



## Claire Lynch, bluegrass star, former Huntsville resident tells story behind 'Dear Sister' LP



Claire Lynch. (Courtesy photo)

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**HUNTSVILLE, Alabama** -- Sometimes bluegrass star Claire Lynch will be singing her lovely, mandolin-dappled ballad "Dear Sister" onstage and looking out into the audience she'll see people wiping tears from their eyes. "That's the most beautiful singing experience I can have," Lynch says. She's walking down a street in Toronto when reached for this phone interview.

The title track from her most recent album, "Dear Sister" centers on Lynch's cane-sweet, post-Dolly Parton voice and a memorable, historical arc torn from co-writer Louisa Branscomb's family's back pages, literally and figuratively.

"She had a great-great aunt who had four brothers in the Civil War," Lynch says, "and they all wrote letters to her, so she saved the letters and the family didn't find the letters until the 20th century." One of the tune's most haunting couplets: *"The enemy and we all sang a melody of home, sweet home."*

The song "Dear Sister" is actually based on author Frank Anderson Chappel's 2002 book "Dear Sister: Civil War Letters to a Sister in Alabama." Chappel is a descendant of Lucida Hunter, the sister detailed in the song and book, the latter of which collects that aforementioned wartime correspondence.

On Aug. 23, the Claire Lynch Band will perform at Three Caves (901 Kennamer Drive S.E.), the picturesque, naturalistic outdoor setting located at the foot of Monte Sano Mountain. Chappel actually lives about three blocks away from the venue. Plans are for the Huntsville based scribe to attend the concert and it will be the first time he's heard Lynch sing "Dear Sister," nominated for International Bluegrass Music Awards' 2014 Song Of The Year, live. Lynch - who's been nominated for Grammys in the past and also worked as a background vocalist for the likes of Parton, Linda Ronstadt and Emmylou Harris - is also up for IMBA's Female Vocalist Of The Year, an award she won in 2013.

Lynch's family moved to Huntsville from Kingston, N.Y. when she was 12. Now a Nashville resident, her fondest Huntsville memories include seeing "Heart Like a Wheel" era Ronstadt perform at the Von Braun Civic Center, and later on regularly performing at the Kaffeeklatsch Bar. Asked if she ever snuck into Three Caves, as Huntsville teenagers have occasionally been wont to do, Lynch says, "No, I never knew it existed. I used to live up there too, above Blossomwood, up on the hill above old Big Cove Road. I don't know if Three Caves was in operations when I was that age – it seems like I would have known about it."

Nashville-via-Baltimore country singer and former "American Idol" top 100 contestant Carrie Zaruba will open the 7 p.m. Three Caves show, benefiting the Land Trust of North Alabama, which is partnering with Downtown Huntsville Inc. to put on the concert, with David Milly assisting with booking. Tickets (\$25 – \$35) are available online at [landtrustna.org](http://landtrustna.org). Free parking is available via the Clinton Street parking garage downtown, will shuttles departing for Three Caves beginning at 6:15 p.m. Local food trucks On-On Tacos and Rollin Lobstah will be on hand at the venue.

The Claire Lynch Band also features bassist Todd Phillips, guitarist Matt Wingate and multi-instrumentalist Bryan McDowell.

Below, Lynch tells the stories behind every song on her "Dear Sister" LP.

### **"How Many Moons"**

*"I wrote it with Don Dunn, who also wrote 'Hitchcock Railway' which was a Joe Cocker hit and I cut that song in the 1990s on a Grammy-nominated CD."*

### **"Doin' Time"**

*"The only song I've ever done about arson. [Laughs.]"*

### **"Once the Teardrops Start to Fall"**

*"A co-write with Craig Fuller from Pure Prairie League. Wonderful writer and singer. Craig wanted to write a bluegrass song and we kind of rocked it."*

### **"Need Someone"**

*"That was my call to the universe that I was finally ready to date, after I divorced. Like six years later. [Laughs.] And it actually worked."*

### **"Dear Sister"**

*"Three years or so, all the bluegrass songwriters were getting on the bandwagon and writing Civil War songs, so Louisa (Branscomb, co-writer) comes to me and says, 'Man, I've got a story.'"*

### **"I'll Be Alright Tomorrow"**

*"A bluegrass standard from the Osborne Brothers. Just a really fun, grassy thing to show people, 'Yes I am a bluegrass and I can play bluegrass.'"*

### **"Patch of Blue"**

*"'Patch of Blue' is about my husband Ian. I wrote that when I was falling in love with him."*

### **"That Kind of Love"**

*"A Pierce Pettis original that is epic in nature and describes unconditional love in the most beautiful way."*

### **"Everybody Knows I've Been Crying"**

*"Well, that is a country song, honey."*

### **"Buttermilk Road/The Arbours"**

*"'Buttermilk Road' is just an odd little song. It's very ballad like in nature so we decided we'd soup it up by playing it a cappella with hand bone. And then 'The Arbours' is an old-time tune that Mark (Schatz, bassist) wrote to put on the end of yet."*

***clairelynch.com***