

## The Abbott Hill Ramblers

**Bluegrass and American Roots** music is alive and well in the central Maine area, and it looks like the youthful Abbott Hill Ramblers will help see that its popularity continues. Under the mentorship of Dexter Middle School teacher Chris Prickitt (himself an experienced performer and long-term member of the popular band Evergreen), the Ramblers are composed of middle and high school students from S.A.D. 46. The program has been going strong since the fall of 2000, kick-started by a Century 21 grant to promote after-school activities. In their early years, they also received significant financial support from the Bluegrass Music Association of Maine. The program is now a legitimate S.A.D. 46 extra-curricular activity.

In addition to local concerts, the Ramblers have performed at fairs, festivals, and coffee houses around the state (and even out of state in September, 2008, at the Big Easterns Expo in West Springfield, Massachusetts). In the spring of 2007 they toured with the world-renowned Kruger Brothers for a four-day, five-school "strings attached" educational outreach program in Maine along with the Bangor High Fiddlers and the Franklin County Fiddlers of Farmington. This program was organized by the Bangor Symphony Orchestra.

This group performs quality music, and their entertaining shows are enhanced by their relaxed humor on stage. They have released five recordings, *Born to Ramble*, *Climbing Higher*, *Going Places*, *Stages*, and most recently, *It Can't Be Stopped*. For more information, visit the website at <[abbotthillramblers.com](http://abbotthillramblers.com)> or contact:

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*Bluegrass and  
American Roots Music*

## History

In the fall of 2000, Dexter teacher Chris Prickitt applied for and received some of the Century 21 grant money that three local school districts were using to promote after school activities. He purchased a bass, a guitar, a banjo, two mandolins and a fiddle and put the word out that on Mondays after school, middle school students were invited to gather in his classroom to learn some basics. About fifteen stayed with the program that first year, which closed with a highly successful concert for parents and friends. For the next few years, the Bluegrass Music Association of Maine provided financial support for the Ramblers before S.A.D. 46 voted to fund the program as a legitimate school-sponsored extra-curricular activity. As the group became more widely known (thanks to some newspaper, radio, and even television coverage), many individuals donated instruments, and the number of participants has grown, so that now there are three groups. In addition to the **Ramblers**, there are the **Abbott Hill Wanderers** (beginners, intermediates), and the **Abbott Hill Meanderers**, which includes community members of all ages. Some former Ramblers have gone on to continue playing, even to form their own bands.

**The Abbott Hill Ramblers** now average more than a dozen shows a year. In addition to local concerts and private engagements, their educational outreach efforts at various schools around the state have included a four-day, five-school tour with the world renowned Kruger Brothers promoted by the Bangor Symphony Orchestra, and exchange concerts with the Franklin County Fiddlers, the Bangor High Fiddlers, and Waterville's middle school strings program. Other events and venues outside of Dexter include the following:

Big Eastern Expo Agricultural Fair, Springfield, MA  
Detroit Bluegrass Festival  
Bluegrass Music Association of ME Benefit Shows  
The Buttermilk Old Time Music Show  
Perkinstock Bluegrass Festival, Blue Hill  
Paul Bunyan Bluegrass Festival  
University of Maine - Writer's Project Retreat  
University of Maine Literacy Conference

(The keynote address by Chris Prickitt was enriched by the Ramblers' music.)

Maine State Agricultural Trade Show  
Piscataquis Heritage Days  
Piscataquis Valley Fair  
Exeter Harvest Days  
Garland Days  
Charleston Days  
Corinth Days  
Corinna Summer Concert Series  
Harmony Free Fair  
Goose River Jam, Waldoboro  
Madison-Anson Days  
Church Street Coffee House, Dexter  
Hutchins Hall Coffee House, Dover-Foxcroft  
State Convention - Maine Federation of Business and Professional Women  
Dover-Foxcroft Homecoming



## About the Director

**Chris Prickitt** is originally from Vermont, but has been living in Maine since graduating from Colby College in 1973. He has been teaching 8th grade language arts in the Dexter Middle School for 27 years, but music has always been a big part of his life. He was a member of the Kennebec Valley Boys and The Northern Valley Boys in the 70s, the contra dance band Pleasin' Keys in the 80s, and for the last 19 years has been performing as a member of Evergreen, Maine's popular eclectic acoustic band. Primarily a banjo player (winner of several contests, including the 2008 New England Banjo Championships), he also plays guitar, fiddle, bass, mandolin, piano, and accordion. He can also teach and call contra dances.

## Recordings

The Ramblers have released five recordings: ***Born to Ramble*** ('04), ***Climbing Higher*** ('05), ***Going Places*** ('06), ***Stages*** ('08), and most recently, ***It Can't Be Stopped*** ('09). Sales help fund the program.

## Offerings

The Abbott Hill Ramblers can provide musical entertainment for all ages and occasions. They perform quality music, and their shows are enhanced by their relaxed humor on stage. They can also tailor their shows to include an educational component, and can conduct instrument and vocal workshops for students. Donations requested would depend on traveling expenses, sound requirements, the time involved, and the design of the desired program.

**For more information**, visit the website <[abbotthillramblers.com](http://abbotthillramblers.com)> or contact

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