

## **International Festival, Folkmoot** <sup>[1]</sup>

### **State International Festival of North Carolina: Folkmoot, USA**

By Amy Kemp, Government and Heritage Library, 2017

**See also:** [North Carolina State Symbols and Official Adoptions main page](#) <sup>[2]</sup>, [Folk Festivals](#) <sup>[3]</sup>; [Folkmoot, USA](#) <sup>[4]</sup>



Belarusian dancers and musicians at Folkmoot, USA, 2008. Photo by Flickr user Anoldent.

<sup>[5]</sup> In 2003, the General Assembly designated [Folkmoot USA](#) <sup>[6]</sup> as the official State International Festival ([Session Laws, 2003, c. 315](#) <sup>[7]</sup>).

### **Selection as State International Festival**

The appointment of a State International Festival has been under debate since 1992, when Rep. Charles Beall of Haywood County presented a bill to give Folkmoot, USA the honor. He was met with opposition from representatives of Fayetteville, North Carolina where the Fayetteville International Folk Festival is held. The bill was dropped, only to be brought back the next year. Eastern legislators proposed naming the Folkmoot festival the State Western International Folk Festival and the Fayetteville festival the State Eastern International Folk Festival. Folkmoot managers disagreed with the claim, stating that the nature of the two festivals were entirely different and should not be referred to with the same title. Folkmoot, USA was a two weeklong festival bringing in international groups representing their home countries, while the Fayetteville festival was a one day gathering with American residents of foreign descent. The bill was once again dropped. In 2003 Folkmoot was eventually designated the sole State International Festival of North Carolina.

### **About Folkmoot, USA**

Folkmoot, USA is an annual two week international festival founded in Waynesville North Carolina, to promote the cultural exchange of traditional dance and music. Its name comes from an old English word meaning "meeting of the people." Their goal is to "celebrate diversity and differences, encourage cultural conversation and inclusion, and preserve and honor worldwide cultural heritages, especially using dance as a tool to achieve world peace."

Folkmoot was the idea of local Waynesville surgeon Dr. Clinton Border who thought that North Carolina's rich traditional culture would make it ideal for hosting an international heritage festival. The first festival was held in 1984 and featured performers from England, Germany, Holland, Ireland, Turkey, Mexico, Puerto Rico and India. Since then, over 8,000 performers from 200 different countries have performed at Folkmoot. The festival is held over a two week period at locations throughout Western North Carolina and now includes a year-round cultural center and non-profit organization. On average, Folkmoot, USA draws over 70,000 visitors from 40 different states. It is one of only two American festivals of

its kind, and is internationally acknowledged and respected. It has also been designated “One of the Top Twenty Events in the Southeast” by the Southeast Tourism Society for more than twenty years.

Recently the festival has promoted a shift from a primarily 'audience' format to that of an interactive, educational framework. New activities include dance lessons, community dinners, cultural panel discussions, a kids camp, and educational partnerships with local schools and universities. Popular traditional events include the Parade of Nations and International Festival Day in downtown Waynesville.

**North Carolina Session Law**

**Excerpt from SESSION LAW 2003-315**

**SENATE BILL 840**

AN ACT TO ADOPT FOLKMOOT USA  
AS NORTH CAROLINA'S OFFICIAL  
INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL.

Whereas, Folkmoot USA is an annual international festival held in Western North Carolina by North Carolina International Folk Festival, Inc., to promote the cultural exchange of traditional dance and music; and

Whereas, the name "Folkmoot" is an old English word meaning "meeting of the people"; and

Whereas, the first Folkmoot festival was held in 1984 and has grown to one of the largest folk festivals of its kind; and

Whereas, most of Folkmoot's worldwide participants are not professional dancers and musicians, but ordinary people who are proud of their culture and enjoy sharing it with others; and

Whereas, these diverse, international performers wear native costumes, play unique instruments, and perform authentic folk dances; and

Whereas, over the years, 190 folk groups representing 95 countries have participated in Folkmoot; and

Whereas, Folkmoot has been named a "Top 20 Event in the Southeast" by the Southeast Tourism Society for 16 years, a 2003 "Top 100 Event in America" by the North American Bus Association, and one of North Carolina's "Most Outstanding Festivals"; and

Whereas, Folkmoot's 70,000 annual visitors come from more than 40 states and from more than half of North Carolina's cities and towns; and

Whereas, Folkmoot creates a positive economic impact of almost four million dollars in the State; and



Dancer from Togo at Folkmoot, USA - 2008. Photo from Flickr user Anoldent. <sup>[8]</sup>

Whereas, Folkmoot is a great cultural resource that provides entertainment and education and promotes tourism in North Carolina; and

Whereas, adopting Folkmoot USA as North Carolina's official international festival will enhance the exchange of international culture and increase tourism in North Carolina; Now, therefore,

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

**SECTION 1.**Chapter 145 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 145-19. State International Festival.

Folkmoot USA is adopted as the official international festival of the State of North Carolina".

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of July, 2003.

s/ Michael F. Easley

Governor

Approved 11:30 a.m. this 10<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2003

**References:**

Folkmoot Official website: <http://folkmoot.org/> <sup>[9]</sup>

Stinneford, Mark. "It's East Vs. West In Legislative Battle Of International Festivals," *Fayetteville Observer, The* (NC), April 26, 1993.

"International Folk Festival Planned for Waynesville," *Pilot, The* (Southern Pines, NC), July 11, 2003.

Folkmoot - Asheville Tourism: <https://www.romanticasheville.com/folkmoot.htm> [10]

Image Credit:

Dancers from Belarus and Togo performing on stage, Folkmoot, 2009. Image courtesy of Flickr user anoldent. Available from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/anoldent/albums/72157606334279322> [11] (accessed July 13, 2017).

Video Credit:

Folkmoot Parade of Nations. Video courtesy The Mountaineer newspaper, Haywood County, North Carolina. Available from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7-ec\\_ixDIWI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7-ec_ixDIWI) [12] 9 (accessed July 13, 2017).

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