johnson City, Tennessee. In the decades since then, it has garnered a dedicated following and become the center of a community of musicians and music fans from East Tennessee and beyond. There are endless stories, memories, photographs, recordings, and artifacts that when put together make up the history the Down Home. Each and every piece of that history is captivating in its own right, but it would be beyond the scope of this thesis to try to recount the myriad of Down Home experiences, memories, and stories. Drawing on my own experiences as an employee and performer at the venue has been invaluable to my examination of and access to the community. As I have considered traditions, memorabilia, and oral history interviews, an understanding of a Down Home community has emerged.

My goal with this work is to explore the ways in which the "eclectic listening room," as it is billed, has engaged the community since 1976 by providing an intimate setting in which to hear and meet highly regarded artists such as Doc Watson, John Hartford, and Townes Van Zandt, as well as local musicians and poets who take the stage on "Open Hoot" nights. This thesis documents the founding of the Down Home and the subsequent growth of a supportive community centered around the establishment. It also examines the venue's continuing presence and significance in the lives of patrons, performers, and the larger Northeast Tennessee region.

Chapter Two provides an overview of the resources I used to apply oral history theory and community theory to my topic. It goes on to summarize my methodology, interview processes, and important primary sources such as the Down Home memorabilia that I studied to piece together and illustrate the founding and growth of the Down Home community.

Chapter Three examines the earliest years of the venue's life. It includes founder Joe "Tank" Leach's story of how the idea for the club came about and how he made it come to fruition despite some challenges. I also examine the musical scene at the time and how its lack of a folk music friendly venue inspired the establishment of the Down Home.

In Chapter Four I examine the traditions and rituals that have formed around the Down Home. The venue has engaged the community—both local and around the country—during the last forty-six years, and it has become an institution that draws reciprocal support from the community that surrounds it. These traditions and rituals have lasted for decades because they both keep the community together, and provide a way for the community to give back to the club. Chapter Five surveys that community in recent years and considers the future of the Down Home. While the community is not confined within the venue's walls—it consists of people from different places who take part in celebrations, festivals, and other events away from the venue—it is the building which serves as a physical reminder of the community's strength and history. The Down Home's future will require thoughtful changes to ensure that the venue continues to attract audiences without compromising its character.

To conclude this thesis, Chapter Six consists of an overview of the full scope of my study. I discuss the void that my research fills and the methodology I employed, give a summary of my findings, and discuss those results. Finally, I consider the limitations I encountered, as

well as how this work could be continued in the future. Following the summary and discussion are my bibliography and appendices.

"The Down Home is not about eighteen pages," the venue's current owner Ed Snodderly told me in November 2019. "It's about community and music and the characters you meet" (Myhre 12). At the time I was writing a paper about the legendary Down Home for my Appalachian Folklore and Folklife class. I chose to focus on the Johnson City venue because the place had captured my attention and affection just as it had done to innumerable people before me, and yet in my research I found it underdocumented. The Down Home is so much more than a paper for a class. It is a unique listening room, a gathering space, a home to a community of musicians and fans who return year after year. On that corner of Main Street and Watauga Avenue have been born ideas, sounds, bands, relationships, communities, and art of all kinds. Everyone who is familiar with the venue has their own lengthy list of memories and reasons to love and support this "eclectic listening room" of East Tennessee.

I have been a patron, employee, and occasional performer at the Down Home since moving to Johnson City. I too have collected memories and stories, met musicians I admired growing up, found a welcoming community of passionate people, and developed strong friendships with other patrons and employees. Though my time spent around the venue pales in comparison to the forty-plus years some of my interview subjects have known the Down Home, it has given me an insider perspective as I write this thesis. Getting acquainted with the venue organically as an insider meant that I could approach the past and present owners and longtime patrons—the "regulars"—with credibility and a shared respect for the place and its history.

In the summer of 2013, as I prepared to move to Johnson City to start college, I spent a week at an old-time music camp in upstate New York. There I encountered a number of

musicians who knew the East Tennessee and Western North Carolina music scenes well. One of them, a banjo instructor from Walkertown, NC, said to me during one conversation, "Oh, Johnson City! You'll be spending a lot of time at the Down Home." That was the first I ever heard of it.

Two months later, on a Wednesday evening in early October, I visited 300 W. Main Street for the first time. At school, I was in an old-time band class under the direction of Mr. Snodderly, and since he owned the nearby venue, he suggested that we work on preparing a short set for an Open Hoot night. Traditionally, on those Wednesday nights, several lesser-known artists and bands would sign up to play a few numbers in a slightly more structured open mic style. Once we felt comfortable with some tunes, Mr. Snodderly put us on the schedule. Our band, the Foxchasers, included guitar, banjo, bass, and two fiddles, and we had been learning songs from the New Lost City Ramblers collection. As we played our five selections up on the small, brightly lit stage, I knew there were some people in the back and around the bar, and I remembered all the photos I had noticed upon the wooden, windowless walls as I walked in. I had only just met the Down Home, but I was aware of the history and spirit there and knew the one-of-a-kind venue would be part of my life for years to come.

Between October 2013 and October 2016, I frequented the Down Home as a patron and occasional performer. It became a familiar, comfortable place filled with good music and friendly people. As each semester concluded, I participated in several nights of the ETSU all-band shows hosted at the Down Home, playing old-time and Celtic music, as well country one year. In October of 2016, the dwindling kitchen staff needed to hire new people and I happily took on a serving position. From that month until the COVID-19 pandemic brought about the venue's lengthy but fortunately temporary closure in March of 2020, I spent nearly every Friday

and Saturday night—the odd Wednesday, Thursday, and Sunday too—waiting tables and getting to know people at the Down Home.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

"Then there's a yell out and a big old laugh,

And the cases unbuckle, you can hear them unsnap.

A little bit of tunin' before the song,

And you remember the 'here' and the 'where you belong.'"

-Ed Snodderly, "Down Home"

My research is focused on demonstrating how the Down Home's existence has played a significant role in the East Tennessee music scene as well as in the individual lives of everyone who has spent time there. The historic listening room has been instrumental in creating a community of musicians and fans who feel at home at the Down Home, even when they return after an absence. This thesis documents the legacy of the Down Home and intends to provide a significant contribution to the study of music and community in East Tennessee. It is my intent to propose a permanent institutional home for both this thesis and any related artifacts in the Archives of Appalachia.

Intertwining theoretical frameworks of community theory and oral history theory inform this thesis. Primary sources include the oral history interviews I have conducted and the interpretation of those narratives, both the interviewee's and my own as the interviewer. As Lynn Abrams reminds us, oral history is both a method and a process, "a complex oral document that contains many layers of meaning and is itself embedded within wider social forces" (16). An understanding of oral history theory can help "decode" the document and "link the past to the present" (16). Oral history interviews make up a significant part of my research. I have conducted interviews with the remaining past and present owners, employees, performers, and some "regulars"—people who have known and supported the Down Home its entire life. Over

my four years as an employee, I have cultivated friendships with some of the longtime "regulars." Many have had a hand in building, running or even owning the business at some point and they have also maintained relationships with notable performers. The regulars themselves, along with artifacts like scrapbooks, newsletters, and issues of a Down Home magazine found in the basement, have been valuable resources to my investigation of the legendary status and legacy of the beloved East Tennessee music venue. During the recorded, semi-structured conversations, I asked the interviewees about their personal experiences with the Down Home and the community that has developed around it through the years. For consistency, and to provide the interviewees a chance to share their initial experiences uninterrupted, my first question in every interview was "Where does your Down Home story begin?" Additionally, we discussed some of the Down Home artifacts, including mementos from their personal collections.

Especially helpful in developing my research methodology was Lynn Abrams' text *Oral History Theory,* in which she states that "oral history exists in four forms: the original oral interview, the recorded version of the interview, the written transcript and the interpretation of the interview material" (9). She describes oral history as both a practice and a method of research where ". . . the doing and interpreting – are entwined" (1). Abrams goes on to point out the distinction between qualitative research that simply collects data and oral history's "distinctive character of specifically engaging with the past" (2). This is helpful to my project because, while I am doing qualitative research, one of my overall goals is to get a sense of the spirit of this community, its history, and why it still works today. DeBlasio, Ganzert, Mould, Paschen, and Sachs add to the description of oral history in their book *Catching Stories: A Practical Guide to Oral History,* stating that interviews "illuminate environments, perceptions,

and feelings of individuals able to paint verbal pictures of all sorts of experiences" (21). These resources will be helpful as I seek to understand and illuminate a range of experiences from the establishment of the Down Home to its significance to performers and the larger community. *Catching Stories* contains particularly useful chapters by DeBlasio, Paschen, and Sacks that clearly guide a researcher through the stages of an oral history project— from why to do it and how to plan it out; to the ethics and possible legal issues; to the interviews and transcriptions and how to share the stories one has collected.

Knowledge of community theory has guided my understanding of musical communities and the social processes that help create them. In the words of Kay Kaufman Shelemay, "musical communities retain the traces of dual musical and social processes, allowing us to sketch with greater clarity the ways in which these collectivities arise, as well as the varying manners in which they seek to affirm common causes" (379). The insight I gained from studying community theory influenced the questions I asked my interviewees and strengthened my ability to interpret and narrate interview responses.

Especially helpful in defining the notion of "community" is Shelemay's article, "Musical Communities: Rethinking the Collective in Music." Shelemay discusses the evolution of the word "community" throughout the twentieth century and how ethnomusicologists have applied it to different case studies, eventually necessitating a reassessment of "the community as a unit of study" (359). While she offers several alternative terms, none describes the people who love the Down Home so well as a "community," and I adopt her definition of the word "community" along with Christopher Small's concept of "musicking": a collectivity of people brought together by a mutually appreciated idea, activity and/or place. A musical community, such as the one that developed around the Down Home, is made up of people with a common interest in musicking—

that is, participating in music making at any point in the process (Shelemay 364-365; Small 9). Not everyone in the community is a musician, but all of the members share a love of music. Shelemay's article is also helpful in my examination of the role the Down Home community has played in the music scene in East Tennessee, and in my comparison of the Down Home with other establishments.

Small's book, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening, is* especially apropos to my examination of the Down Home community. Small explores notions of what music really is, what it means to people, and how it functions in our societies. He argues that music is about people—the people who play it, the people who listen to and support it. This exemplifies the Down Home community. It is a real life example of Small's conclusion that "the meaning of music lies not just in musical works but in the totality of a musical performance" (13). If an unknown artist comes to the Down Home and plays a short set for a handful of people who wander in, buy a beer, and take the time to listen to the music, an intimate, shared musical experience occurs between the musician, the music appreciators in the audience, the sound engineer, the bartender, and so on. It is not simply that some songs are performed, but that a roomful of people is engaged in the process. That is to say, "it is not so much about *music* as about people *musicking*" (Small 9).

When people attend concerts, they are not just watching a show and trying to live vicariously through a performer. We see this participatory tendency happening everywhere, from small rooms like the Down Home, to the largest of music festivals. Useful in elaborating on music as a communal event is Robert Cantwell's essay "When We Were Good: Class and Culture in the Folk Revival," found in Neil Rosenberg's edited volume, *Transforming Tradition*, which explores ways in which folk music has shaped and been shaped by "the life of a people"

(57). Cantwell connects the decline of major folk revivals at the end of the 1960s to the desire to create, for one thing, "a life of participatory, not vicarious, recreation, with recognition of the importance of small community to such enjoyment" (57). The Down Home was founded early in the next decade as a place where 150 people could enjoy and participate in a shared live music experience. From the beginning, a strong community has developed around the venue because of a common desire to keep the experiences alive.

Another resource useful in an examination of a folk music community is Philip Bohlman's seminal work, *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World*, in which he writes about ways that "place" and "community" form the "social basis of folk music" (52). However, in contrast to Bohlman's writing, the Down Home community is bound together by the members' social relationships with each other and a general appreciation for music rather than a common love for a specific type of music. Not every artist who passes through the Down Home plays *folk music*, the musical and social processes that happen there are decidedly "folk." As Bohlman states, the music lives on in the community "through repetition or re-creation, both of which characteristically require performer and audience" (53). Bohlman's work supports that live music—folk or otherwise—thrives within an intimate community-supported venue such as the Down Home. Especially after other venues in the Tri Cities succumbed to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Down Home remains vital to the survival of local live music. It boasts history, familiarity, intimacy, and consistency.

Collections of memorabilia serve as a source of primary information and are catalogued into three chronologically organized categories: printed memorabilia (newsletters, tickets, riders, calendars); photographic memorabilia (scrapbooks, loose photos, framed photos); and personal artifacts (clothing, check from Doc Watson, instruments). I use these sources to investigate the

formation of a Down Home community, including which performers and types of music drew enthusiastic crowds, which events the creators of the materials thought were worth documenting, and elements of the venue and its community that have stood the test of time.

Helpful to my qualitative research is John and David Cresswell's book, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. The authors assert that qualitative research consists of narrative research, ethnographies, and case studies (12). They go on to describe narrative research as "a design of inquiry from the humanities in which the researcher studies the lives of individuals and asks one or more individuals to provide stories about their lives," as I do in my examination of the Down Home (13).

There are several comparative sources I used to examine how a place becomes a local institution with a passionate community that supports the continued survival of the place. These comparable places are by no means limited to music venues. A rather unexpected and surprising comparison can be made between the Down Home and a city park in Washington State. While there are no physical similarities, both have strong networks of supporters that are essential to the wellbeing of the venue/park. In their book *Manito Park: A Reflection of Spokane's Past,* Tony and Suzanne Bamonte support the theory that when a place, be it a park or a nightclub, engages its surrounding community, the community will want to give back and contribute to the wellbeing of the place. A network of volunteers and donors has been keeping the park alive for over a century now (Bamonte 55). Similarly, the Down Home could not keep running without the help of employees who are there for reasons beyond making a living, as well as the support from generous patrons who make donations in addition to buying tickets for shows.

To compare the Down Home to other music venues, I turned to two sources about Club Passim in the Boston area. One is an episode of NPR's *All Things Considered* that aired on

August 5, 2008. Narrated by Abigail Beshkin, "Club Passim: 50 Years of Folk Legends" is a seven-minute segment honoring the first half-century of memories and history at the club. Singer-Songwriter Ellis Paul chimes in after the introduction to say that, like the Down Home, Club Passim's reputation makes newcomers expect something grand, when in reality the venue is "'a basement with cobblestone floors, and there's nothing remarkable about the actual space. But there is something incredible about the actual space's history'" (Beshkin). While the Down Home building is unique in its own right, it is special today because of everything that has happened there and the community that has formed over the last four-and-a-half decades. A community began to form at Club Passim (then called Club 47) during the 1960s. Many who attended the shows soon became regulars and performers, including songwriter Tom Rush (Beshkin).

My second comparative source about Club Passim is an article by Donna Goodison called "Passim Plays On." Goodison examines the natural rise and fall of the club's success, particularly during the "lean times" through the 1980s into the mid-1990s. According to Betsy Siggins, the venue's director, by the turn of the century Club Passim had entered a "period of stability" before entering a new "period of growth" at the time of the article, March 2000 (Goodison). Siggins credited the "combination of people who care about the club and saw the value in what the club offered" for the venue's survival (Goodison). Goodison also described other tactics that a small, potentially struggling folk venue such as the Down Home could use to ensure that the place has a future. Club Passim became a cultural education center and a nonprofit with a yearly budget "derived from admission fees, grants, and dues paid by 800 club members," (Goodison). Its community rallied around it and successfully ensured its existence in the twenty-first century.

A final comparative resource comes from Josh Rosenthal's article, "Hangin' on the Bowery: Observations on the Accomplishment of Authenticity at CBGB." In this article, Rosenthal examines the thirty-three-year run of a legendary New York City music venue and community efforts to support it. Much like the Down Home, CBGB always stayed true to its distinctive personality and aesthetic (Rosenthal 146). While other places might be changing all the time to try to keep up with modern life, these two venues demonstrate that proudly standing by their identities does not repel customers. As Gaines Snodderly told me, "You can go in, you know what to expect, you know where you can sit down, you know how the food is, you know how the music is, you know how it sounds, and you like it."

As previously mentioned, a range of memorabilia will serve as valuable primary source material for my thesis. Scrapbooks from the first half of the 1980s have preserved Down Home newsletter clippings, concert tickets, photographs of performers, and photographs of employees and patrons gathered at events both at the Down Home and elsewhere. Scrapbooks also feature photographs from birthday barbecues, holidays, and weddings of numerous couples who met each other at the Down Home. Around the venue I have also found numerous hats and t-shirts designed by longtime owner Danny Julian; t-shirts left behind by artists; monthly calendars; loose photographs; riders from bands such as New Grass Revival; posters such as the Pabst Blue Ribbon Down Home Music Gathering; and a framed check (never cashed) from Rosa Lee Carlton and Doc Watson to cover postage for the newsletter. Because these artifacts serve as tangible evidence of the Down Home's past, discussing selected items of memorabilia enhanced my interviews. Memories evolve over time, developing gaps or sprouting new details, but photographs, newsletters, and scrapbook entries remain unaltered and therefore can help to call up memories that might not be triggered by conversation alone. "As practising oral historians we

try to facilitate remembering," writes Lynn Abrams (82). Throughout my research, I found that flipping through a respondent's photo album with them as we talked was an effective way to piece together their stories. Abrams goes on to say that these stories created from an interviewee's memories are of interest to the interviewer "because it is meaning we are after, not just a litany of facts" (82). From the way interview subjects describe memories, researchers can interpret and analyze the emotion and meaning behind the stories.

CHAPTER 3: EARLY YEARS

"Yeah, it's a little old place, it ain't open all the time

But when it is the music plays and the music shines

And there's a lot of different kind of people come walkin' in

And that's the best part about it: everybody minglin'."

-Ed Snodderly, "Down Home"

Merriam-Webster describes the adjective "down-home" as "of, relating to, or having qualities (such as informality and simplicity) associated with rural or small-town people especially of the Southern U.S." The venue really is just that. Its barnwood walls, which keep us sweltering in the summer and frigid in the winter, intend to evoke a casual atmosphere of simplicity and familiarity. It is a comfortable place without being luxurious, or least of all formal. A long-held tradition is that people be kind and respectful toward each other, the place, and the music. It needs no new, fancy, over-the-top gimmicks to attract people because the lack of loud games, flashing screens, and fashionable drinks sets it apart by keeping everyone focused on the music. Instead of going to a bar further downtown, socializing only amongst the group one came with, and having a completely separate time from the other people in the building, one can go to the Down Home and experience an event as part of a community, where everyone is there to take part in an evening together. It does not have a liquor license and only offers beer. Patrons are welcome to bring in a bottle of wine or other drink of their choosing, but for the most part, no one seems to need more than what the venue has to offer. The bathrooms do not have proper stall doors, but rather fabric curtains. I have had many a lighthearted conversation in the women's room about the curtains and the close quarters and how the experience is funny, but fine because it is just part of the

Down Home. The bathrooms are a visual representation of the Down Home community thanks to the array of graffiti on the walls. In the women's room there are names, dates, and initials; declarations of love for significant others, artists, and the venue; messages to the owners; quotes both credited and anonymous; and advice, some applicable to life in general, and some for when one is a guest at the Down Home. An example of the latter is a note above the toilet paper holder in the righthand stall which recommends holding the curtain against the wall on the right side so that, should someone open the door, the fabric will not drift away and betray one's coverage.

The Beginning

On Tuesday, June 8, 2021, I met with Phil Leonard, a former Down Home proprietor; Toby Wilkins, a longtime Down Home patron, employee, handyman and carpenter; and Roger Rasnake, a songwriter as well as a former Down Home employee and "regular" since the beginning. When I arrived at Mr. Leonard's house at 2:30 that afternoon, nervous and clutching a case of my subjects' common favorite beer as a token of my appreciation, I was pleasantly surprised to discover that Joe "Tank" Leach would be dropping by to do an interview as well. Mr. Leonard keenly offered to set up some microphones and transfer the interview files to a thumb drive for me at the end of the day.

Mr. Wilkins brought a scrapbook full of photos, tickets, calendars, cards, and other mementos, and after interviewing the four men individually, we sat down in the kitchen to pore over the album together while Mr. Leonard, with the help of Mr. Rasnake, selected music from his extensive collection of recordings to play in the background. The four of them enjoyed the opportunity to get together and reminisce after a long year not seeing much of each other, and they were appreciative of my genuine interest in their individual and collective Down Home

tales. I appreciated the chance to get to know better these four crucial Down Home characters and to see how they opened up and felt comfortable sharing with me their experiences and thoughts regarding the past and future of the music venue that has played such an important role in each of their lives.

The individual who first had the idea for an acoustic listening room in Johnson City was Mr. Leach, and he dreamed up the Down Home in stages. "It kind of started in Vietnam, in combat," he began, so eager to share his story that he needed no prompting from me. "I had a premonition or something out there. It was a bad day. I remember the ambush, and I remember telling the Great Spirit that, you know, 'If you get me out of this, I'm going to do something… to make people happy.'" He had no specific plan at the time, and the promise took up residence in the back of his mind until the perfect idea struck him years later.

Back in Johnson City in 1975 and 1976, Mr. Leach and Mr. Snodderly, accompanied by several other friends, were playing a regular Wednesday through Saturday night gig at the Red Pig Bar-B-Q across from the ETSU campus (Myhre 2). Mr. Snodderly remembered how people talked and ate as the band played their own songs, but he said they always liked to sing and clap along to the old, familiar staples and the current radio hits (Myhre 2-3). Drawing big crowds but earning only a dismal twenty dollars each four-day week, Mr. Leach eventually said to Mr. Snodderly, "One of these days, I'm going to build me a listening room." Johnson City at the time was what Mr. Leach called "a rock-and-roll town," with warehouse-type bars that were not particularly receptive to acoustic music and pickers. "'You had a place called the Crow's Nest, which was mostly loud country, rock, and party-type music, or this other place called the Cage. And then there was the Holiday Inn, but that was a current, lounge-type, cover band situation," Mr. Snodderly recalled. "We needed a place where you could listen to music'" (Myhre 3). They

would go on to accomplish that goal right from the start, and to this day it is what sets the place apart from other venues. However, before there could be music, they had to find the place to house it, and that was no simple task.

Mr. Leach had been considering enrolling in medical school, but his dream of starting an eclectic listening room kept its hold on him. "One day I drove by the Down Home, and it was the old Montclair Hotel building," he recollected. "It used to go all the way to Market Street… I cut that off for parking. But it was condemned." Despite its condition, Mr. Leach had a feeling that the building might just be his music venue, and he inquired. It turned out that he knew the owner, Rex Lewis, who "had deeds for property all over East Tennessee," and from whom he had arranged to purchase, with the intent to restore, a 1750s log cabin for one hundred dollars a month.

"I went in there with no money," he said. "I asked him if I could get it back to snuff where it would pass codes. I said, 'would you take a percentage of my cash register receipts? And that way, if I fail, you've got a rentable space again.'" Mr. Lewis agreed to Mr. Leach's proposal. Mr. Leach then went down to the bank to secure a loan, saying he needed it for his log house. But in reality, "I got a five thousand dollar home improvement loan and built the Down Home with it."

Mr. Leach was then on a mission to find tools and materials, and he built the walk-in cooler himself. "That was a rush. That was about… six, seven weeks before the open," he told me. "Just up all night, and just killing myself. Already had the Red Clay Ramblers booked. So finally, at the last week or so, people just started showing up." From that moment, a Down Home community was born. It was no longer just Mr. Leach and Mr. Snodderly working on a dream project in a condemned building that may or may not pan out. Danny Julian, a fellow

veteran and classmate of Mr. Leach, came by that first week of June 1976, his carpentry tools in tow. Mr. Leach could not pay him, but Mr. Julian only wanted to be part of the project and help to make it a real, functioning place where people could listen to music. He only asked for a few tickets in return (Leach).

Mr. Snodderly recalled the busy few weeks leading up to the venue's opening night when a local film crew came to the Down Home on Sunday, May 15, 2022, to gather footage for a commercial that they hope will raise money for a future documentary about the club. Leading up to a performance of his song "Down Home," he recounted for the small crowd of the venue's friends his memory of starting the project and watching it gain interest and momentum:

> "[We] found this guy walking by who drank some kind of alcohol that you pour through white bread. And he was a carpenter. And he came in and we started over there in the corner. He got us on the forty-five degree angle. And then for about a month or so, Tank and me, we put the floor down. We had a really good time. And then slowly people came by, and they'd go 'what are y'all doing?'
> We said, 'well, we're making a room where you can come in and listen to music.'
> 'Well, I have a power tool, and I can do this.'
> And it's like, well come on in!... And before you knew it, there was about ten, fifteen people in here doing stuff" (Snodderly, Ed. "Down Home").

Working right up through the day of the first show, Mr. Leach had to convince both the band and the city building inspector, who came in late that afternoon, that the new venue would be ready by showtime. He told the Red Clay Ramblers to get something to eat and come back in a bit after they dropped in and asked if they were in the right place. He pleaded with the inspector to trust that he could pull it together and promised right then to run to City Hall to get his license (Leach). Returning to work for a few more hours to get the place cleaned up and presentable, Mr. Leach finally went to get ready at a friend's nearby apartment. "And we came back, and topped the hill there going down Watauga, and the sidewalk was just packed with people. And I just lost it… I couldn't believe it. I was a mess the whole night," he remembered.

Jackie Ringersma, a music lover and Johnson City native whose first venture to the Down Home was to see the Red Clay Ramblers in 1976, credits the intimacy and "the respect the audience gives the acts" for making it a special place. In our email interview, she went on to agree that the difference is that it is "strictly a musical listening room. Not a bar or coffee house. Not a restaurant. Not a hangout."

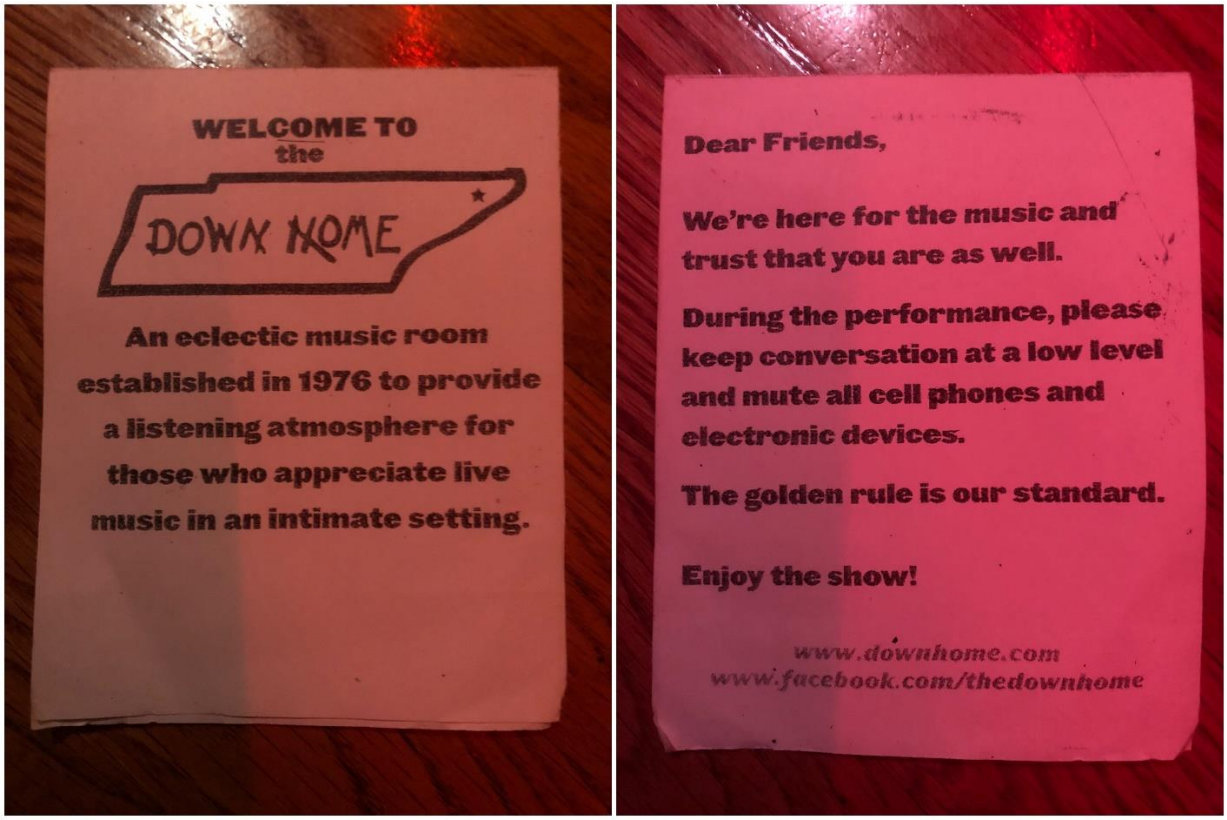

Figure 1. Reminders to respect the music. Today these messages sit in plastic holders on every table to remind guests of the venue's purpose and to be respectful of the performers and other listeners during shows. Photos by Rheva Myhre.

Of course, to compliment the music, the venue has a bar, serves coffee and food, and provides a place for people to hang out, but all of those things are only there because of the performances. They are secondary, as evidenced by the Down Home's tradition of opening only when a show is happening. Mrs. Ringersma continued, stating, "The Down Home is my home away from home. My safe, happy place. Now that I'm a retired, widowed, empty nester [it is]

my favorite place to socialize." It is a community too embedded in her life for her to abandon. Her friends are there, the music she loves is there, and she has decades of nostalgia and memories rooted there. In Shelemay's words, "a musical community is a social entity… rendering those who participate in making or listening to music aware of a connection among themselves," as demonstrated by Mrs. Ringersma's Down Home story (365).

Figure 2. The original bar. This framed photo presently hangs on display in the Down Home. From 1976 until 1985, the bar was located near the front door, where the booth seating is now. Photo by Rheva Myhre.

The Late 1970s in Johnson City

My research has indicated that Johnson City was not a particularly busy town leading up to and around the time of the listening room's establishment. During the late 1970s in Johnson City, the biggest music venue was Freedom Hall Civic Center, and the biggest act to appear there in 1976 was not President Gerald Ford, who spoke at a rally on May 14, but Elvis Presley, who

performed on March 17 of that year for ten dollars per general admission ticket (Patrick). When one types "Johnson City 1976" into Google, the first page and a half of results are related to that concert. The Down Home's website comes up halfway down the second page. Willie Nelson, perhaps too big of a star to perform at the Down Home less than a year into its existence, appeared at Freedom Hall on March 11, 1977 (Cate). In other folklife happenings around Johnson City, the Archives of Appalachia opened in the Sherrod Library at East Tennessee State University on September 1, 1978, with the mission to "promote awareness of and appreciation for Appalachian culture and history" ("Archives History"). Mr. Leach, in fact, credits the Down Home as a significant factor in the development of ETSU's Appalachian Studies. "Back when I started [the Down Home], Dr. Richard Blaustein had just started the Appalachian Studies, so that fed right into it," Mr. Leach recalled. "And of course, all these local musicians started showing up… so it really was the forerunner" of the program.

Mr. Leonard moved to Johnson City in January of 1976 to take an entry-level job as an announcer at ETSU's public radio station. The following year, in the summer of 1977, he settled in at 204 W. Watauga Ave., just four blocks north of 300 W. Main St., and he would drive past the Down Home every day on his way back from the campus radio station, then located at 922 W. Maple St. But he was not intrigued at first. "I had interest in avoiding the place," he told me. "It looked threatening."

Figure 3. Early, threatening exterior. This photo of the Down Home's early exterior hangs in a display case of photos in the club today. "It looked really crude... from the outside, and I had interest in avoiding the place," said Phil Leonard of his first impressions of the building. Photo by Rheva Myhre.

Mr. Leonard was not the only person who had that ominous first impression of and initial hesitance to acquaint himself with the Down Home. The broken sidewalk in front, the board-covered windows, and the occasionally mismatched—or altogether missing—letters on the marquee today still convince unfamiliar passersby that the venue—should they recognize the building to be a venue in the first place—is an off-putting, potentially dangerous location. As a server at the Down Home, every weekend I listen to new customers tell me that this is their first show at the establishment, and they wish they had ventured in earlier, but they had felt unsure, or even downright frightened, about coming inside. Dan Boner, current director of the Bluegrass, Old-Time, and Roots Music Studies program at ETSU, described his expectations and surprise

the first time he played at the Down Home as a student. Leading up to that night, then-director of the program Raymond McLain told Mr. Boner about the Down Home's status as a premier music venue. "I was expecting it to be some huge place, then we arrived and walked in to find, well, the Down Home!" Had he not been playing there that night he very well may have passed it by. In a Sunday feature piece published in the Bristol Herald Courier's "Community" section on July 2, 1995, Mr. Snodderly admitted to Mark Hyler, "'Some people have thought that this was some rough kind of place because of the way it looks on the exterior, but it's not at all…. They discover that on their own terms, in their own way, when they decide to come to a show here.'"

And Mr. Snodderly was exactly right. People most often decide to put their reservations aside and buy tickets once they have seen an advertisement for a can't-miss show. That was what happened to Mr. Leonard one weekend when a poster in the window caught his eye as he drove by the venue. The name of the band slated to play both Friday and Saturday night was the Hot Mud Family, and it reminded him of the jug band music he had discovered and enjoyed while he was living in New England in the submarine service. His interest began to outweigh his misgivings founded on the appearance of the building. So, Mr. Leonard recruited a friend to venture in with him that weekend. It was a decision that changed his life. The Hot Mud Family turned out to be an old-time band from Yellow Springs, Ohio, and they were responsible for luring Mr. Leonard into the building and allowing him to see for the first time just how different the inside was from the impression it presented to passersby on Main Street. Small explains in *Musicking* that the "relation between our internal mental processes and what is outside us" comes from "an active process of engagement by our mental processes, and those… can vary from individual to individual and between members of different social and cultural groups" (130). For

many people in our society, our experiences growing up have taught us to avoid seemingly boarded-up buildings on busy streets a few blocks outside of a city's downtown, for there may be unfriendly or even dangerous people inside. Small reminds us that we begin learning as soon as we are born, and that we all find our own ways of figuring out "the world and its relationships" (130). While it is beneficial to be cautious, sometimes one must gain new experiences in order make more informed connections, since acquiring a "sense of what is reality is a dialectical process between… the experience and the inborn temperament of each individual and… the perceptions of the various social groups to which he or she belongs" (Small 131). People who have taken a chance on the Down Home have found a unique, welcoming community, and that new community will expand a person's outlook and influence how one judges future situations. That was what happened to Mr. Leonard. He elaborated, "I noticed real quickly that when they did hell-raising songs, the people that were there participated in a hell-raising way, and when they did a gospel song, the bands took their hats off, and the crowd, you could hear them breathe." The responsive audience blew him away. He continued, saying, "I realized immediately that there was something special going on in this place."

The Down Home Music Series

Mr. Leonard visited with Mr. Leach that night and let him know that he was with the public radio station. Inspired by the "sophisticated," yet "innate" atmosphere of the Down Home, Mr. Leonard wasted no time in beginning a new project: he started bringing a tape recorder to the venue every weekend, taking "a drop from the old Yamaha eight-channel board into an Otari machine," and blending the house mix with the stage feed for a quality live representation that he could play on the radio. One or two nights of a band's show he would condense down to a 59-minute recording to be broadcast over the weekend. As Mr. Leonard

continued to record shows at the Down Home, he began to connect the music he was hearing there to music he had heard attending festivals such as Bean Blossom, in Brown County, Indiana, with his parents during his childhood.

"It [the Down Home] had a personal affection to me, as well as a communal one," he reminisced. "I saw almost like a secular church happening" at the Down Home. That was how the club wedged itself into its future owner's life. The Down Home community is what Shelemay refers to as an "affinity community," which "emerges first and foremost from individual preferences, quickly followed by a desire for social proximity or association with others equally enamored" (373). She acknowledges exactly what happened to Mr. Leonard when she explains that a "chance encounter" may be all that is needed to "spark a lifelong engagement" with a place, a tradition, or a group of people (373). Mr. Leonard, like so many other members of the community, noticed the Down Home one day, decided to see what it was all about, and now, decades later, has it to thank for so many of his friends, experiences, and memories.

At the turn of the decade, National Public Radio had the first satellite radio system in the country (Leonard). Completed on June 20, 1980, NPR's "nationwide radio satellite distribution network" would utilize this new technology to expand from one channel to sixteen which ran at a higher quality (NPR). "The Corporation for Public Broadcasting funded the acquisition of satellite access to NPR to prove that the concept would work," Mr. Leonard explained. And it did work. From that day forward, NPR could be much more than *All Things Considered* in the evenings. This potential to provide the country access to so many more shows naturally brought about a search for new programming. "They put out a thing called the Satellite Program Development Fund, which was a way to acquire programming for all of these empty channels we

now had," Mr. Leonard recalled. "So, I tried out for a program called the *Down Home Music Series* where I was going to record from the Down Home and put it up on the satellite." His plan was to continue what he had been doing since he was first drawn into the venue: he would record a couple hours of John Hartford, for example, playing for the intimate Down Home crowd, and distill it down to a 59-minute program that he could then share with the whole country. Mr. Leonard and a friend from the radio station, Jim Boswell, tried out and ended up receiving the grant to get *Down Home Music* up and running.

On the back of an April 1985 newsletter is a blurb promoting the radio show, described as "an hour-long sound portrait of an evening at the Down Home" (Andrade). That month would feature such notable names as Ralph Stanley and the Clinch Mountain Boys, Doc Watson, Asleep at the Wheel, and more. According to the newsletter, the show was broadcast on the local WETS-FM station twice a week—Wednesdays at 3:00pm and Saturdays at 8:00pm—as well as on "national public radio stations all across the country." Thanks to a collaboration with Tom Sahlin, Mr. Leonard was able to send an "impressive and professional" promotional package to stations around the United States to let them know about the series (Leonard, Phil. Comment on April). During our interview, Mr. Leonard explained that this widespread airplay from the listening room "helped the Down Home become more stabilized." It also marked the first time the venue made a shift away from being a "localized community" toward an "imagined community" that people all over the country could take part in on some level (Shelemay 356). If a family in Oregon gathered around the radio once a week to listen to a Down Home show, they were joining in the Down Home community and allowing it to become a part of their lives without ever having to visit East Tennessee. When ETSU old-time instructor Roy Andrade posted photos of that April 1985 newsletter on Facebook in March 2022, regional musician

Janice Birchfield excitedly commented that she remembered recording the Down Home's live satellite broadcasts. Mrs. Birchfield, along with her husband and his parents and uncle, formed the Roan Mountain Hilltoppers, a powerful Appalachian string band, in 1974 (Hanson). Mr. Leonard responded to her comment to add that the band had been a notable feature of the radio show. As I discuss in Chapter Five, a few decades later the Down Home began using new forms of technology to help expand its community.

CHAPTER 4: ESTABLISHED TRADITIONS

"Now there's music in the air

And I guess there's a song for every chair, and

The dearly departed stand at the bar

And we, the living, speak of their charms."

-Ed Snodderly, "Down Home"

The Open Hoot

The growing sense of community surrounding the Down Home in its early years meant that traditions formed quickly. On Wednesday nights throughout much of its history, the Down Home featured its version of an open mic night, providing a lively place for the local community to socialize and listen to each other perform in an enthusiastic and supportive setting. "'The Open Hoot was absolutely packed once it took off," Mr. Snodderly emphasized. "People were having a big time'" (Myhre 6). He went on to describe the atmosphere as more of a party than a listening club, but the key—what made it distinctly Down Home—was that the party happened in celebration of the music. It got wild because people put their energy into dancing to old-time bands and participating in the lively time (Myhre 6). Without television screens, pool tables, or busy food service after show time, the Down Home naturally directed its focus and the attentions of its people toward the artists and their crafts—a habit the room still boasts today. In spite of the party atmosphere, people were still there to listen to the music. While the weekly (and later monthly) event was in essence an "open mic night," it worked a bit differently from a typical affair of that nature. To entice people to come out to the Open Hoot, the Down Home initially charged no admission on Wednesday nights, and featured food and beer specials. In other

words, free music, free popcorn, cheap beer, and good company quickly attracted a big, regular crowd. Mr. Leonard recalled that it was not unusual for three hundred people to filter in and out on a Wednesday night.

"You could hardly get in the place," noted Mr. Wilkins. In contrast to typical "open mic night" procedure, in which an eager participant would simply sign up for a short time slot—perhaps the length of two songs—upon their arrival at the venue, people looking to perform at the Down Home's Open Hoot would have to contact the management about their interest and then wait to be assigned a half-hour time slot on a future Wednesday (Luckey-Smith). Mr. Leonard noted that only one electric band would make the schedule each Wednesday night. They would always be the closing act so that setup time between performers would be as minimal as possible and no acoustic acts would have to follow a louder, rowdier group (Leonard). This routine helped to create some structure and predictability in the convivial chaos and might very well be the reason the lively Open Hoot was able to stay afloat. Mr. Julian's passion for the event, which fueled his dedication to nailing down a schedule beforehand to keep the excitement from descending into a complete free-for-all, allowed the Down Home to establish the Open Hoot as a recurring occasion that began to bring in steady revenue (Luckey-Smith). According to Mr. Leonard, the Open Hoot made the Down Home financially viable in its early days. As Mr. Rasnake put it, "it helped keep the club going because you didn't have to pay bands." That savings, combined with up to three hundred people purchasing beverages in a night, meant that the owners could afford the beer and the bills and continue to enrich the community with regular, eclectic live music shows in an intimate setting.

The Down Home, in large part due to the Open Hoot, has always been a unique, "critical" space for the community (Leonard). In an October 1987 interview published in Bluegrass

Unlimited, Phil Leonard told Tim Stafford that the Open Hoot had been "a tradition at the club ever since it opened. It's still an open forum for anybody who wants to come pick." There was no snootiness or exclusivity at the Down Home. If someone wanted to give performing a try, even if they had only ever sung to their dog before, the Open Hoot was the place to do it. By keeping the Open Hoot on the calendar, the Down Home was fighting against a widespread emphasis on "perfection," of which "the price is that the majority of people are considered not to have the ability to take an active part in a musical performance" (Small 73). The Down Home community sincerely welcomed anyone to the stage and thoroughly enjoyed the Wednesday night performances, encouraging anyone to get up and share their art, emotion, and creativity.

Mr. Wilkins, for one, found the experience educational. He reminisced, laughing, "I did make a fool of myself a time or two, but that's all right because I did it, and I wouldn't have known had I not done it." That opportunity to play before a friendly audience left a lasting impression upon the career carpenter, who said, "I think one of the best things I ever did was play an Open Hoot, with a guitar, singing by myself."

Sprucing-Up Ritual

When people attended shows at the venue and made memories and fast friends, they quickly became immersed in the community. A community develops a ritual because, the more often it is performed, the more it "affirms, explores, and celebrates a… community's sense of itself" and the relationships within it (Small 96). One such tradition that grew out of the community's love for the Down Home in its first few summers was a two-week cleaning period each August, during which the venue would close while employees and volunteers got to work deep cleaning the place.

Mr. Wilkins explained that the venue used to shut down in August due to the unbearable heat and lack of air conditioning. "There were so many people, volunteers, they'd have to turn people away. There was nothing for them to do." People who knew the Down Home were nearly as excited to volunteer to clean the building as they were to attend an Open Hoot. Everyone got to spend time with the friends they would see at shows, and they had a good time together while spiffing up the club. Even though there were no shows going on during those weeks, the community was still "musicking," simply because, as Small writes, "ritual is the mother of all the arts" (105). Everyone looked forward to pitching in those two weeks every August to keep the club in shape for a year's worth of the concerts and events they so enjoyed, and that played a big part in keeping the music going.

"Don't forget to say that they paid us in beer," Down Home cook Chandler Brunke insisted with a laugh when I asked what stood out to him when he thought about the annual ritual. My interview subjects all concurred that music, refreshments, and good friends at the Down Home was a special combination whether they were oiling the tables and chairs on a sweltering August afternoon or watching a favorite band on a Saturday night. Such a large group turning out for the cleaning days demonstrated the shared eagerness to show the Down Home the love and attention it needed so that it could continue to be the community's favorite gathering space. It was always there for the people, and they in turn were always ready to reciprocate. This annual tradition exemplifies Small's realization that "in taking part in ritual we do not only see and hear, listen and watch, or even taste, smell, or touch, but we also act, and it is in the bodily experience of performing the actions in company with others that the meaning of taking part lies" (105).

The ritual of getting together in the hottest part of the summer to tidy, shine, disinfect, and repair the Down Home became a tradition that lasted through the early 2010s—about three and a half decades. Mr. Brunke has worked in the venue's kitchen since 2011 and remembers a couple of subsequent summers when he joined in the polishing up. With Mr. Julian's health beginning to deteriorate mid-decade, however, the cleaning tradition became less organized. Mr. Brunke confirmed that Mr. Julian always headed it up, and once air conditioning was installed, the ritual faded away. It did make sense, after all, to stay open year-round. Because the Down Home traditionally has opened only for performances or other specified events, and in its early days elected not to follow the patterns of a regular bar or night club where people could drink, play pool, or dance to recorded music any day of the week, its hours and days of operation, and therefore income, were already significantly decreased. As it was, the venue was always closed during the day, as well as more than half of the week at night. Such a schedule allows more than enough time for cleaning and maintenance without necessitating a full two-week shutdown.

Benefit Events

The Down Home has given back to the local community in several ways beyond the Open Hoots. In the years since I have worked there, we have hosted benefits for such causes as the Johnson City Public Library's Arts Initiative, the Washington County Animal Shelter, and several liberal political candidates. For those events there was a suggested donation of twenty dollars at the door (E. Snodderly, "Benefit"). According to Mr. Leonard, the Down Home has been hosting "community-minded" benefits not only in recent years, but for decades. "We provided a venue for Peace Links, which was a[n] anti-nuclear discussion," Mr. Leonard told me when I asked him about the Down Home's life outside of regular concerts. "They would have good musicians come in on a Sunday that would perform an appropriate program, and then the

proceeds would go to the Peace Links." Peace Links was a "nonpartisan movement to seek direct connections between American and Soviet women," founded by Betty Bumpers of Little Rock, Arkansas in 1982 ("In Memoriam"). Mr. Leonard described the Down Home's support of the campaign as "a local attempt to tamp down the rhetoric of the nuclear… war." Presumably due to the focus on peace and diplomacy, the Peace Links fundraisers went over well among the local community. However, the venue's support of other causes was not always so well-received.

Mr. Leonard explained that after hosting a gathering for the American Civil Liberties Union, the Down Home "got into big heat with some of the local politicos." He added that "you could feel a reaction to it, which was disappointing." Yet the Down Home did not shy away from its dedication to community involvement. When a local candidate's ideas line up with the Down Home's inclusive background and focus on community, the venue is there to help further the cause. "The Down Home has been a real microcosm, in a sense. I harken back to when my parents were growing up, there were neighborhood taverns, and each little tavern was centered around a mill or a machine shop, or a neighborhood," Mr. Leonard said thoughtfully. "Everybody went in there to have a beer afterwards and talk about their day and talk about their aspirations…. And our society moved past the neighborhood taverns." While it is not open every day, the Down Home has still been there for its people in that way. It is a gathering space, and when it is not open for regular business, it is available to rent for private events and parties. Gaines Snodderly, son of current proprietor Ed Snodderly, explained how the venue works with anyone wishing to hold an event at the club to iron out details that work for both the venue and the client. The cost is case by case and depends entirely on factors such as the time of year, the length of the event, how far in advance it is scheduled, and whether the clients need the kitchen,

bar, or live sound. These accommodations demonstrate an inherent interest in being there for the community.

Partnership with ETSU

The Bluegrass, Old-Time, and Roots Music Studies program at ETSU first existed as an idea that came to Jack Tottle in 1982 ("Bluegrass"). According to the program's current director, Dan Boner, Mr. Tottle was new to the region at the time, and making a living by playing with a band called the Payroll Boys and teaching private lessons in music and yoga. That year, Mr. Tottle thought of something that would supplement his income while helping to expose the community to bluegrass music: he asked the Music Department Chair about the possibility of offering courses in bluegrass at the university (Boner). With the idea well-received by Dr. Richard Compton, the first courses were put into place, including guitar and mandolin lessons, a class covering the history of country music, and a bluegrass band. Mr. Tottle had no way of knowing at the time that his proposal would eventually turn into a full, four-year bachelor's degree program, with many bluegrass, old-time, Celtic, country, and other roots music bands each semester, and students coming not only from all around the United States, but from more than a dozen countries to participate in the program (Boner).

The Bluegrass, Old-Time, and Roots Music Studies program has been able to use the Down Home as something of a home venue for department-sponsored shows with guest artists, square dances, holiday events, faculty concerts, and biannual end-of-semester all-band shows featuring as many of the student bands as possible. Once the program at ETSU had been established under the direction of Mr. Tottle, he and Mr. Snodderly started collaborating to put on the ETSU Down Home shows at the end of each semester, and it is a tradition that carries on today. Mrs. Ringersma, who frequently attends these events, has witnessed the growth of the

bluegrass program from its very beginning and especially appreciates how the Down Home allows students to practice their craft in so notable a venue. As Mr. Boner stated in our email interview, "the Down Home is one of those mainstay acoustic music venues, like the Station Inn in Nashville or Club Passim in Boston, where audiences come specifically to hear high level performances from top artists. The students in our program can feel that importance and history when they take the stage." One is introduced to the Down Home as a student in the program, and it is not unusual to become a part of the community over those college years.

Nearly everyone who has been an employee of the Down Home has also been a student of traditional music at ETSU. It is an ideal part-time job for student musicians primarily because we typically cannot afford to pay the cover for every show we wish to attend. All of the employees are naturally admitted for free regardless of whether they are working that night, and although the pay does not necessarily cover all living expenses, it can be enough to help a poor college musician get by. Another bright side is that there are usually only one to three shows each week, leaving plenty of time for classes, homework, and individual and group practice. Perhaps most importantly, the schedule easily allows for time off when one has a gig or other conflict. As long as one gives enough notice, the staff usually has enough time to make sure the kitchen, bar, door, and sound are properly covered for each show. Because of the nature of the venue, it is commonly understood that performances are important to everyone there, so we do our best to make sure no one has to miss a gig of their own to work at the Down Home. After all, Mr. Snodderly's journey started out in just the same way. On the back of his 1977 album "Sidewalk Shoes" he writes, "While trying to attend college, I played the area whenever possible. This approach led me into a variety of places: Boy Scout meetings, church dinners, too many weddings, noisy barrooms, etc." Working at a venue that hosts a steady stream of

inspiring musicians is valuable to a newcomer trying to make connections in the industry, but it does not outweigh the importance of playing every gig one can book.

Dearly Departed

The way the patrons wholeheartedly feel the magic of the Down Home only intensifies the emotion for the performers. It is, and always has been, a reciprocal experience thanks to the personality of the room and its history of putting the music first. The more enthusiasm the artists show, the more excited the audience gets, and vice versa. In a Facebook post made on October 10, 2020, Mr. Leonard remembered that October 1984 "was a good month for music at the Down Home," and he accompanied the statement with a photograph of a newsletter from that time. Among the many acts listed to perform that month were notable names such as New Grass Revival, the Metropolitan Blues All-Stars, Larry Sparks, and the Dry Branch Fire Squad. Below the post are several comments written by blues guitarist and East Kentucky native Nick Stump of the Metropolitan Blues All-Stars (Davis). He reflected on his October 1984 performance at the Down Home, saying, "That was the first gig we played there. I think we made 168 dollars. Next gig we came back for a weekend…. Best place ever to play music." Stump added, "Felt like coming home to family. Hell, our mothers and fathers would come to those shows. What a joy." It is touching that Mr. Stump, whose birth name was Michael David Stamper, was reminiscing about the Down Home in what turned out to be his final months (Davis). Even though he was not local to Johnson City, Mr. Stump had developed a strong attachment to the Down Home community and looked back upon his days there fondly. On February 17, 2021, in the words of his longtime friend Dee Davis, he passed away at the age of 72, "from complications of a life well-lived."

At the end of the bar, around the corner from the kitchen door, hang photos of all of the beloved Down Home people who have passed on. These photos keep them coming up in our minds and conversations, as folks love to point out a picture of a lost one and reminisce about the days when he or she was around. A motivation for this thesis was that I realized someone needed to document the life and significance of the Down Home community before the wall of the dearly departed grew any larger. I found that Howard L. Sacks discusses this same motivation for undertaking an oral history project in the first chapter of *Catching Stories*, titled "Why Do Oral History?" He describes how a meeting he had arranged with members of the local African American community to discuss their stories was preempted by the deaths of two elderly members. More than mourning the deaths of these individuals, "residents also felt the loss of a connection to their collective past," prompting "a strongly felt need to document" the history, stories, and contributions of the community (Sacks 5).

Losing founding or influential people is challenging for any community. Danny Julian and David "Brother Dave" Jackson are two sorely missed characters from the Down Home's past. I knew Mr. Julian for several years and I deeply regret that it was not until after his departure that I began this research project. While I am able to draw upon my memories of working for him at the Down Home, I regret that I cannot ask him the same questions I have been able to ask the other proprietors. I did not know Brother Dave at all as he passed away three years before I moved to Johnson City. "Anybody that never got to know him," Mr. Leonard started, and then paused to let out a sentimental chuckle, "It's a sad situation."

Brother Dave

"Brother Dave was, you know, a huge, huge part of the Down Home," Mr. Wilkins emphasized as he began to recount the story of how Brother Dave ended up working at the

venue. Brother Dave drove a bread truck at the time and took up the habit of stopping in at the Down Home for an afternoon beer when he had finished his deliveries. He got to know Mr. Leach, who one day realized he had forgotten to run an errand to the bank. Brother Dave told him to go take care of that, and he would watch the bar. When Mr. Leach returned, Brother Dave was dusting and tidying up, "and the rest was history," Mr. Wilkins summarized. Brother Dave filled a role that Shelemay describes as "the center of attention that gives rise to strong feelings of affinity" within a community (377). People were already excited about the place, the friendships, and the music, but Brother Dave tied it all together. He found his people on that bread route and through his enthusiasm and charisma he found his place at the core of the Down Home community.

When people talk about him, it is obvious that the legendary Down Home figure is remembered as if he were in the club just yesterday, instead of deceased for over a decade. As Mr. Leonard told me last June, "Brother Dave was a magical person… an affirmation that special people do exist." Although he passed away on July 4, 2010, all who knew him personally, or through friends' memories, still experience his legacy at the Down Home (Lawless). Patrons and performers who have not been to the club in some years bring him up often when I am working, and we converse about how they have missed the place. The artists and employees remember him "behind the scenes, swapping stories and giving the musicians encouragement," and everyone recalls him out on the sidewalk with a cigarette, waving at the people going by, or lighting up the front room, where one would find him either selling drinks at the bar or working the merchandise table for the band (Janz). Sam Bush, renowned bluegrass and newgrass mandolinist, told the Johnson City Press in the weeks following Brother Dave's death that the treasured individual "made you feel comfortable and like you were at home" at the Down Home

(Janz). He was a special man who felt like family to all who knew him, and as such he stayed a sturdy pillar in the growing Down Home community until the end of his life.

Figure 4. The dearly departed. From top left, Anndrena Belcher, Danny Julian, Brother Dave Jackson, Thomas Farris, and Bill Ringersma. The original cooler also earned a spot on the wall after it finally gave out in 2020. Photo by Rheva Myhre.

One of the most loved and anticipated Down Home-related events through the years has been an annual birthday party for Brother Dave. He was born on March 4, and the celebration has traditionally happened on the following Sunday (Ringersma). While Brother Dave passed away in 2010, the party had turned into a reunion gathering for everyone involved in the Down Home community, and with the exception of 2021, it has continued to happen in honor of Brother Dave's memory, as well as in honor of the place and each other.

Once Toby Wilkins had decided that he would settle down in East Tennessee in the mid-1980s, specifically to be near the Down Home, he bought some property in Unicoi County and built a house (Wilkins). The land is an ideal spot for a gathering. It is surrounded by the Cherokee National Forest and features three ponds, a barn, a cabin affectionately known as "the Shack," a woodshop, and the main house. Brother Dave had always had a birthday party, but as soon as Mr. Wilkins bought his picturesque property in the woods, that became the permanent location for the annual event for the next thirty-some years (Wilkins). It grew quickly and got to be known beyond the local music community. "Oh, everybody would come," Mr. Wilkins reminisced. "Verlon Thompson, Suzi Ragsdale, and Jerry Douglas would come to it. They didn't come on a regular basis, but if they happened to be in town they would." Brother Dave was just that kind of charismatic person who could keep a community going and growing. And indeed, most communities need someone like that, who brings people in and makes them want to stay. While Brother Dave was not known to be a musician, his presence in the community is still an example of Shelemay's finding that "an affinity community rests on the talent and charisma of a powerful musical figure, forging collectivities of followers through the leader's living presence and, after his or her death, through memories of their music and impact" (377). It matters not that Brother Dave is not remembered for his music because the rest of the statement holds true. He participated in the music and kept the music going strong just by being who he was. In a sense, he was a tradition bearer who valued and perpetuated the traditions of the Down Home community. If Christopher Small's definition of "musicking" includes the door person and those who clean the venue after a show, it absolutely includes Brother Dave selling merchandise, pouring beer, and charming the performers in the green room (9).

Figure 5. Jamming at the Shack for Brother Dave's birthday, March 7, 2016. Note the photo of Brother Dave affixed to the post at the far right. Photo by Anne Hammonds. Used by permission.

Phil Leonard painted a picture of an example of this understanding of community when I asked him about the "festivals, Brother Dave parties—things that took place away from the Down Home but were very much Down Home events." He described the idea as "tentacles that came about from the Down Home," and when a promoter or band they knew was involved in a festival, they would go as "a Down Home unit." He told a brief story about the Slagle's Pasture Bluegrass Festival in Elizabethton, Tennessee:

"At Slagle's Pasture, there was a bus, a group called the Blueheads. Danny worked with… the guy who owned the bus, so we all would hang out on the bus there, as well as go and visit the Slagle's Pasture music. When the Bluegrass Album Band came to Slagle's Pasture, there was a contingency of the Down Home that was present there. I mean I would have wanted to be there anyway, but to be there with the Down Home was to be there with Brother Dave."

An Institution

The Down Home has become an institution in its own right. The venue fits well into two standard definitions of the word "institution." In one, an institution is defined as "an organization, establishment, foundation, society, or the like, devoted to the promotion of a particular cause or program, esp. one of a public, educational, or charitable character" ("Institution…"). It is easy to rewrite that sentence to specify that the Down Home is "an… establishment… devoted to the promotion of" the appreciation of live music and is therefore "of a public… character." However, another, simpler definition from the same HarperCollins Publishers entry is perhaps an even better fit: "any familiar, long-established person, thing, or practice; fixture." The Down Home is one of the most notable fixtures of Johnson City, especially when one considers those that are long-established. It has had time to gather a significant following and a community of people who consider it a very special place and a home-away-from-home.

Examples of local institutions with mutually supportive communities can be found all over the world. Although it is not specifically a music venue, one that stands out to me is a city park in my hometown of Spokane, Washington. As confirmed by the "History" page on the Friends of Manito website, the area was dedicated in 1904 as a city park, and had been known as Montrose Park during the late 19th century before shifting "in 1903 to 'Manito' meaning 'a supernatural force that pervades nature' in the dialect of a local Native American tribe." Now encompassing ninety acres, the extensive gardens, rolling fields, pond, café, playgrounds, greenhouses, and old, stone buildings are busy all year round with every activity imaginable, from plant sales, picnics, athletic competitions, and sledding, to family reunions, graduations, birthday parties, and weddings ("History." *The Friends*). Sometimes there are even musical

events. The Friends of Manito, according to the organization's website, is a group of supporters who volunteer their time to tend the park's gardens, run fundraisers, host plant sales, and conduct educational outreach "to support the responsible preservation and improvement of the park in cooperation with the City of Spokane and its surrounding community." It is a special place that holds significance for generations of Spokanites, many of whom enjoy helping to take care of the area and making sure it will be there for the community to appreciate for years to come.

One can draw interesting comparisons between the Down Home and other venues across the country as well. One that stands out, despite being part of an entirely different music scene, is CBGB & OMFUG, a rock club in New York City that opened in 1974 and closed in 2006 (Rosenthal 141). Although the full name of the venue—Country Bluegrass Blues & Other Music For Uplifting Gormandizers—did include some of the Down Home's staple genres, once it got up and running the club's focus really turned toward the "other," namely rock, punk, and the like (Rosenthal 139). What is important when comparing the two small venues is to realize that they both achieved legendary status by attracting musicians and patrons who formed a community that was held together by a common affection for and loyalty to the venue whilst reciprocating support for the place and in turn keeping it going. Josh Rosenthal, in his article "Hangin' on the Bowery: Observations on the Accomplishment of Authenticity at CBGB," contends that "the club's allure was fundamentally attached to its claims of authenticity" (139). While there are a number of ways to define authenticity, the most straightforward, logical definition to apply to both of these venues is "real, not imitative," which "refers to that which is *true, consistent, sincere,* or *real* as opposed to the *imitative, artifactual, contrived,* or *phony*" (Peterson 209). CBGB was, as the Down Home is, committed to its image and the maintenance thereof, and that unchanging nature brings comfort to a community which centers itself around the history,

memories, and predictability of a place. If anyone over the years suggested that either place make changes to conform to any standard in order to attract more patrons, those ideas were obviously ignored in favor of staying true to the venue's identity and purpose. Despite starting off with a broader range of music in mind, CBGB always looked "derelict," always featured "underground" music performed by musicians who were fully invested in "the punk identity," displaying punk "signifiers" such as "torn clothing held in place by safety pins, … messy hair often propped up by strong-hold spray, … an abrasive and loud voice" (Rosenthal 146). It simply started to lean toward the "punk" and that became its identity. In her definition of a musical community, Shelemay states that it "does not require the presence of conventional structural elements nor must it be anchored in a single place, although both structural and local elements may assume importance at points in the process of community formation as well as in its ongoing existence" (364-365). The communities surrounding both the Down Home and CBGB are examples of such collectivities that do place significant importance upon a unifying location. The venue very much helps define the community, and when a newcomer should happen upon the building, they get a sense of that community just by looking around. While the Down Home may not have manufactured its image as intentionally as CBGB did, it ended up with a look that matched its music all the same. It is the Down Home, and it has never been influenced by other venues. It was, as Mr. Leach described, founded as a place that would feature acoustic music, and it was built on a tight budget, in a hurry, with whatever materials and help were within its reach. Over four decades of traditions, music, and community have proven that the Down Home's way works.

CHAPTER 5: RECENT YEARS AND THE FUTURE

"It's like ridin' up the road and lookin' for the house

You've been gone too long and there's been some doubt

If you'd ever be back to see this place again

And there it is, sure enough, still standin'."

-Ed Snodderly, "Down Home"

The last Open Hoot at the Down Home took place on September 5, 2018, according to the venue's Instagram page. Unaware that the struggling event was coming to an end, fellow Down Home employee and Celtic bandmate Keegan Luckey-Smith and I performed a short set that night. It turned out to be the last time we would see Mr. Julian, who lost his battle with COPD just weeks later on the eighteenth of November (The Down Home). Mr. Luckey-Smith recalled the conversation he had with Mr. Julian up in the booths at the end of that last night, as he passed on the Open Hoot notebook in the hopes that the tradition could keep going: "He told me, 'All week the Down Home is selling a product, but the Open Hoot is how we give back to the community.' That's why it was so important to him." For Mr. Julian to request in his final weeks that the Open Hoot be perpetuated was for him to acknowledge that "music helps generate and sustain the collective," as well as "provide avenues to penetrate… social boundaries and to bring new constituencies into the fold" (Shelemay 368). The Open Hoot had been vital to the Down Home's survival in the past, and Mr. Julian made it clear that he felt the venue would do well to restore it to its former liveliness and regularity. Sadly, the opposite happened, and as of the publication of this thesis, it has yet to be revived.

The Poetry Hoot

With the Open Hoot defunct since October 2018, the Down Home found itself with something of a void to fill. Even though the Open Hoot had been slowing down in recent years, the now-quiet Wednesday nights became glaring holes in the schedule. On the other side of State of Franklin Road, about eight blocks away, the Acoustic Coffeehouse had been sitting vacant since January 1, 2018 ("Johnson City"). Opened in 2003, the "Coho," as it was dubbed, had provided a place that felt like a living room to college students residing in the dorms, and not only did it feature open mic nights, but it became "a place where musicians who had never played in public could come and perform" ("Johnson City"). It might have reminded one of an Open Hoot night, but even less formal, and more frequent. Toward the end of 2018, the Down Home hosted a few trial Wednesday night poetry events for the self-proclaimed "Coho orphans." In mid-July of 2019, according to their earliest Instagram post, the Johnson City Poets Collective held their first Open Poetry Hoot at the Down Home. The event "usually takes place on the third Wednesday of each month, starting at 7:00pm and lasting about two hours," said Mr. Luckey-Smith, the employee who sets up the sound and works the bar for the Poetry Hoots. He is the only one needed, as the kitchen does not open on those nights, and no one needs to cover the door because admission is free. However, the crowd willingly offers some donations to the venue to show their appreciation, since, as Dr. Kevin O'Donnell of the Department of Literature and Language told me in an email interview, the Down Home "is the much preferred place" to hold the monthly gathering. While the Poets Collective is its own community separate from the Down Home, and it would almost definitely survive without the venue, it is enriched because it has a special, historic place to hold its get-togethers.

"The poetry crowd helps clean up and they also tip really well at the bar," Mr. Luckey-Smith added. "It is obvious that they value the space and want to continue to use it." The poets actively participate in taking care of the place, which makes them a part of the Down Home community, and the Down Home a part of the poetry community. Dr. O'Donnell suggested why the Collective respects the Down Home so much— besides it being "a great room and performance space." In our email exchange he spoke of the poetry slam contests that were held at the club in the 1990s and mentioned notable poets who have performed there over the years, such as Jim Wayne Miller. "There's an element of continuity and history there," Dr. O'Donnell concluded. Because they love that the Down Home is there for them, the poetry enthusiasts are likely to be paying some attention to the club's schedule and attend musical shows from time to time, while in return, those of us who work or attend everything that happens at the Down Home have gained a new appreciation for poetry.

Brandon Bragg, now host and emcee of the monthly Poetry Hoot, regularly attended the poetry slams of the nineties. Conversing at the bar as the April 20, 2022 event wrapped up, he told those of us gathered around that "we're keeping it alive; literature, poetry, community." And the event continues to grow. I remember the beginning, when there was plenty of time for several poets to claim multiple time slots if they wished. At the April 2022 show, Mr. Bragg continually reminded the writers to keep their performance to four minutes so that everyone who signed up would have a chance to read.

New Technology

With the use of technology becoming ever more prevalent in all manners of entertainment, the Down Home began using a service called Concert Window. Launched in the fall of 2012, the company provided venues with the equipment necessary to stream their live

shows over the internet and would then control the broadcasts through its remote system (Empson). Suddenly people could watch a high-quality live show in progress at the Down Home from the comfort of their own home. Not only was this development a perfect solution for long-distance fans wishing they could be in Johnson City for a specific show, but it proved useful to local Down Home community members as well. If car trouble, illness, or bad weather forced a would-be concertgoer to stay in, the show could now come to them— and at a lower price than in-person tickets. The online tickets typically cost under ten dollars, of which the venue and artists would receive two-thirds (Empson).

Similarly, when the week of ETSU end-of-semester performances happened in December and April, students' parents could tune in from wherever they lived. Around two-thirds of the Bluegrass, Old-time and Roots Music Studies program is made up of out-of-state and international students, so oftentimes parents and other family members do not get to attend student gigs in the area (Boner). Concert Window made it possible for them to watch at least the one show each semester, but it was not without some flaws. "Concert Window, as a program, [did] not have a lot of financial backing to it, so there's not a lot of representation," Gaines Snodderly told me during our interview in the back room at the Down Home on May 13, 2022. Looking to the future, he went on to add that using a bigger, more functional streaming platform, however, "would work in a heartbeat with how technology has grown. There are people all over the country— there were people in Russia— that were listening to this, that were into our place. Absolutely it works. It has to be used though, and it has to be good enough…. I think it does incredibly well if it is just done right."

Mr. G. Snodderly would like to see the Down Home routinely stream its events and predicts that the Bluegrass, Old-time, and Roots Music program at ETSU would appreciate that

as well when they host shows at their partner venue. The school could advertise the concerts, and the Down Home would "get publication, so then we are able to run ads," perhaps offer subscription options, and generally increase awareness of and attendance at the Down Home, even among people who are not physically in Johnson City (G. Snodderly). In this way, both the university program and the venue could expand their communities using technology to bring people into the experience from afar. While watching a show digitally from home is certainly not the same experience as attending it in person, such a taste of the events could encourage local people to come in, or distant people to come visit. According to Shelemay, it is of the upmost importance to do so because "affinity communities derive their strength from the presence and proximity of a sizable group" (373). Broadcasting at least some concerts is a way to bring in new people and bringing in new people is the only way to ensure that the community lives on. If the community members spread out and if new members do not take an interest, the Down Home will no longer serve its purpose and the collectivity surrounding it will be no more. As the venue has demonstrated, "music proves to be a particularly powerful mechanism" for not only starting communities, but also keeping them together (Shelemay 373).

Social Media

While the Down Home has remained a place that focuses on the music and people and stands its ground even though, as Mr. E. Snodderly sings in his tribute to the venue, "these modern times are tryin' to get through," one can hardly argue that social media has been detrimental to the Down Home community. As Shelemay states, "The processes of affinity partner well with new technologies" because they allow us to share what is going on within the community with a larger audience that we would be unlikely to reach otherwise (375). Particularly during the years of limited in-person interactions due to the COVID-19 pandemic,

Facebook and Instagram have been valuable as platforms to keep the community connected by sharing news and memories. Mr. Leonard's posting of bits and pieces from his extensive personal collection of Down Home memorabilia has been significant. It is an example of how technology can bind a community and keep it going through times when physical connections are minimal. Mr. Leonard's posts have evoked feelings of nostalgia within the established community and at the same time piqued the interest of outsiders through the audio and visual material he selects to share. This use of Facebook and Instagram illustrates how "Technological factors… shape musical communities from within and in their relationship to others" (Shelemay 378). The Down Home Facebook and Instagram accounts have kept people engaged as well, especially since the venue reopened in June of 2021 after fifteen months of closure during the height of the pandemic. In a November 28, 2021 Instagram post reminding Down Home followers to get tickets for the upcoming December 5 show with Linda Davis, Lang Scott, and Bill Whyte, Ron Short of Ron Short and the Possum Playboys commented, "It's a wonderful venue," and added that every "musician wants to play Down Home once before they die." Someone scrolling by might see that comment, wonder what makes the place so special, and decide to attend a show to see for themselves. They may even become a regular. The power of social media cannot be underestimated when it comes to an affinity community's "dispersal across boundaries," to use Shelemay's words (375).

Closure During the Coronavirus Pandemic

In March of 2020, my Celtic band Roaring Jelly was preparing to play a St. Patrick's Day show at the Down Home. At the beginning of the month, our Facebook event page was telling us to expect a near-capacity turnout, but over the next two weeks it became increasingly clear that a gathering of that size was not feasible due to the rising number of people contracting

COVID-19. Once the shows leading up to March 17 were canceled, we ultimately followed suit, putting out a video explaining the unsurprising news and performing one of the songs we had planned to play. Based on news at the time, we speculated that we could perhaps schedule a make-up St. Patrick's Day show later in the spring. In the fifteen months that the pandemic-mandated hiatus lasted, the Down Home hosted three events. One was a private birthday party with twenty attendees at the end of June 2020. That fall, the Down Home partnered with Visit Johnson City to organize two concerts in the parking lot of the Mall at Johnson City. Both were fundraisers to support the venue.

On November 8, 2020, the concert at the mall featured the well-known bluegrass band the Steeldrivers, long a Down Home favorite, supported by the ETSU Bluegrass Pride Band. As I tended the Down Home merchandise table with a clear view of both the stage and the expanse of socially distanced groups of people sitting in lawn chairs next to their cars, I took in the significance of my surroundings. These people, who had happily given the $100.00 suggested donation per vehicle to attend the event, recognized their opportunity to help the keep the Down Home alive during uncertain times, as well as the chance to have a taste of live music and the Down Home experience— albeit a heavily amended one— for the first time in an unexpectedly long time. Even the pre-concert music helped people recreate their nostalgia as it was curated to be a compilation of decades of notable past performances from the room. In a Facebook comment on a post by Mrs. Ringersma the following day, Mr. Leonard explained the music that played over the parking lot as the crowd organized itself and milled around before the ETSU Bluegrass Pride Band took the stage. He answered Mrs. Ringersma's quarry about the show's sound as follows:

> "Sound was perfect…. I prepared a pre-show CD with cuts from the board tapes from the Down Home. So people who had never been to the club got a taste of some of the

> eclectic offerings. [I] found several snippets where the pickers praised the club. So it served as a gentle 'infomercial'" (Leonard, Phil. Comment).

Mr. Leonard's idea to put his old recordings to use in this Down Home-away-from-home setting was a good one. When the brick-and-mortar venue was suddenly too confining for people to gather safely, he found a way to recreate a portion of the quintessential Down Home atmosphere in an outdoor location in a different part of town. While the room at 300 W. Main Street is the place that ties the community together, a community is arguably made up of shared experiences among a group of people, as Shelemay contends (358). So, to sit together after many months of missing the Down Home and listen to highlighted recordings from the place, it is safe to say that most of the parking lot attendees could look around at their friends and visualize being at a show in their favorite gathering space. When they visited the merch table, I could see how happy they were to be at a Down Home event, and it was those feelings and memories that mattered more than the location.

The second parking lot concert was held on December 6, 2020 in the same location. This time the featured artist was the locally celebrated Scott Miller, who for the first time in many years was playing only one show in Johnson City that first weekend in December instead of his usual Thursday through Saturday night run at the Down Home. That show concluded the mid-pandemic reprieve, giving fans one more chance to enjoy the next best thing to a Down Home show before another quiet six-and-a-half months of closure. On Friday, June 18, 2021, the venue opened its doors to the public for the first time since March 13, 2020, marking the end of a fifteen-month period of casually sprucing up the place (Netherland). Through February of 2021, I lived in an apartment next door, and I would see Mr. Snodderly puttering around the building: he cleaned out the basement, he painted the front exterior, he unloaded ladders, tools, and materials for indoor projects. Mr. Luckey-Smith, a professional electrician, put up a new light in

the entryway and changed out electrical outlets around the venue that previously were not up to code (Luckey-Smith). "It was a thirty-dollar light, but I didn't charge Ed for anything. It was just a contribution to the Down Home," said Mr. Luckey-Smith, adding, in short, that the building has needed electrical attention for some time, and that it would be a tragedy to lose it to a preventable fire. I was watching one day when the two of them pushed up a ceiling tile in front of the bar to investigate an outlet and, fortunately, discovered a hot wire sitting in some old, fluffy insulation. It was alarming to see how real and dangerous the electrical problems could be.

Despite the bits and pieces of work that skilled friends of the Down Home contributed over the course of the COVID shutdown, there is a long list of improvements that one might argue would have been better investments for the future of the venue. Jamie Garskof Constantopoulos is the founder of MAFE Electric in Johnson City, as well as a professional sound engineer who has run sound for some of the Down Home's biggest shows over the last six years. Much of the sound equipment currently in the venue is on loan from Mr. Garskof Constantopoulos and is the only reason the venue is still able to provide quality sound reinforcement since much of its own equipment started failing after years of constant use (Garskof Constantopoulos). Even though the Down Home was privileged to have had a custom sound system designed by Cliff Miller, Doc Watson's sound engineer, it is only to be expected that forty years later some updates are going to be necessary (Leach).

Ron Stuard is a Down Home regular and employee of several decades (Stuard). He, too, has construction experience and has been concerned about the physical condition of the Down Home. Throughout the pandemic, he spent countless days there as he installed a new tile floor behind the bar, and helped replace the old, heavy cooler that had finally given out after forty-four

years of service keeping the Down Home beer cold (Stuard). The bar floor that is now in the place of the old, badly cracked one is made up of grey, twelve-inch, square tiles interspersed with smaller, terracotta-red ones, upon many of which are inscribed in white paint the first and last initials of someone who has given their time and love to the Down Home over the years. The list of people who would find their initials on a tile continued to grow as the project took shape over 2020 and the beginning of 2021. Now, the floor is covered in the initials of past and present employees, owners, and regular patrons, arranged in ways to represent the region. For example, the three triangular tips in front of the new cooler are meant to resemble the peaks of Buffalo Mountain (Stuard). There is a tile for the Red Clay Ramblers, a tile for ETSU, and a tile for the Road Company. There is a tile for Brother Dave, and a tile for Danny Julian right at the end of the bar, where he always used to stand. There is even a tile with "RM" on it for me. This visual representation of the community is a unique way for the Down Home to acknowledge the people, groups, and places that have appreciated the venue so much over its life. Especially during the pandemic to which so many small venues succumbed, it symbolized optimism for the future and confidence that when life got back to normal, the club would still be here. Christopher Small explores the need of all living things to understand how they relate to each other and to the entities that unite them (136-137). To use Small's words, this tile floor is the "way of representing to themselves" the relationship between each Down Home community member and the venue as a whole (137). As it is behind the bar, it is not so much for the general public to see and ponder, but to remind those who have been there for the club of their history and relationships there. While the Down Home community includes anyone who feels they are a part of it, those represented on the new bar floor make up something of a core community of people who have helped keep the venue going at some point throughout its life.

Figure 6. Community initials. The new tile floor behind the bar is a visual representation of the Down Home community. Photos by Rheva Myhre.

Back Up and Running: New Year's Eve

As 2021 turned into 2022, I worked two sold-out shows at the Down Home. Initially there was to be a New Year's Eve concert on December 31, but as early interest suggested that the event might sell out, an additional night of the same show was scheduled for December 30. Although celebrating the New Year at the Down Home was a tradition in the venue's heyday— particularly during the time when Doc Watson would play— in more recent years attendance had dwindled substantially until in 2020 there was no show at all due to the pandemic.

Mr. Luckey-Smith recalled that 2019 was an unsuccessful New Year's Eve show. Only three people bought tickets, but the band played all night anyway. This time around, with 2022 on the horizon, Mr. Snodderly put a very good idea on the schedule. All the excitement leading

up to December 30 and 31, 2021 stemmed from the news that Brian and the Nightmares, local underground favorite of the late 1980s, would headline New Year's Eve at the Down Home.

A native of East Tennessee, Brian Relleva reminisced to the audience at the close of the December 30 show about his band getting their start playing Open Hoot nights at the Down Home in 1985. The group stayed together through 1990, releasing an EP and two full-length albums and collecting a following in the underground music scene during those five years (Miller). Mr. Wilkins, who arrived in Johnson City in 1985 and wasted no time becoming a regular Down Home patron and employee, also became fast friends with Mr. Relleva and has been a devoted fan of the band ever since. When Mr. Wilkins and I sat down to look through his scrapbook of memorabilia in June 2021, I noticed Brian and the Nightmares tickets and posters on many of the pages. A long piece of paper had slipped free from inside the front cover of the classic green photo album, showing me that the band had rung in 1989 with a show at the Down Home. So, the local excitement at the band's return made sense— it was based in nostalgia, and not only for the fans, but for the band that had local roots and a history ranging from Open Hoots to packed headlining shows at the club. It would be two celebratory nights to remember, bringing an era full circle.

Thirty-two years after the night from that poster, I found myself surrounded by fifty- and sixty-somethings reliving and recreating a moment from their earlier lives. They were in the same room, on the same holiday, with the same people, listening to the same music, and it seemed as though almost nothing had changed apart from their ages. The excitement was palpable, and the stories and memories flew nonstop. As I gazed out at the grooving room on the last night of the year, a woman in a beige, 80s-style corduroy jumper momentarily stopped dancing to lean across the bar and shout, "I feel like I'm twenty-four years old again!"

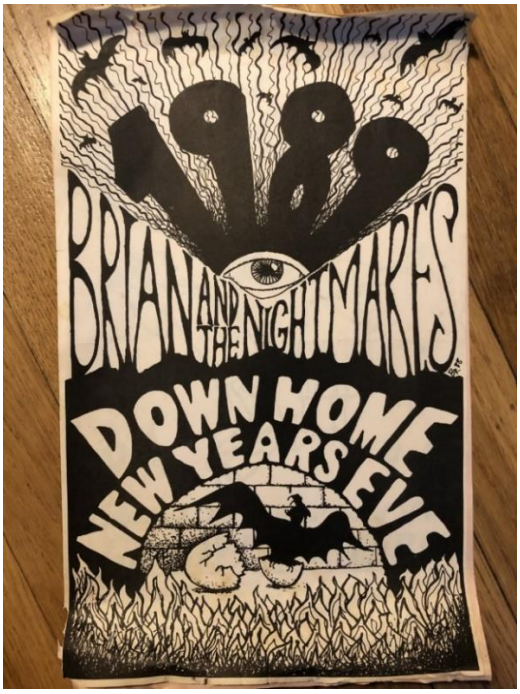

Figure 7. Ringing in 1989. A memento poster from Toby Wilkin's scrapbook advertises the 1988 Down Home New Year's Eve show, which featured Brian and the Nightmares.

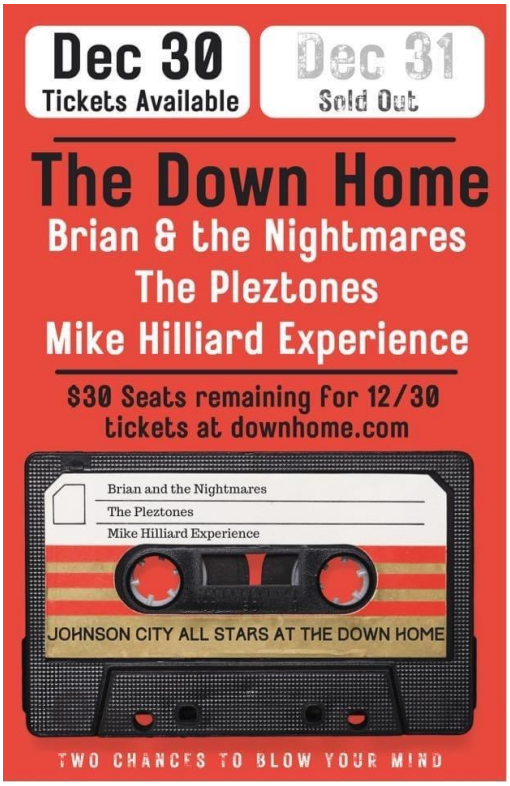

Figure 8. Ringing in 2022. A poster advertising New Year's Eve 2021 at the Down Home, shared by the Nightmares guitar player Kurt Hagardorn (Facebook).

It was a powerful nostalgia experienced by many of the people there that night. As Lynn Abrams writes, drawing from philosopher Umberto Eco, "our identity is grounded in our memory of the past" (82). One's "social existence" is real because of one's memories, and watching all those people relive a time when they were so young, happy, and vibrant brought that idea to life (82). Each individual's excitement was clearly fueled by the matched enthusiasm from the others who were at once recreating a memory in their minds and sharing the memories— acknowledged verbally or physically— of others who were there thirty-two years ago. In short, all those memories colliding at once in the space where they originally happened illustrated Abrams' contention that a person's memory is always influenced by the people around him or her, that it is a "socially shared experience" (79).

Reciprocal Relationships

A recent encounter at the Down Home reminded me yet again of all the relationships that trace their origins to the club, and how strong the community that surrounds it has become. The night of Saturday, May 7, 2022, the Down Home featured a well-known bluegrass band. Standing at the bar before the show, the lead singer's wife reminisced about all the time she had spent at the venue over the years, tearing up from time to time as memories from the past and joy from the present overwhelmed her. She told me about meeting her husband there one night when a friend convinced her to attend his show despite her feeling somewhat ill. She still marveled at the nearly-missed encounter that changed her life. She asked Mr. Luckey-Smith to look behind the bar for any small, thick coffee mugs, and when he found one, she hugged it to her chest and told us about the hours she used to spend standing in that very spot, drinking coffee with Brother Dave out of those very mugs. She asked to keep the piece of memorabilia and got out a Sharpie so that all of her friends there that night— new and old— could sign the bottom

and sides. It was obvious that she would treasure the memento. Later in the night, she took her Sharpie into the women's restroom to leave a note for the future, and during the encore, she made her way behind the bar to give us hugs and express her delight that we were maintaining the spirit of the place and honoring its legacy so well.

The behavior we experienced that night was not unusual of a Down Home community member, particularly of one who has not been to the venue in several years. The lead singer's wife expressed her gratitude to the place by thanking the staff repeatedly, sharing stories, and tipping one hundred percent when she paid the band's discounted food and beverage tab. She demonstrated that the Down Home has had a profound impact on her life and has provided her with a very special group of people to call her friends and even family, and she did not let that go unacknowledged. This kind of reciprocal behavior illustrates what happens when a local place becomes an institution that is appreciated by the community around it.

Figure 9. Memento mug. A community member wanted a signed Down Home coffee mug as a special memento. The mug collected many more signatures that night.

The Future

Gaines Snodderly, as the son of the current proprietor, is the next generation looking at running the Down Home, and he is optimistic about the future of the venue. He feels hopeful that with a few updates and fresh ideas, the Down Home can remain relevant and keep attracting people for years to come. "It can be bright," he said of the future. "The cards just have to be played right and… in a way that appeals to both the old and the new. You can still have the old flair of things…. You can modernize it…. You would never have to lose the soul of the building, and the soul of the people and the place." Just as Club Passim found ways to adapt and regain its vitality in the twenty-first century, the Down Home will need to look to the future and make changes to keep the community growing.

Comparing the venue to an old house that simply requires regular attention and maintenance to keep up its appeal and habitability, the younger Mr. Snodderly sees the Down Home as having been stuck in a stagnant state for some time. While the predictability of the club is indeed a good thing that its patrons appreciate, it cannot fully rely on the same old comfort zone to keep it afloat forever. This stagnation and the subsequent need to develop a plan for the future are the reasons Mr. G. Snodderly has been carefully considering viable options that just might work if they are brought to the table and genuinely considered. It is not realistic to expect that the venue resist all change, just as it is not reasonable to assume that all change is bad. Mr. G. Snodderly grew up at the Down Home and credits it with helping him become the person he is today. He loves what the venue has always been and remains considerate of that identity, not dreaming too wildly or suggesting anything that would overshadow the "Down Home way."

"What I want to see in this place… is to modernize a little bit," he told me plainly. "Not in a negative way…. Make it just enough that you could still come and experience what Down

Home is but give a bit of modern life to it to make it… more appealing to people." His visions are not the least bit outlandish. He wants to bring in more people by exploring some new plans that work for the venue, the familiar patrons, and the newer, younger audiences alike. It is not an impossible task, but in order to see real growth, some investment of both time and money is imperative. There will need to be physical as well as operational updates to the club in the near future (G. Snodderly).

Mr. G. Snodderly listed some ideas for new traditions. "Bands that come through that bring in a crowd of their own," he began. "It would be great, instead of an Open Hoot, just have one night of the week it's a little cheaper for a ticket, it's a little earlier, it's local artists." He envisions designating a night at the beginning of each month— say, the first Thursday— when local bands can sign up to play a set. There would then be a corresponding night at the end of the month reserved for a band selected from the first Thursday based on their draw and crowd appeal. Both the band and the venue would advertise as much as possible, and ideally new bands would frequently be recruited and become consistent Down Home performers. "They have to start somewhere. You have to facilitate that," Mr. G. Snodderly emphasized before going on to point out that a similar strategy worked when local Johnson City band Demon Waffle started playing shows at the Hideway with a five dollar cover charge. They continued to draw crowds and before long their regular ticket price had tripled (G. Snodderly). Acts such as Webb Wilder, Scott Miller, Billy Crawford and Hogslop Stringband have played at the Down Home at least once a year— some for decades and others just recently— and over that time have seen their audiences and therefore their ticket prices increase. Even though the club and the bands would theoretically make less money at the door to begin with, audiences paying lower ticket prices might be inclined to spend a bit more money on food and beverages, which would benefit the

venue, and merchandise, which would benefit the band. Mr. G. Snodderly reflected, confidently concluding that taking a few risks would be worth a steady stream of new, promising bands could keep regular audiences interested and growing.

Throughout its life, to this day, the Down Home has maintained the simplistic, down-home, community feel that is embedded in its very nature. The club would not have gotten off the ground the way it did without a community of people who wanted to help just because they all liked the idea of the place and wanted to see it become a reality. As much as every inch of CBGB fit its grunge-y, graffitied, underground aesthetic, the Down Home broadcasts its rural, "shabby chic" feel to the fullest, without any suggestion that it is trying too hard to be what it is. A modern "country" venue might give off a kitschy energy, but the Down Home genuinely accomplishes and maintains that coveted rustic ambience. People feel comfortable there and tend to appreciate its commitment to hampering "these modern times [that] are trying to get through" ("Ed Snodderly"). It is a perfect example of a place where "music making [gives] rise to real-time social relationships," as Shelemay describes in her definition of musical communities. Even the building takes part in Christopher Small's idea that music can be turned into a verb that encompasses every aspect of a "musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for a performance (what is called composing), or by dancing" (Small 9). If the building changed, the Down Home experience would change. If there were windows, there would be distractions from the outside world, but as it is, the room keeps the performances isolated and enhances the intimacy. Hence, I contend that the venue hosting the performance and providing the physical atmosphere is not only an important part of the community, but it is "musicking" as well.

CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

"Or some card game, at the bar, goin' way past two,

And the side door opens and the morning blastin' through,

And someone like Townes sayin' 'adios, my friend,'

And you can't forget the 'peace' from Willie Dixon."

-Ed Snodderly, "Down Home"

The concluding chapter of this thesis reviews the full scope of my study. It restates the reasons I chose to explore the Down Home community and addresses the void my research fills. In addition, it reviews my methodology and summarizes my findings. Finally, this chapter includes a discussion of the meaning of the study, limitations I faced, and how it may be useful to other researchers in the future.

When I began researching the Down Home, I quickly found there was very little information about the venue and no discussion of its significance in or beyond the local community. I also discovered that Joe "Tank" Leach, the person who initially had the idea for a listening room in Johnson City and put in the work to make it happen, rarely gets the recognition he deserves. After forty-six years and in the aftermath of a global pandemic, the Down Home is past its heyday. However, rather than remaining in a stagnant state, its future needs to be considered at the same time its past needs to be celebrated.

Methodology

I began this study by reviewing any literature I could find concerning the Down Home. While the results of my search were minimal, I discovered several brief articles and videos online. From there, I looked for memorabilia around the venue and asked my interview subjects about their personal collections of mementos. I conducted oral history interviews with the living

past owners of the Down Home, as well as several past and present employees, and the son of the current owner to get his perspective on the future of the venue. I conducted three focused email interviews— two with professors from ETSU, and one with a lifelong regular Down Home patron. Finally, I also drew upon my own experiences as an employee and occasional performer at the venue. These methods allowed me to explore the reasons a community formed around the Down Home and the ways in which it has continued to grow and thrive in the decades since the club's establishment. The definition of community adopted for this thesis draws from the work of both Shelemay and Small: A collectivity of people brought together by a mutually appreciated idea, activity and/or place. A musical community, such as the one that developed around the Down Home, is made up of people with a common interest in musicking— that is, participating in music making at any point in the process (364-365; 9). Not everyone in the community is a musician, but all of the members share a love of music.

Summary

Throughout this study, I have found that there is a reciprocal relationship between the Down Home and its community of supporters. The club provides a gathering space, an intimate performance venue, and a place the community is able to rent for events such as benefits and celebrations. Countless relationships have begun at the Down Home. In return, the community has supported the club and taken care of the physical venue to ensure its future. In recent years, I have seen the community support a fundraiser for a film documenting the Down Home's history, demonstrating that the community wants to see the club's legacy documented. I have seen hundreds of people attend concerts in the Mall at Johnson City parking lot to raise money to support the venue, and I have seen patrons donate money by purchasing tickets and then refusing refunds for shows they cannot attend.

The Down Home is a brick-and-mortar place, a concrete location that stays right where it has always been. It does not travel, so it cannot physically envelope the community. While it is not accurate to claim that the building somehow contains the community or even defines it, the physical venue is the nucleus of the Down Home community and the reason it began to form in the first place. If the Down Home itself ceased to be, the community would not vanish because it actually exists in the memories and connections made by the people who experienced the venue together, forged relationships, and developed affection for each other, the place, and their shared experiences. In her article "Musical Communities: Rethinking the Collective in Music," Shelemay states that by the 1990s, musical scholars had mostly abandoned the idea of "single-local communities" in favor of the concept of "imagined communities," whereby such a collective is viewed "not as a structure to be defined and described, but as a mode of experience that has meaning to people who consider themselves to be part of it" (357-358). The building, though, is arguably necessary for the community to continue to grow. New members cannot reasonably join the Down Home community if there is no Down Home. If the building were remodeled or the club relocated, much of its history would be lost or no longer apparent to new patrons. Presently, when one walks into the room, one can see so much of its history displayed on the walls and appreciate spending time in the place where the photographs, stories, and memories were made.

The Down Home has worked to engage the community throughout its entire existence. In its early years it began hosting a regular Open Hoot— its version of an open mic night— when performers of any level could participate in a show and play for a lively crowd. The tradition continued through the late 2010s, drawing new patrons and performers from near and far and providing everyone a notable stage on which to share their creativity. Today, there is a

monthly Poetry Hoot, which gives the local Poets Collective and any verse enthusiasts an historic venue in which to perform their work. These events are free and widely attended. In addition, the Down Home is available for the community to use for benefit events, filming, private celebrations and more (G. Snodderly).

The club has also engaged the community through its use of streaming and social media. By broadcasting some of the concerts online, the Down Home can reach a larger audience and include people who are unable to attend a show in person. While it is not the same as attending a show at the physical location, watching a performance online can give distant fans a taste of the venue's legacy. The club's future will, according to Gaines Snodderly, ideally include tactful use of modern technology—a more organized livestreaming setup for example—without compromising the spirit or overshadowing the history of the place.

Discussion

The Down Home is an example of a local venue that has become an institution through the growth of a mutually supportive community. The community keeps the place alive, and the institution holds the community together. Many love the institution because it is a familiar, predictable place which stays true to its identity. However, modernization alongside respect for history and authenticity is key. If a place is to remain relevant, it is going to have to make changes along the way to enhance and solidify the institution's position within the community.

Previous research concerning the Down Home has focused on history, individuals, and specific shows or events while my research examined the Down Home through the lens of community theory. However, the sources I discovered helped me synthesize existing research and examine the collectivity of Down Home people through a community theory lens. There were two primary limitations I faced while composing this thesis, although they ultimately did

not prevent me from achieving my goal of addressing the significance of the Down Home community.

In addition to becoming a notable obstacle for the Down Home itself, the coronavirus pandemic essentially put a halt to my thesis work for about a year. In the beginning I did not anticipate such a lengthy period of difficulty or foresee how the venue's closure and the widespread lockdowns would change the course of my endeavors. Once it became clear that the world would not be back to normal for quite some time, I realized that gathering the information I required to complete this project would be next to impossible and least of all inspiring. The venue was closed indefinitely. Running into Mr. Snodderly around the neighborhood here and there did not make up for working several shows each week and regularly seeing and talking to a variety of people who love the Down Home. I was used to hearing performers gush about the place on stage and after hours, as well as serving tables of longtime patrons who wanted to reminisce or new guests who lamented their late introduction to the venue. Those interactions had inspired me to do this project and suddenly I realized that I had taken them for granted. I had not done my formal interviews yet or even made notes about the casual conversations that would have given me fuel, and suddenly everyone had to stay home. I knew that in-person interviews needed to be a large part of my research, and that I would not get the same interactions with the Down Home "regulars" over the phone or by email. So, I waited it out. I completed my prospectus in May of 2020 and did not make any more significant progress until June of 2021, when I was finally able to arrange some useful interviews. Later the same month, music at the Down Home sprang back to life.

The other limitation I faced in writing this thesis was that several important Down Home figures had already passed away. In particular, talking to Mr. Julian and Brother Dave would

have given me valuable insight, though I was still able to gather memories and stories about them and weave them into my work. It was important to conduct oral history interviews while I had the chance to record the memories and stories of the earliest Down Home community members. In Abrams' words, "Memory is not just about the individual; it is also about the community" (79). Each interview I conducted helped me to construct the story of the community.

In the future, this study could be useful to anyone embarking on a project documenting and analyzing the community centered around a venue or other local institution. This thesis has utilized aspects of community theory along with oral history theory, a combination which is appropriate for an in-depth examination of more than just the history of a place, but why it is significant to so many people and how it has become firmly-rooted. My work could also serve as a reference for someone writing about other pieces of the Down Home's history, or perhaps even better, its future. I have explored some ideas about how an established venue stays relevant while maintaining its image in a changing world, and that topic alone could be expanded to become a full study. The world revolves around technology now, and that leads us to consider how a venue that uses minimal technology, such as the Down Home, will keep up. This study has shown that this particular venue has provided people a much-needed respite from fast-paced digital communication, but it can also use technology to its advantage. I have examined how the Down Home has utilized a national radio show, an early streaming service, newer streaming platforms, and social media to expand its community. In the coming years, it is only logical to assume that new technological tools will continue to appear at our disposal, and the Down Home will need to decide how to use them in order to maintain its commercial viability while continuing to serve its dedicated listeners.

This thesis documents the history of the Down Home as told through the stories of its owners and "regulars" and thus holds meaning and importance for them. It also makes a significant contribution to the academic study of musical and social communities in East Tennessee and helps fill a gap In the literature of the region. This study incorporates pieces of different individuals' stories to examine the collective story of the Down Home community. It studies the Down Home's transition from a mere idea to the institution it is now, and why it continues to serve as the cornerstone of a strong community. The Down Home provides an ideal case study to examine how a community forms around a local music venue and in turn supports that venue until it becomes an institution. The Down Home exemplifies what Small means when he writes that "the way people relate to one another as they music is linked not only with the sound relationships that are created by the performers… but also with the participants' relationships to the world outside the performance space… and it is those relationships… that are the meaning of the performance" (47-48). The Down Home is about music, but more than that, it is about the community and the relationships that have developed since the club's establishment in 1976. As Shelemay concludes, "a musical community is a social entity, an outcome of a combination of social and musical processes, rendering those who participate in making or listening to music aware of a connection among themselves" (365). Whatever the music, a night spent at the historic eclectic listening room will be notable because of the distinctive character and the welcoming sense of community.

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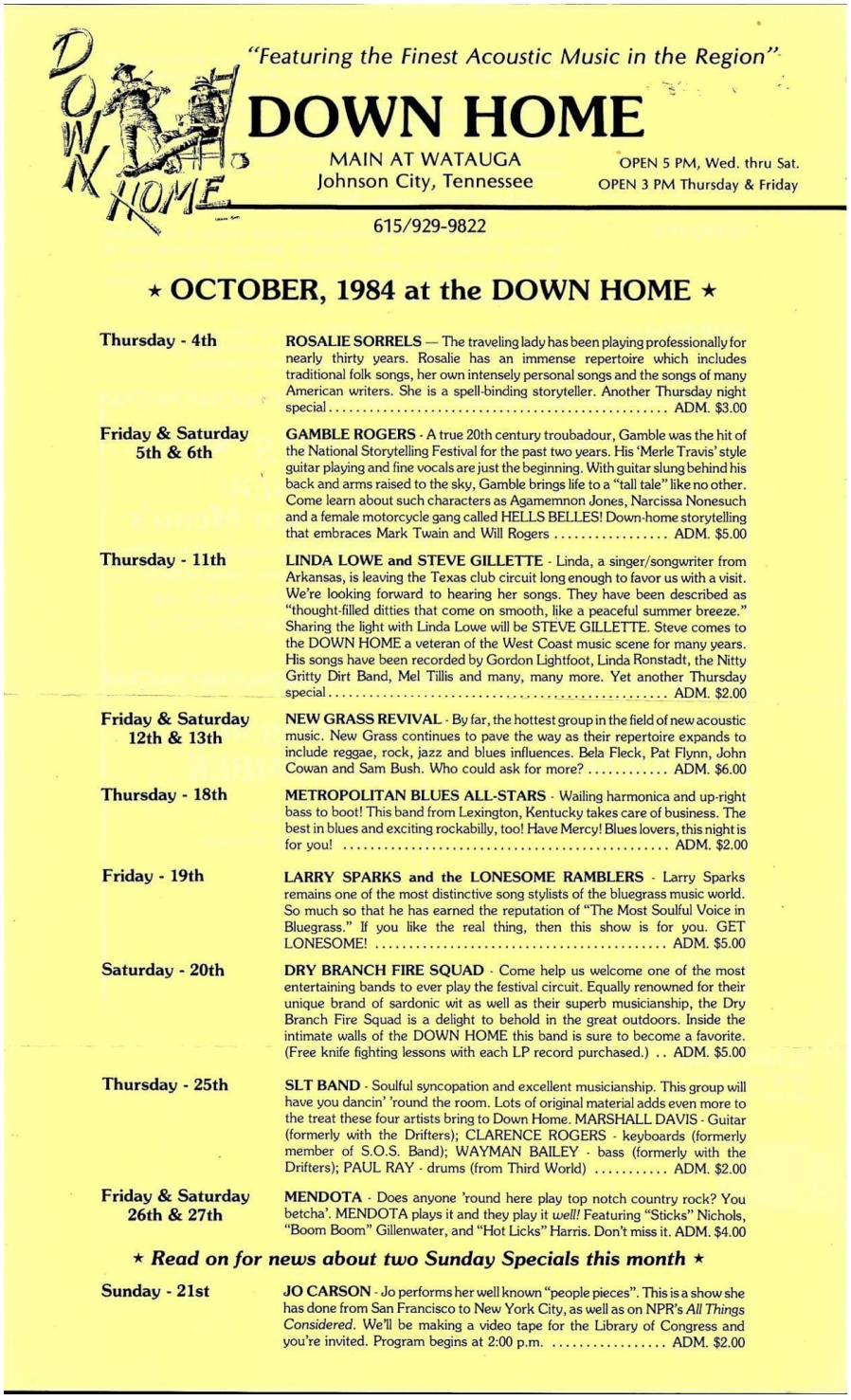
APPENDICES

Appendix A: October 1984 Down Home Newsletter



"Featuring the Finest Acoustic Music in the Region"

DOWN HOME

MAIN AT WATAUGA
Johnson City, Tennessee

OPEN 5 PM, Wed. thru Sat.
OPEN 3 PM Thursday & Friday

615/929-9822

★ OCTOBER, 1984 at the DOWN HOME ★

Thursday - 4th

ROSALIE SORRELS — The traveling lady has been playing professionally for nearly thirty years. Rosalie has an immense repertoire which includes traditional folk songs, her own intensely personal songs and the songs of many American writers. She is a spell-binding storyteller. Another Thursday night special ..... ADM. $3.00

Friday & Saturday 5th & 6th

GAMBLE ROGERS - A true 20th century troubadour, Gamble was the hit of the National Storytelling Festival for the past two years. His 'Merle Travis' style guitar playing and fine vocals are just the beginning. With guitar slung behind his back and arms raised to the sky, Gamble brings life to a "tall tale" like no other. Come learn about such characters as Agamemnon Jones, Narcissa Nonesuch and a female motorcycle gang called HELLS BELLES! Down-home storytelling that embraces Mark Twain and Will Rogers ..... ADM. $5.00

Thursday - 11th

LINDA LOWE and STEVE GILLETTE - Linda, a singer/songwriter from Arkansas, is leaving the Texas club circuit long enough to favor us with a visit. We're looking forward to hearing her songs. They have been described as "thought-filled ditties that come on smooth, like a peaceful summer breeze." Sharing the light with Linda Lowe will be STEVE GILLETTE. Steve comes to the DOWN HOME a veteran of the West Coast music scene for many years. His songs have been recorded by Gordon Lightfoot, Linda Ronstadt, the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, Mel Tillis and many, many more. Yet another Thursday special ..... ADM. $2.00

Friday & Saturday 12th & 13th

NEW GRASS REVIVAL - By far, the hottest group in the field of new acoustic music. New Grass continues to pave the way as their repertoire expands to include reggae, rock, jazz and blues influences. Bela Fleck, Pat Flynn, John Cowan and Sam Bush. Who could ask for more? ..... ADM. $6.00

Thursday - 18th

METROPOLITAN BLUES ALL-STARS - Wailing harmonica and up-right bass to boot! This band from Lexington, Kentucky takes care of business. The best in blues and exciting rockabilly, too! Have Mercy! Blues lovers, this night is for you! ..... ADM. $2.00

Friday - 19th

LARRY SPARKS and the LONESOME RAMBLERS - Larry Sparks remains one of the most distinctive song stylists of the bluegrass music world. So much so that he has earned the reputation of "The Most Soulful Voice in Bluegrass." If you like the real thing, then this show is for you. GET LONESOME! ..... ADM. $5.00

Saturday - 20th

DRY BRANCH FIRE SQUAD - Come help us welcome one of the most entertaining bands to ever play the festival circuit. Equally renowned for their unique brand of sardonic wit as well as their superb musicianship, the Dry Branch Fire Squad is a delight to behold in the great outdoors. Inside the intimate walls of the DOWN HOME this band is sure to become a favorite. (Free knife fighting lessons with each LP record purchased.) .. ADM. $5.00

Thursday - 25th

SLT BAND - Soulful syncopation and excellent musicianship. This group will have you dancin' 'round the room. Lots of original material adds even more to the treat these four artists bring to Down Home. MARSHALL DAVIS - Guitar (formerly with the Drifters); CLARENCE ROGERS - keyboards (formerly member of S.O.S. Band); WAYMAN BAILEY - bass (formerly with the Drifters); PAUL RAY - drums (from Third World) ..... ADM. $2.00

Friday & Saturday 26th & 27th

MENDOTA - Does anyone 'round here play top notch country rock? You betcha'. MENDOTA plays it and they play it *well!* Featuring "Sticks" Nichols, "Boom Boom" Gillenwater, and "Hot Licks" Harris. Don't miss it. ADM. $4.00

★ Read on for news about two Sunday Specials this month ★

Sunday - 21st

JO CARSON - Jo performs her well known "people pieces". This is a show she has done from San Francisco to New York City, as well as on NPR's *All Things Considered*. We'll be making a video tape for the Library of Congress and you're invited. Program begins at 2:00 p.m. ..... ADM. $2.00

Figure 10. October 1984 newsletter.

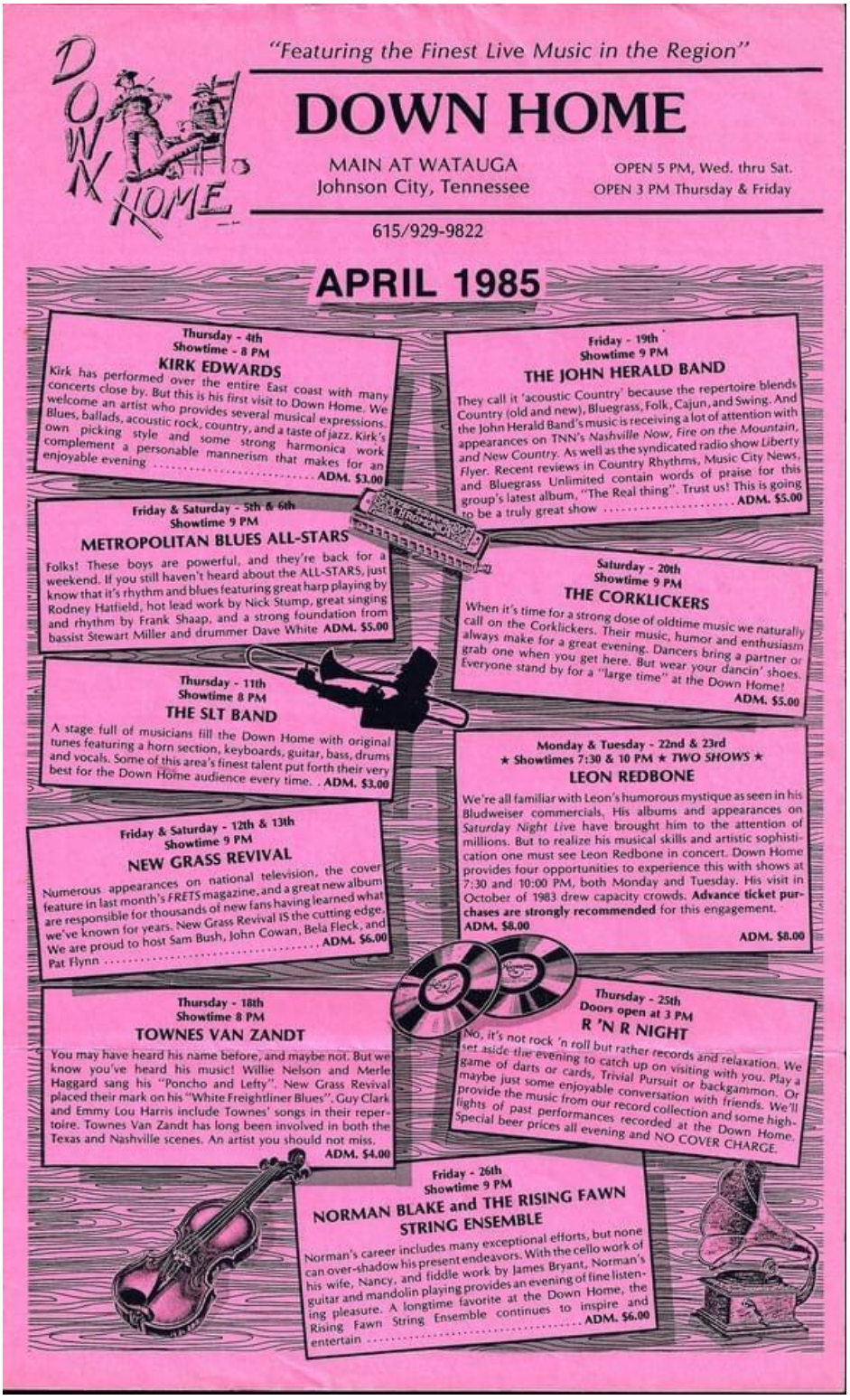


Figure 11. April 1985 newsletter, front.

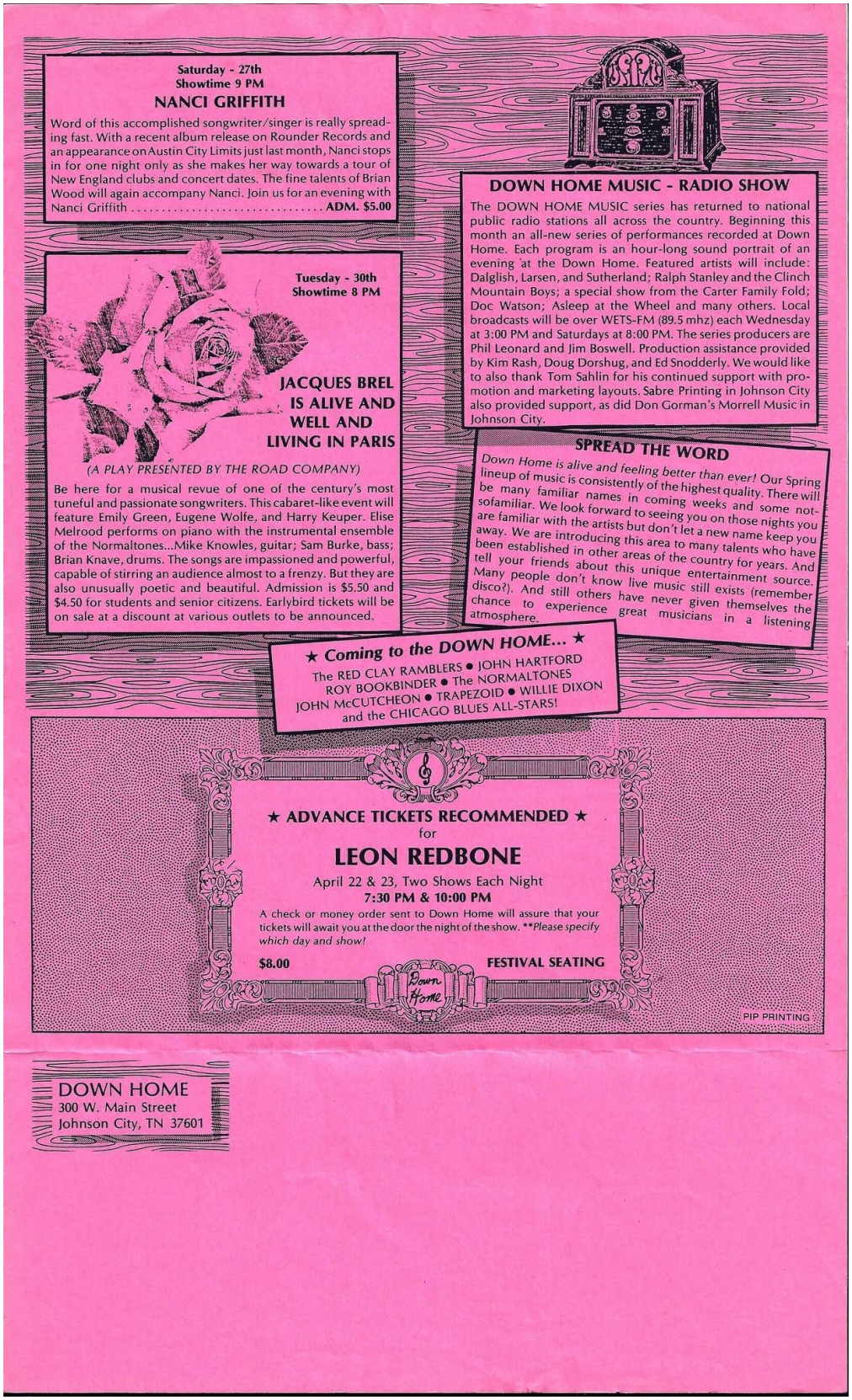


Figure 12. April 1985 newsletter, back.

Appendix C: Current Down Home Floor Plan

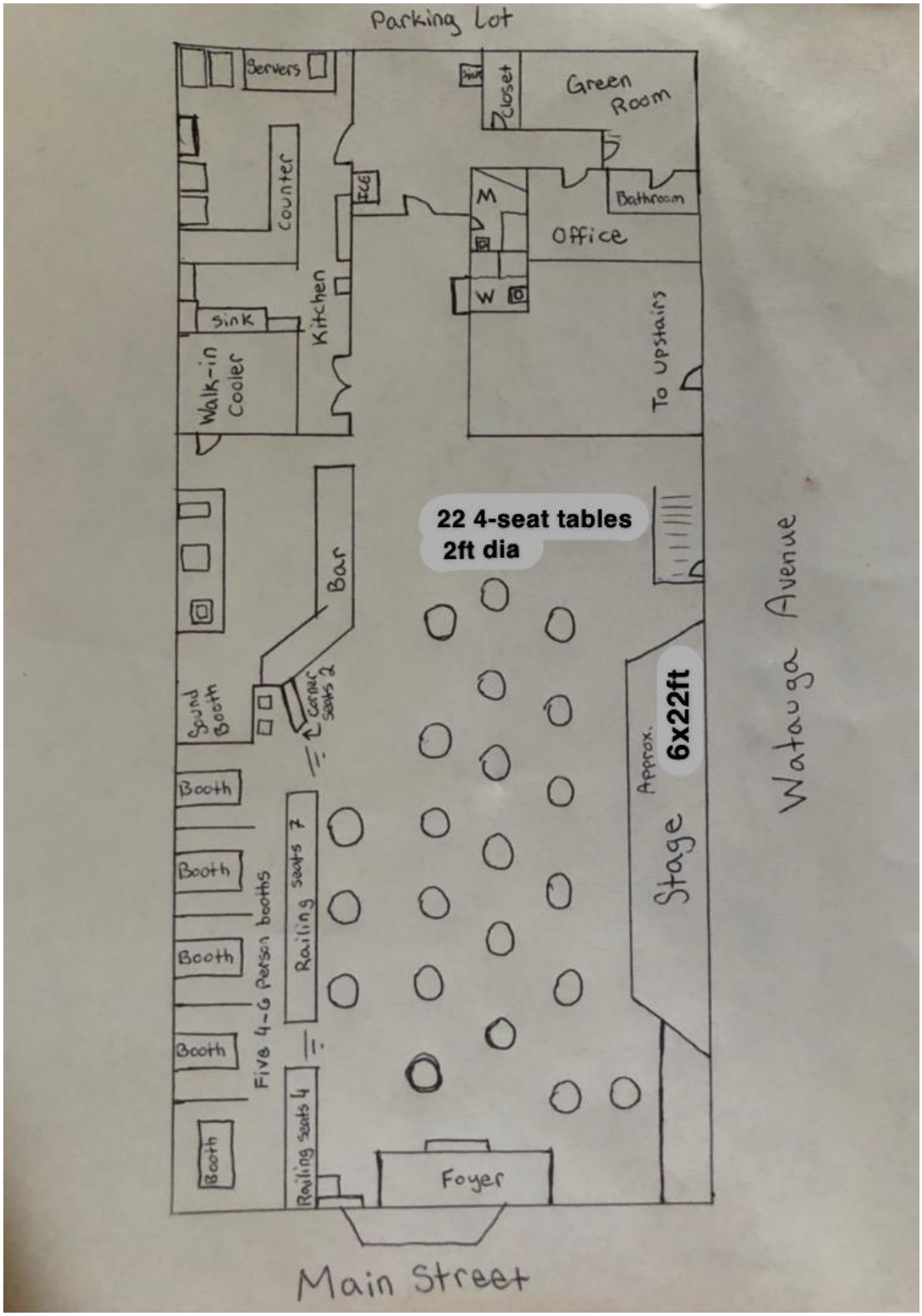


Figure 13. Current Down Home floor plan. Diagram by Rheva Myhre.

VITA

RHEVA MYHRE

Education:	M.A. Appalachian Studies, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee, 2022
	B.A. Bluegrass, Old-Time, and Country Music Studies, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, 2017
	Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Glasgow, Scotland, 2016
	IES Antonio José Cavanilles, Alicante, Spain, 2013
	Public Schools, Spokane, Washington
Professional Experience:	Teacher, Junior Appalachian Musicians, University School, Johnson City, Tennessee, 2015
	Server, Down Home, Johnson City, Tennessee, 2016-2022
	Graduate Assistant, East Tennessee State University, College of Arts and Sciences, 2018-2020