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Don Cusic, Editor

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The Original Carter Family: A Comparative Statistical Analysis of Their Sacred and Profane Recorded Output

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Abstract

The Sacred and Profane represents a dichotomy common in all cultures, but is particularly pronounced in the Evangelical Protestant Christian culture of the U.S. South. Country Music developed with deep roots in the U.S. South. The metaphorically and literally important 1927 Bristol Sessions, the *Big Bang of Country Music,* reflected the Sacred and Profane dichotomy in the music and the personae of The Carter Family and Jimmie Rodgers, *The Father of Country Music.* This discussion focuses on statistical and lyrical analysis of The Carter Family and compare their output to Uncle Dave Macon and Hank Williams to determine the limits of the metaphorical and literal validity of the Sacred designation in comparison to Country Music notables.

Introduction

The 1927 Bristol Sessions metaphor "The Big Bang of Country Music" may well generate an immaculate conception imagery to the birth of Country Music's and Its life cycle. There is no such thing as the immaculate conception of cultural ideas and forms, but Nolan Porterfield's metaphor contains more than a germ of truth. Antecedents or other recording sessions notwithstanding, the recording of The Carter Family and Jimmie Rodger, much less The Stoneman Family and others, provide The Bristol Sessions an undeniable gravitas in the creation of a cultural form commonly known as Country Music. Besides recording during The Big Bang of The Bristol Sessions, the Carter Family and Jimmie Rodgers conceptually carry with their iconic success additional cultural meanings deeply embedded in the culture of Country Music.

The Carter Family and Jimmie Rodgers often receive symbolic recognition in terms of two polarities associated with all cultures, but particularly salient in the context of The U.S. South and Evangelical Protestantism. The Sacred and Profane dichotomy includes heaven and hell as well as Saturday night temptations and sin followed by Sunday church attendance. The Sacred and Profane dichotomy thus fits both Country Music artists as well as their song content. The Sacred and Profane dichotomy not only manifested itself throughout the early period 1921-1957 ending with the transition to the Nashville Sound

but continues to exist into the third decade of the 21st Century. Thus, Gid Tanner and the Skillet Likers S-A-V-E-D and Keith Urban's God Whispered Your Name manifest the Sacred and Profane references common to Evangelical Christianity. The Carter Family commonly receives Country Music symbolic status as the Sacred to Jimmie Rodgers' Country Music symbolic status as the Profane. Yet, the Carter Family's Sacred designation and Profane dichotomy merits consideration in context not only of The Bristol Sessions and Jimmie Rodgers, but within the broader scope of Country Music history ending with the emergence of the Nashville Sound in 1957.

This discussion, then, focuses on the Sacred and Profane dichotomy in early Country Music with an emphasis on the recorded output of the Carter Family in comparison to significant Country Music artists including Jimmie, Rodgers, Uncle Dave Macon, and Hank Williams. The four artists may be considered foundational to the genre. Hank Williams was chosen because of his iconic status in American music and representing a transitional period in the genre, from the early, formative period to the modern era of country music. His alter ego, Luke the Drifter, is also included in the sample as Williams recorded several albums under this name. Uncle Dave Macon, the Carter Family, Jimmie Rodgers, and Hank Williams played instrumental roles in establishing and codifying country music as a distinct form of American music, drawn from disparate sources to become the recognizable form of today. Each of

these artists was significant in the historical evolution of the Country Music genre and their songs provided an ample sample for illustrating the sacred and profane dichotomy.

Presenting and elaborating a comparative statistical analysis of the Carter Family's recordings will provide insight into the manner in which the Carter Family's recorded output verifies, as well as limits the validity, of their metaphorical designation as the Sacred component of early Country Music. Data presentation techniques will be discussed in terms of limitations due to lack of reliable sales data of the Carter Family. The manner in which reliable sales data could be enhanced by a *Likeability Index*, developed by Tex Morton biographer Andrew Smith, to provide deeper insight into The Carter Family Sacred designation will be advanced. The Carter's Sacred niche may well be more complex than the symbolism by which they are viewed juxtaposed to Jimmie Rodgers the profane *Father of Country Music* and other artists.

The Sacred and the Profane

From its crystallization in the 1920s including the famed "Big Bang of Country Music" of the 1927 Bristol Sessions Country Music featured a cultural hearth of "The Fertile Crescent of Country Music" (Peterson & Davis, 1975) strongly associated with the U.S. South. The commercial product that became known as Country Music did not exist only in the U.S. South any more than the

Big Bang metaphor completely described its inception. Yet, the role of southern culture and its strong connection to Protestant Evangelical Christianity cannot be dismissed as a tired trope. Flannery O'Conner's description of *The Christ Haunted South* with its emphasize upon salvation through accepting Jesus Christ as personal savior resonates deeply in the 21st century in the South. The appeal of Conservative Evangelical Christianity continues despite weakened denominational ties. The dominant Southern Baptists losing membership at an alarming rate, the Southern Baptist denominational struggle dealing with the demons of racism and sexual assault, and a supposedly post Christian age. It also resonates with the intense Evangelical community outside the South for which issues of race, and gender identity manifest themselves frequently and intensely including significant influence on the national political scene.

The Protestant Evangelical world view carries with it a dichotomy recognized in popular culture, in Country Music scholarship, and Country Music songs ranging Gid Tanner's *S-A-V-E-D,* Ernest Tubb's *Saturday Night Sinner and Sunday Saint.* to Keith Urban's *God Whispered Your Name.* The Ken Burns *Country Music* documentary likewise identified the Sacred and Profane dichotomy. The lens of Country Music scholarship recognized that The Carter Family and Jimmie Rodgers symbolically represented an early manifestation of the Sacred and the Profane in Country Music. Mississippi born and raised Jimmie Rodgers,

divorced and remarried, caused anxiety in the God-fearing Methodist family of wife Carrie Williamson. (Porterfield, 1977, 41) As Carrie's sister Elsie Williamson McWilliams explained 'Jimmie couldn't hold a good job." (Interview James Akenson, 1986 Meridian, Mississippi) Rodgers' first recordings with Ralph Peer in *The Bristol Sessions* featured two secular songs. *Sleep Baby Sleep* and *The Soldiers Sweetheart* (Porterfield, 390) that continued to be the pattern of Rodgers' repertoire throughout his career. Rodgers' jaunty, hale-fellow-well-met personality, and his selection of songs often included double entendre.' Rodgers did not represent the strong conservative Evangelical Christian traditions of the South. Jimmie Rodgers thus represented the Profane in Country Music culture.

The Carter Family, on the other hand, not only appeared to be a stable family unit, but their recorded repertoire from The Bristol Sessions and beyond included religious references and content. The Carter Family oeuvre appears to justify the Sacred metaphorical and literal mantle. Clearly, the Carter Family merited the Sacred label in opposition to Jimmie Rodgers' Profane. But did The Carter Family fully merit the metaphorically and literal Sacred dimension in their in their recorded output? This discussion puts The Carter Family recorded output to an empirical analysis and leaves biographical evidence for additional discussion. Discourse analysis as well as basic quantitative display of The Carter Family song lyrics in their recorded output will provide evidence. Hypothetical

discussion will advance a sophisticated statistical analysis in the form The Likeability Index (LI) developed by Andrew Smith of Tasmania. Greater precision and data from implementation of the Likeability Index would take place if reliable sales data existed for sales data of the Carter Family. Thus, this analysis sets forth data by which to judge the accuracy of The Carter Families metaphorical and literal position representing the Sacred in Country Music and suggest the limitations of the figurative language.

Sacred and Profane Themes in Early Country Music 1921-1957

Keyword Analysis of 161 songs revealed a wide variety of terms that related to the Sacred and Profane framework.

Table 1: Keywords and Themes

Keyword	Songs	Songs (%)
Alcohol	1	0.61%
Angel	16	9.70%
Beer	5	3.03%
Bible	10	6.06%
Booze	1	0.61%
Cheating/Cheated	4	2.42%
Christ	1	0.61%
Christian	1	0.61%
Church	5	3.03%
Devil	8	4.85%
Death/ Dying	18	10.91%
Evil	0	0.00%

God	35	21.21%
Good Book	7	4.24%
Heaven	38	23.03%
Hell	10	6.06%
Jesus	28	16.97%
Liquor	3	1.82%
Lost	18	10.91%
Murder	3	1.82%
Rambler/ Rambling	1	0.61%
Sacred	1	0.61%
Saint	2	1.21%
Saved	10	6.06%
Shoot/ Shooting	5	3.03%
Sin/Sinner	21	12.73%
Train	22	13.33%
Wanderer/Wandering	6	3.64%
Whiskey	3	1.82%
Wine	4	2.42%
Wings	2	1.21%
Lord/ Savior	35	21.21%

The analysis resulted in the adoption of six terms devil, hell, heaven, Jesus, and angels to drive the analysis. Discourse analysis further supported the inquiry as a way of examining modes of thought, writing, and speaking about subjects to ascertain assumptions, ways of viewing the world, hidden motivations, and information (Grbich, 2013, p. 246). The song lyrics in this study serve as the modes through which various discourses have been promoted and perpetuated to shape the historical memory. The

discourses are present in the information the lyrics convey to the reader or listener, the information readily apparent, as well as information embedded in the text. Discourse moves between alternative ways of encoding reality and is quintessentially a mediative practice (White, 1978, p. 4). Discourse analysis takes into account that song lyrics and music of any genre may be interpreted in myriad ways.

The occurrence of Sacred and Profane terms may be analyzed with basic statistical data. Table 2 reflects Keywords connected to conceptions of the Sacred and the Profane in the recordings of the Carter Family, Jimmie Rodgers, Uncle Dave Macon and Hank Williams.

Table 2: Sacred and Profane Keywords by Artist

Keywords	Uncle Dave Macon	The Carter Family	Jimmie Rodgers	Hank Williams	Compilation
Devil	10.53 %	7.69 %	0 %	1.67 %	4.35 %
Hell	10.53 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	2.48 %
Heaven	18.42 %	7.69 %	0 %	16.67%	12.42 %
God	28.95 %	10.26 %	4.2 %	26.67 %	19.88 %
Jesus	18.42 %	33.33%	0 %	21.67 %	14.91 %
Angels	2.6 %	0 %	8.33 %	6.67 %	4.35 %
Sacred	47.37 %	56.41 %	4.2 %	58.33 %	47.2 %
Profane	52.63 %	43.59 %	95.8 %	41.67 %	52.8 %

It is striking that Jimmie Rodgers's songs were devoid of the dichotomous keywords *Heaven* and *Hell*, and *Jesus*

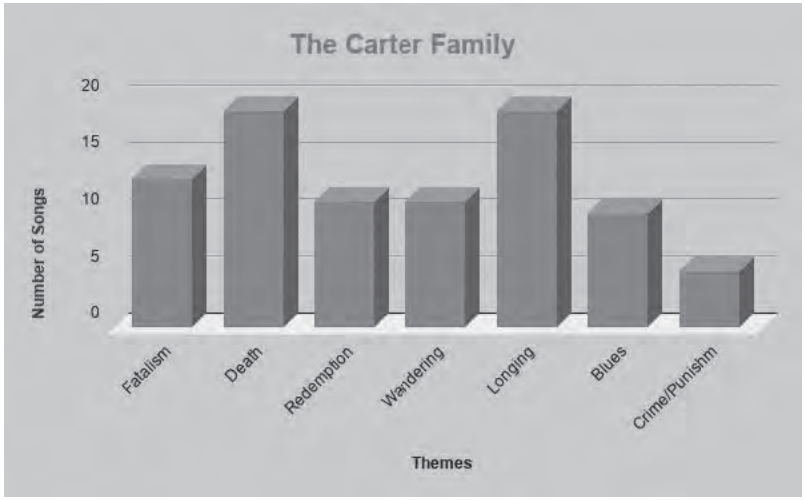
and *Devil*. Even Hank Williams, who was renowned for religious themes, had no mention of *Hell* in the song lyrics. It begs the question how one can write songs of a religious nature without the mention of hell, especially in an evangelical context. Likewise, the songs of the Carter Family made no mention of hell despite their renown for religious-themed songs and the popular notion of the Carter Family as performers of sentimental songs.

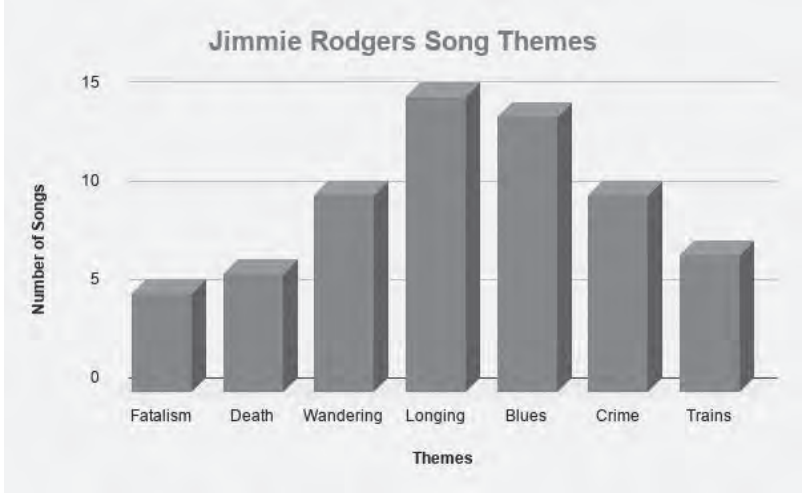
Ten themes that emerged in Content Analysis and the frequencies with which Sacred and Profane themes occurred.

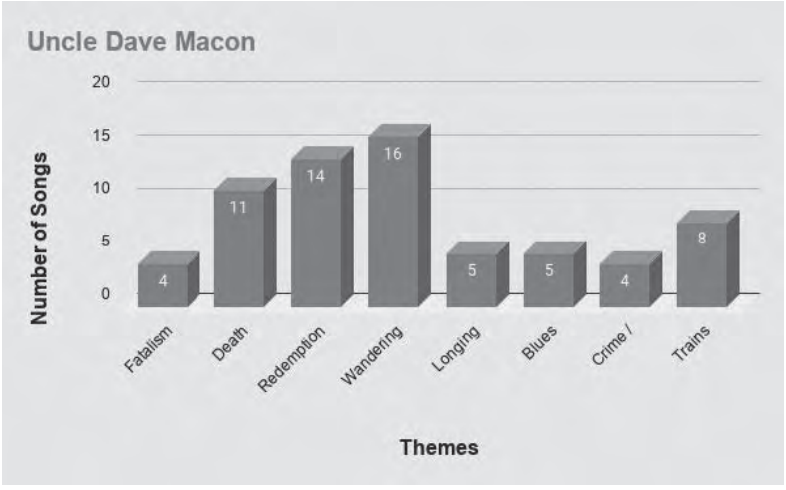
Table 3: Sacred and Profane Themes By Artist

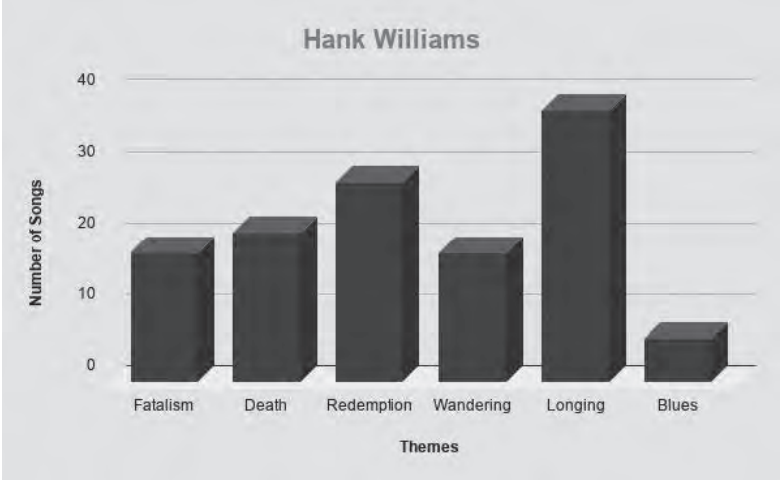
Theme	Uncle Dave Macon	The Carter Family	Jimmie Rodgers	Hank Williams	Compilatio
Fatalism	10.53 %	33.33%	20.8 %	30%	24.84 %
Death	29.95 %	48.72 %	25 %	35%	35.4 %
Redemption	36.84 %	28.2%	0 %	46.66 %	32.92 %
Wandering	42.11 %	28.2%	41.67%	30%	34.16 %
Longing	10.53 %	48.72 %	62.5 %	63.33%	47.83 %
Blues	13.16 %	25.64 %	58.33 %	10%	21.74 %
Murder	0 %	5.13 %	8.33 %	0 %	2.48 %
Crime	10.53 %	12.82%	41.66%	6.67%	14.29 %
Salvation	2.6 %	5.13%	0 %	0 %	1.86 %
Train	21.05 %	5.13%	29.17%	5 %	12.42 %

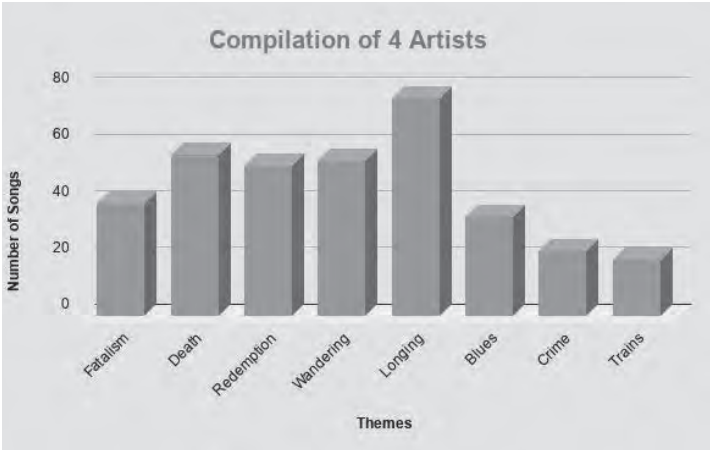
Figure 1: Song Distributed Across Ten Themes By Artists


The Carter Family
20
15
10
5
0
Number of Songs
Fatalism
Death
Redemption
Wandering
Longing
Blues
Crime/Punishm
Themes


Jimmie Rodgers Song Themes
15
10
5
0
Number of Songs
Fatalism
Death
Wandering
Longing
Blues
Crime
Trains
Themes

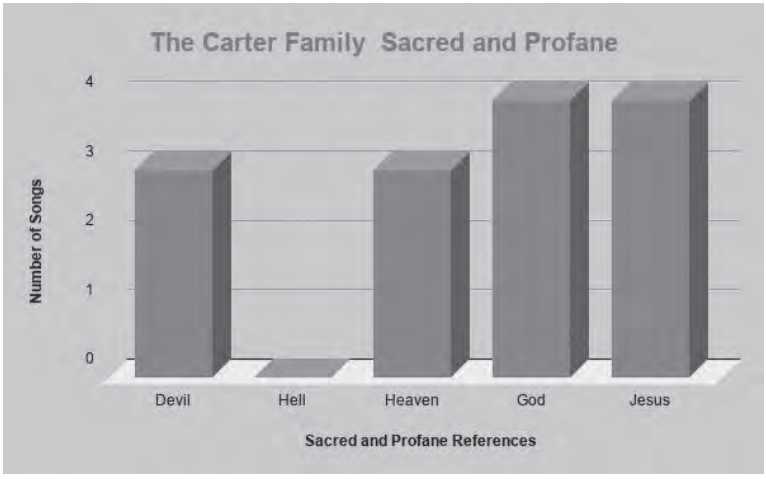

Uncle Dave Macon
Number of Songs
20
15
10
5
0
4
11
14
16
5
5
4
8
Fatalism
Death
Redemption
Wandering
Longing
Blues
Crime /
Trains
Themes

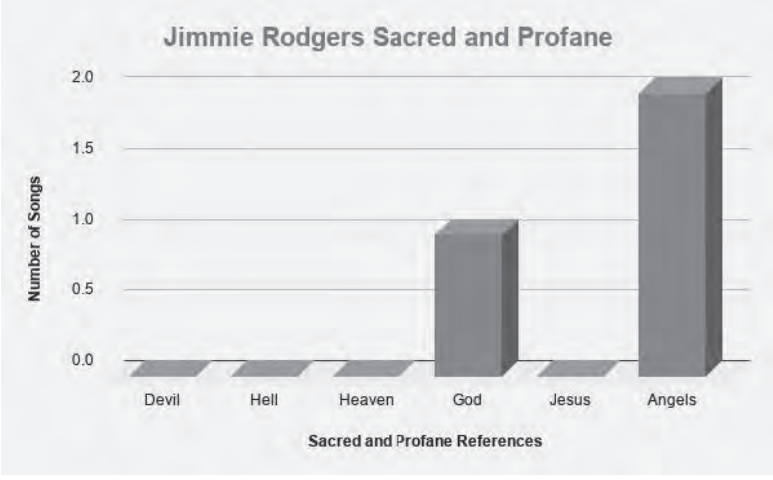

Hank Williams
Number of Songs
40
30
20
10
0
Fatalism
Death
Redemption
Wandering
Longing
Blues
Themes

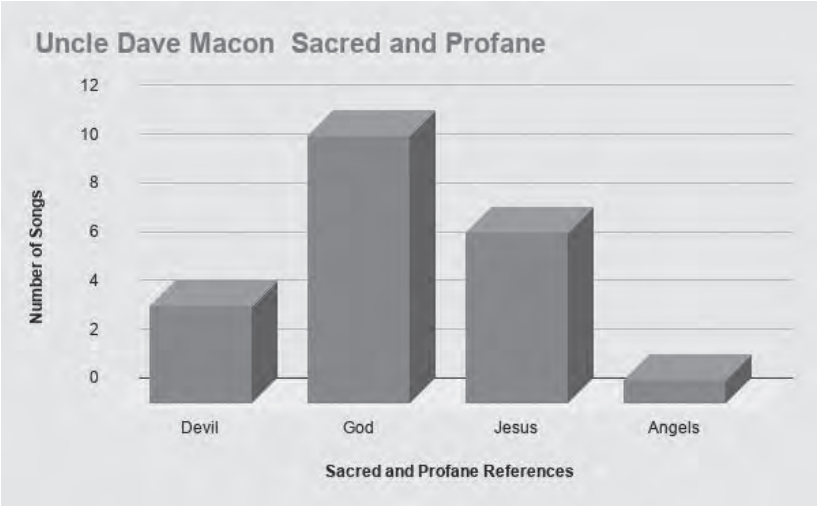


Most noticeable was the cursory treatment of *Hell* as an evangelical construct across all artists. Sacred and profane references varied greatly among the artists of the study. The Carter Family's songs were the most overtly Christian, while Jimmie Rodgers's songs represented the opposite idea; they were almost completely devoid of Christian themes. This is to be expected. From 1927 onwards, record companies and A&R men used this device to juxtapose the Carters and Rodgers, driving up record sales and recognition. The acceptance of the dichotomy of the sacred and the profane was adopted early on and was a signifier of cultural and religious tension that the country music audience would understand and accept without question. Jimmie Rodgers also attracted a cross-over audience that would have been outside a traditional evangelical Christian paradigm. A compilation of all artists shows that references to *Heaven*, *God*, and *Jesus* were the most prominent.

Figure 2: Sacred and Profane By Artist







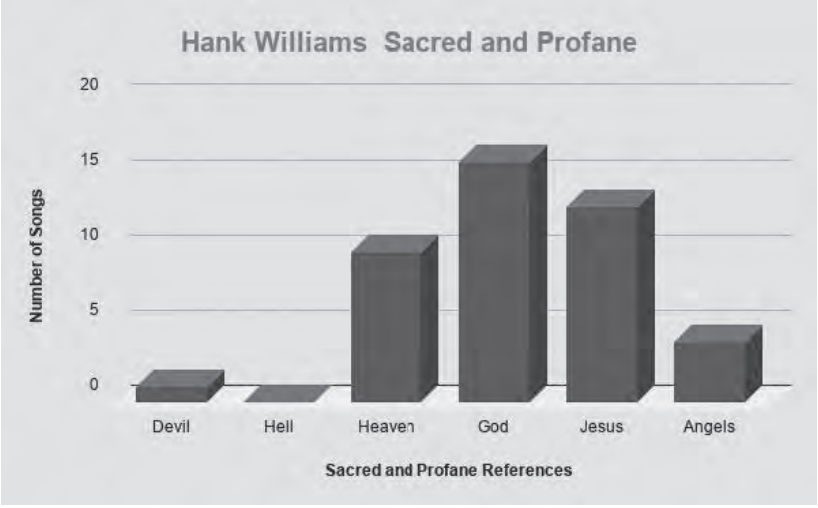
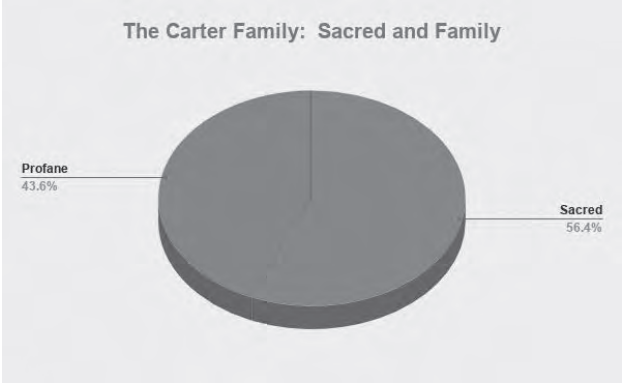
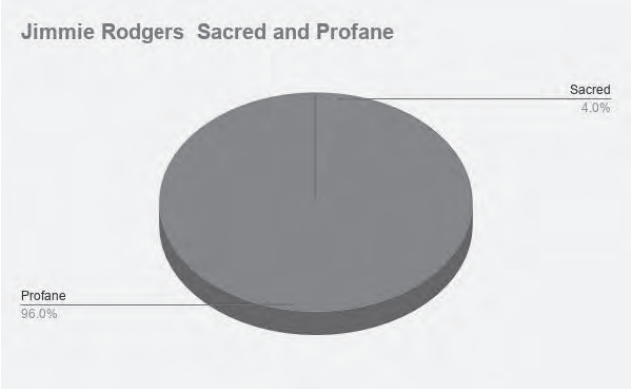
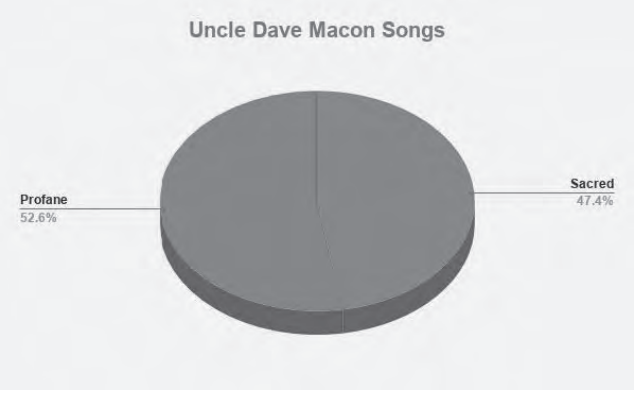
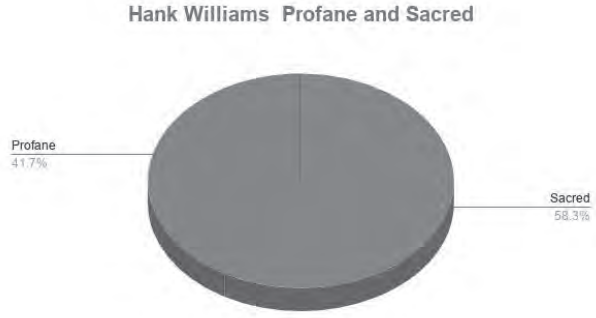


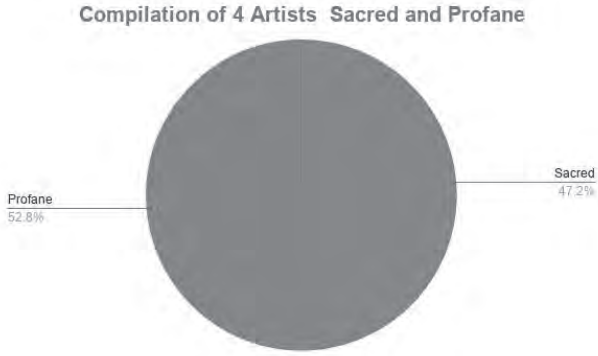
Figure 3: Percent Of Songs Sacred and Profane by Artist.


The Carter Family: Sacred and Family
Profane
43.6%
Sacred
56.4%


Jimmie Rodgers Sacred and Profane
Sacred
4.0%
Profane
96.0%


Uncle Dave Macon Songs
Profane
52.6%
Sacred
47.4%





The pie graphs compilation of the data across all artists shows how evenly distributed references to the sacred and the profane are—profane, 52.8%, and sacred 47.2%, a difference of only 5.6%. The pie graphs also reveal that the data are skewed by the Jimmie Rodgers sample—96% profane, 4% sacred. All other artist's data are fairly evenly distributed between the sacred and the profane, with the

profane being a larger percentage of the sample across all artists.

After analyzing the song lyric database using thematic analysis (10 themes previously discussed) and using content analysis (graphs/word cloud/findings previously discussed), analysis moved to an examination of the sacred and profane discourses that were present and/or promoted within the lyrics of the songs. In this effort, lyrics provided a lens on the historical narrative and cultural contexts of the time period. From the perspective of evangelical Christianity, all of the artists included in the study were enculturated within the fundamental beliefs of evangelical Christianity. The lyrics provide a window into the time, culture, and audience of that time in the way they do not in the modern era; even though many of the songs in this study are still performed, they take on different meanings for different generations. That's where the discourse in this study lies: within the lyrics themselves. The lyrics signify authenticity of the song itself——perhaps the most dominant of the discourses noted in this study.

Brian Alcorn (1998) stated that "from its very beginning, from the Carter Family and Jimmie Rodger's Bristol Sessions, country music has had two souls. One is pure, pious, and sentimental; the other, whiskey-bent and hell-bound" (p. 270). Alcorn acknowledged Hank Williams's place in the dichotomy of the sacred and the profane in country music when he said, "but no single artist has encompassed both halves of this spirit like Hank

Williams. He loved Jesus, women, and the bottle about equally" (p. 270). This is indicative of the dichotomy of the sacred and the profane and its entrenchment in the South, an area that historian C. Vann Woodward believed to have a sense of "defeat, pessimism, and irony not present in most of American culture" (Blaser, 1985, p. 210).

Discussion

Data clearly point to the Carter Family recording songs with Sacred terms and themes. Compared to Jimmie Rodgers recorded output, the metaphorical Profane polar opposite of the Carter Family, their designation is clearly appropriate. Yet, the Carter Family recorded output included a substantial content that fit within the Profane profile. The data also clearly suggest that Uncle Dave Macon and Hank Williams recorded a substantial content consistent with both the Sacred and the Profane concepts. Such data confirms that the Sacred and Profane dichotomy did indeed continue until the advent of the Nashville Sound in 1957 that terminated this research. Additional data collection beyond 1957 currently in process, as well as conceptual and analytical evidence suggests that despite a variety of shifts in U.S. culture, and specifically within the U.S. South, contemporary Country Music continues to manifest a surprising Sacred and Profane presence even into the third decade of the twenty-first century. One only needs to listen to Keith Urban's *God Whispered Your*

Name to recognize a variety of concepts consistent with the same cultural tensions and Evangelical Christian referents regarding being cold, lost, baptized, and saved.

The limits of the data sets presented could reveal greater subtleties if reliable sales data existed for the Carter Family recorded output. Tex Morton's biographer Andrew Smith developed a *Likeability Index (LI)* based on reliable sales figures. Smith indicates computation would be based upon the average sales for each song. Sales for songs containing the Sacred or Profane theme and supporting keywords may be divided by the average sales for songs without the Sacred and Profane them and supporting keywords. The figures may then be adjusted (by subtracting the number one) so that an index of zero suggests no decided preference for or against songs in that category. The *Likeability Index = [(average sales of song with Sacred and Profane themes and keywords) / (average sales of song without the Sacred and Profane themes and keywords] -1.* A more detailed explanation of the Likeability Index indicates.

$L = \log_e(A/N)$

Where:

A = average sales of songs with the attribute, and

N = average sales of songs without the attribute.

e (Euler's number) is the base of the natural logarithms, and is approximately equal to 2.7

$\log_e(A/N)$ can be written as $\ln(A/N)$

A positive index suggests that songs with the Sacred and Profane themes and keywords were more popular, based on long-term sales, than songs in which Sacred and Profane themes and keywords were absent. A negative result suggests the opposite. Songs with the themes and keywords present are less popular than those where the themes and keywords are not present. The *Likeability Index* does have a limiting factor. People may have purchased the Carter Family records with no preference for one side or the other. Lacking reliable purchase data for the Carter Family recordings the Likeabilty Index cannot be applied to provide further insight into the Sacred and Profane dichotomy. The Likeability Index will be applied in the future to Country Music recordings for which reliable sales data exists.

Conclusion

The Bristol Sessions, given the metaphorical designation of The Big Bang of Country Music, cannot claim to be the sole birthplace of Country Music. Besides extensive scholarship, The Birthplace of Country Music Museum (BCCMM) itself clearly details in its exhibits that *Early Arrivals* preceded The Bristol Sessions. In a train station style arrivals and departures table, the BCCMM announces the arrival of recordings by the likes of Eck Robertson (1922), Fiddlin' John Carson (1923), Dave Macon (1924), Charlie Poole (1926), and Gid Tanner & His Skillet Lickers

(1926). Country Music, like most genres must be viewed as polygenetic with the input of varied artists in varied locales helping to bring it to life. As a metaphor with both literal and symbolic valid dimensions, the Bristol Sessions did indeed contribute mightily to the crystallization of what became known as Country Music. Clearly, Jimmie Rodgers and the Carter Family loom as fundamental literal and metaphoric icons in the history of the genre. Likewise, the Carter Family and Jimmie Rodgers metaphorical designation as symbols of the Sacred and the Profane merit appropriate usage giving tangible, concrete referents deeply embedded in the Evangelical Protestant culture of the U.S. South which even contemporary Country Music continues to manifest in the third decade of the 21st Century.

This data analysis of The Carter Family reveals the limitations of their Sacred metaphorical designation. While a valid metaphor in the broad historical context, the Carter Family's recorded output points to secular as well as sacred output. Multiple, sometimes conflicting Sacred and Profane themes manifested themselves in individual recordings. Such data does not take into account elements of the Carter Family's personal life. One need not be an Evangelical Born Again Christian to realize that divorce often sent shock waves in families, friends, and churches committed to the sanctity and permanent belief that *what God hath put together no man should put asunder.* Nor does this statistical analysis probe into other aspects of the Carter Family behavior to question the literal accuracy of their

Sacred designation. Thus, this statistical analysis of the recorded output of the Carter Family points to the limits of the Sacred metaphorical label while accepting its utility and validity to conceptualize powerful cultural forces. The Sacred and the Profane dichotomy characterizes cultures other than the Christ Haunted U.S. South yet provides a useful tool in coming to grips with the complexities of Country Music from its inception and crystallization into the third decade of the 21st century.

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The Hames Sisters and CBC's Country Hoedown

by Linda J. Daniel

Introduction

The Hames Sisters were a Canadian singing trio who performed on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's television program *Country Hoedown* from 1956 to 1965. A February 1963 *Liberty* magazine article stated: "Each Friday evening on CBC Television three pretty red-headed sisters delight a national audience with their vocal harmonizing on Country Hoedown." As regulars on the show since its beginning, Norma, 26, sang alto and played piano, Marjorie, 24, sang lead soprano and played bass, while Jean, 23, sang second soprano and played vibes. Their photograph graced the cover, wearing identical blue dresses with white lace collars and leaning on some bales of hay.

Musical Background

The Hames Sisters were the third generation of the family to be involved with music. Their grandfather had led the Oxbow, Saskatchewan, town band in which all his 10 children, three girls and seven boys, played (*Liberty*, □). Their father was an accomplished musician who played

saxophone and clarinet and had his own dance band in Regina, Saskatchewan, in the 1930s (Hames Sisters – Meet The).

The sisters grew up near Toronto, Ontario, and were all professional musicians, having studied piano for 10 years and later learning to play other instruments. Primarily, they were singers, but their broad knowledge of music gave them the ability to learn new material quickly and helped make them Canada's best-known female trio (Ibid.).

Les Hames, their father, arranged his daughters' first three-part harmony song. From there, their career continued to grow. At first, they appeared in amateur shows, then church and school functions. After completing school, they began performing in nightclubs which took them to Quebec and the United States in Buffalo, Rochester, and Syracuse. "Back in Canada, their hard work paid off, and led to guest appearances on CBC television in Toronto" (Ibid.).

The 1950s

Stephen Cole, author of *Here's Looking at Us, Celebrating Fifty Years of CBC-TV*, claimed that "Variety shows ruled Canadian Television in the 50s. In crowded CBC-TV studios and in private affiliates across the land, emcees, gag men, canaries, hoofers, jazzbos, and fiddlers stirred alive every weeknight between 7 and 10" (14). Canadian country music performer, Tommy Hunter, recalled the fifties as "a heady time for all the networks, and the CBC

was right in the middle of this beehive of activity that was sweeping across North America." Toronto was its main hub (Hunter 131).

The CBC had a few prime-time television shows during this time whose main aim was to discover upcoming talent, such as *Now's Your Chance, Pick the Stars, and La couronne d'or* (Rutherford 192). In March 1955, the sisters made their first television appearance on Pick the Stars and won, which led to other appearances on the show (*Liberty,* □). While still teenagers, the siblings auditioned for *The Denny Vaughan Show* and were hired (Tong).

Elsewhere in Canada, Lucille Starr had begun her singing career in Vancouver, British Columbia in 1954. A year later, at the age of 14, Myrna Lorrie had her biggest hit with "Are You Mine?" By 1956, Lucille Starr and Bob Regan had formed the Canadian Sweethearts and would tour extensively throughout the world for the next two decades. In 1959, Sylvia Fricker began singing with Ian Tyson in Yorkville Village, Toronto (Melhuish 56-62).

CBC's Country Hoedown

According to Bob Blackburn, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation "felt a need for a new show which would bring the unregenerate country-and-western music fan back to the fold." Cliff McKay's Holiday Ranch had become "too citified and sophisticated." Drew Crossan, producer of *Pick the Stars*, was asked to develop a pilot show.

Country Hoedown began as a summer replacement for *Holiday Ranch* on the CBC (Hunter 128). Like its predecessor, there was much banter and kidding around on the new show (Rutherford 207). It was one of the earlier Canadian television programs, dйbuting in 1956 (Tapp 62).

Format

The *Country Hoedown* set was a simple, authentic looking old-fashioned barn and the presentation was "very straightforward country." Gordie Tapp introduced all the acts, except when he did his Cousin Clem comedy routine, and then he would be introduced by one of the singers. King Ganam played the fiddle and conducted the band. The singers each sang a solo [including the Hames Sisters, Tommy Common, Tommy Hunter, and Lorraine Foreman]. It was only a half-hour show so there was little time left over, except for commercials, many of which were done live (Hunter 130-131).

A group known as the Singing Swinging Eight both sang and danced. "Their square dances were simple celebrations of harmony and fun, unlike the complicated and subtle routines of modern dancing. The old-time morality was always around to inform or uplift." The show ended with the entire cast dancing and singing "Love is the Only Thing" (Rutherford 208).

They rehearsed Mondays and Wednesdays and most of the day on Fridays, with the show being televised live at

8 p.m. Friday evening (Hunter 130). There were comedy acts, skits, and country music. “It had a very country, down-home Canadian feel to it” (Collins 51).

Paul Rutherford wrote in *When Television was Young that shows like Country Hoedown,* which he deemed to be “old-fashioned variety,” seemed quaint with a message of “timelessness and togetherness.” As an example of this friendly persona, Rutherford described an episode of the show on September 8th, 1962. It “began with four couples [the Singing Swinging Eight] singing ‘Come Right In. It’s Country Hoedown Time.’ Gordie Tapp, the emcee, then welcomed the audience with ‘Hi there, friends and neighbours’; the phrase ‘friends and neighbours’ he repeated constantly throughout the half-hour. The language was colloquial, folksy, down to earth” (207).

Live On Air

The performances on *Country Hoedown* were done “live on air,” adding an exciting dimension to the show. Gordie Tapp explained, “Live television is different than taped television because in a taped show you knew you could correct the situation. When we did it live, you knew that if the door didn’t open, it wasn’t going to open, and so you had to ad-lib your way around it. We had to ad-lib on many occasions” (Tapp 63).

In 1963, *Country Hoedown* was “about the only variety show left that’s telecast live, and so has a spontaneity

the viewer can sense." By this time, the cast had been together for so long that there was a familiarity among its members that led to "a formidable amount of clowning" during rehearsals which carried over into the live show (Blackburn).

Original Cast Members

The Hames Sisters

Producer Drew Crossan was impressed with some of the performers on *Pick the Stars,* especially a group called the Hames Sisters who were both a vocal and instrumental trio (Blackburn). In 1955, the sisters heard about the new show and auditioned successfully (Hames Sisters – Meet the).

For many years, the Hames Sisters worked with arranger and coach Art Snider. A member of one of Toronto's best-known musical families, Snider was credited with helping them to become successful. Their first album, entitled *Meet the Hames Sisters,* was produced by Snider, who did the vocal arrangements and led the orchestra. The songs for the LP were chosen by suggestions from tens of thousands of fan mail they received from their numerous television and public appearances, along with three of their own personal favourites (Ibid.).

The following photographs show the Hames Sisters on the set of Country Hoedown and appeared in Gordie Tapp's autobiography: gathered around a piano, singing

with the entire cast of *Country Hoedown* (Tapp 56, *CBC Still Photo Collection);* leaning on a piano, flanked by Tommy Common and Tommy Hunter, watching Cousin Clem's comedy routine (Tapp 58, *CBC Still Photo Collection);* during a dress rehearsal, wearing elegant dresses and sitting on some bales of hay with Gordie Tapp seated behind them (Tapp 59, *CBC Still Photo Collection);* and standing with the original cast of *Country Hoedown*, including King Ganam, Tommy Hunter, Tommy Common, Lorraine Foreman, and Gordie Tapp, the trio wearing matching gingham dresses with puffed sleeves and full skirts (Tapp 85, *Library and Archives Canada / Gordie Tapp Collection).* In another photograph, the sisters were standing on the tarmac in stylish short fur coats, ready for a trip to entertain the Canadian troops, with Gordie Tapp and Tommy Hunter behind them (Tapp 54, *Library and Archives Canada / Gordie Tapp Collection).* Except for the photograph on the tarmac, the sisters, while on the stage, were dressed identically.

Lorraine Foreman

Before coming to *Country Hoedown,* Lorraine Foreman had toured across Canada and England, primarily as a pop vocalist (Hunter 130). In 1954, she performed in the original London production of Wedding in Paris in the West End ("Lorraine . . ."). Like the Hames Sisters, her successful appearance on the Canadian talent show *Pick the Stars* resulted in her being "pushed into the limelight" (Rutherford 192).

Foreman had started out on television doing the *Country Hoedown* show and recalled how much fun it was (CBC TV). She was the show's first female solo performer ". . . and it was no surprise that she went on and did so well in Hollywood and Broadway" (Tapp 62). In 1957, she was featured on the cover of *Chatelaine for the Canadian Woman* (CBC TV). The cast had grown very fond of Foreman but, during the middle years of *Country Hoedown*, she "decided to resume her solo career as a vocalist" (Hunter 160).

Gordie Tapp

"Canadian entertainer Gordie Tapp was a comedian, musician and script writer who found success in radio and TV . . ." ("London-born . . ."). He was working at radio station CHML in Hamilton, Ontario, when he was asked to do a country music show called *Main Street Jamboree*, which eventually went to the CBC network radio and then to television on Channel 11 (Tapp 53). W*hen Main Street Jamboree* needed a comedic character, Tapp created Cousin Clem, his best-known alter ego. In his autobiography entitled *What's on Tapp? The Gordie Tapp Story, alias Cousin Clem,* Tapp asserted, "Cousin Clem is a hick, but he's not stupid, ... He could be made fun of, but he seems to have the upper hand" (135).

For some time, Crossan had been trying to lure Tapp away from his successful job in Hamilton. He thought Cousin Clem would be ideal for the new show (Blackburn).

In 1956, Tapp left *Main Street Jamboree* to join the cast of *Country Hoedown* (Tapp 53).

"Gordie Tapp was the host and resident country bumpkin, a role he later reprised in the long-running American country music/comedy series *Hee Haw.* Nobody in America seemed to notice that his hick farmer character was a quintessential Canadian" (Collins 51). Initially, Tapp imitated the accent of his relatives from Exeter, Ontario, but later, when he moved to *Hee Haw*, gave Clem a more southern accent (Tapp 135).

King Ganam

Ameen Ganam was born in Swift Current, Saskatchewan, and started fiddling at the age of five. A recording company gave him the nickname "King" after he won a "King of the Fiddlers" contest. In 1942, he organized a group called Sons of the West which had a repertoire of 1,000 jigs and reels. He moved to Toronto in 1950, where he established a new Sons of the West group, and they began playing on radio and at dances on Saturday nights at Casa Loma ("Fiddling . . .").

Ganam had been Holiday Ranch's most popular entertainer, so in 1956, when the CBC decided "to try out a low-budget country-western variety show as a summer replacement," Crossan asked him to join *Country Hoedown.* As part of the deal, the fiddler requested that a young guitar player in his band be allowed to sing one song a

month. Crossan agreed. The singer's name was Tommy Hunter (Blackburn).

During the 1950s, King Ganam was "the reigning western music star of Canadian television." He has been described as "The tall, shy fiddler with the riverboat-gambler moustache and trademark wink who headlined *Country Hoedown*." Within weeks, the show was a success among Canadian television entertainment ("Fiddling . . .").

Tommy Hunter

In his autobiography, *Tommy Hunter, My Story,* the performer recalled riding back from playing a show with King Ganam and the Sons of the West in 1956. King told him that the CBC was looking for a summer replacement for Holiday Ranch. There was to be a pilot show and, if successful, it would mean being on the air for 13 weeks across the entire CBC network. Hunter was thrilled to do the pilot and, after it was completed, waited anxiously for any news. Finally, he received a phone call from King Ganam who said, "'Well, Tommy, run a comb through your hair and polish up your teeth, . . .You're going on television!'" (as qtd. in Hunter 128).

In 1956, T*ommy Hunter* joined Country Hoedown as a rhythm guitarist in King Ganam's Sons of the West ("Today . . ."). He was with the show for nine years, while at the same time "fronting a live, five-day-a-week country-music show on the national radio network" (Neister).

In 1965, the CBC gave Hunter his own show. The *Tommy Hunter Show replaced* Country Hoedown and "It became one of the most popular TV variety programs in the country, and received international exposure via *The Nashville Network* pay TV channel in the U.S." When it was cancelled by the CBC in 1992, "it was the longest-running music show on any North American network ("Today . . .").

For his 60th birthday and to mark 50 years in show business, Hunter was Guest of Honour at a benefit gala in the Imperial Room of the Royal York in Toronto (Neister). The Hames Sisters, among many others, joined him on stage that night, while Gordon Lightfoot was in the audience (Adilman).

Tommy Common

Drew Crossan decided that Tommy Common's "dimpled good looks were just what the new Country Hoedown show needed." Common did not know any country songs so Crossan sent him away to learn "Wagon Wheels" and told him to come back on Friday. "Common, a boyish figure measuring 5 feet 7 inches and weighing 135 pounds, pulled in 1,000 fan letters a week. He was Canada's answer to Pat Boone. And the audience loved him" (Bye).

A Saint John, New Brunswick, radio station voted him their favourite Canadian singer. "When the Hoedown cast went on tour performing at armed forces bases, it was Common who garnered cartoon drawings from soldiers

saying 'We love you, Tommy.'" *Herald reporter,* Bob Bergen, remembered that long after Country Hoedown had ended, older women would still stop Common on the street and tell him how much they had liked him on the show (Ibid.).

Gordie Tapp described Common as a great artist and performer. "He'd work those songs over, never needed a retake. I was amazed" (Tapp 63). His friends from the show portrayed him as "a happy-go-lucky charmer who enjoyed a good joke," especially if it was played on another member of the cast. Norma Hames recalled that he was clever, articulate, talented, fun to work with, and always good to them (Bye).

Gordon Lightfoot

Talent agent, Art Snider, through his connections with the CBC, heard about an opening on *Country Hoedown*. He encouraged Gordon Lightfoot to audition. Lightfoot soon joined their ranks as one of the Singing Swinging Eight. ". . . Lightfoot loved the show's colourful characters, especially Gordie Tapp, who was pure cornball, and the redheaded Hames Sisters – Jean, Marjorie and Norma – who were 'cute, bubbly and a lot of fun'" (as qtd. in Jennings 36). Marjorie Hames declared, "'The three of us always thought what a great singing voice Gordie (Lightfoot) had and thought he would make it at some point'" (as qtd. in Tong).

Lightfoot signed with Snider while still a member of a singing duo called the Two Tones. Snider had

extensive experience with the industry's booking side, "but also, according to Lightfoot, he was willing to give up his performers if they were capable of becoming more successful than he could handle" (Collins 62).

As a musician and record producer, Snider helped launch Lightfoot's career. He convinced the singer/songwriter to drive down to Nashville with him to record Gordon's self-penned song "Remember Me," among others, with session greats like Chet Atkins, Grady Martin, Floyd Cramer, and Hargus "Pig" Robbins. Upon its release, the song started climbing the charts, and the producers of Country Hoedown asked Lightfoot to sing it on the show. It was his first vocal solo and "Everyone praised his smooth, confident performance" (Jennings 38-40). Upon Gordon Lightfoot's induction into the Canadian Music Hall of Fame at the 1986 Juno Awards, "he paid tribute to Snider for starting his career" ("Art Snider, . . .").

The Singing Swinging Eight

The Singing Swinging Eight were "a group of terrific singers and dancers on the show." However, according to Tommy Hunter, they were not so much dancers as singers "who with some rehearsal could do a bit of square dancing." Two of them, Billy Van and Gordon Lightfoot, went on to have "wonderful careers of their own" (Hunter 179-180).

As a member of the Singing Swinging Eight, Lightfoot was at ease with the singing part, but dancing was not his forte. He did a total of 250 shows, always afraid of forgetting

his dance steps or his lines. The singer/songwriter admitted candidly, "'I was an atrocious dancer. Bloody awful. I was the one who was always doin' a do-si-do instead of an allemande left. The only reason they kept me was I was so bloody good at sight reading'" (as qtd. in Collins 51). Having attended Westlake, a music school in California, he had learned to read and write music and that was his saving grace (Ibid.).

Art Snider

Art Snider began his career playing piano in Toronto area bands while still a teenager (CCMA). Later, as a talent scout, arranger, band leader, and vocal coach, he became the driving force behind the scenes of *Country Hoedown* (Kanitz).

From 1956 to 1965, Snider directed the chorus for *Country Hoedown* and from 1965 to 1970, for *The Tommy Hunter Show.* He established and ran his own label, Chateau Records, from 1956 to 1961, releasing 30 LPs and 60 singles by several artists such as the Hames Sisters, the Allen Sisters (Snider was married to Jackie), Pat Hervey, Gordon Lightfoot (as a duo called the Two Tones), his brother, Lou Snider, Trump Davidson, Tommy Ambrose, and others (*Canadian …).*

Your Country Dance Party, Chateau Records' first LP, was a success. It contained "several well-known local country-style musicians" who backed John Davidson, a square-dance caller from *Country Hoedown*. "It was

the first album in the field made entirely by Canadian artists" (Kanitz).

Snider always championed Canadian talent. He claimed that most radio stations ignored Canadian records or, at best, gave them "a sort of condescending nod treatment." In a May 1961 Toronto Daily Star article, Snider asserted: "There is so much good talent in Canada that a 95 per cent [Canadian Content] rule couldn't scare me!" Out to prove his point, his own Chateau Records promoted Canadian talent only (Ibid.). In 1984, Snider claimed that his whole life had been about talent development ("Art Snider . . .").

The Essence of CBC's Country Hoedown

Hunter remembered *Country Hoedown's* delightful camaraderie: "None of us on the cast was ever out to imitate or to outdo anyone else; we were just very young, enthusiastic performers who loved working together and wanted to do the best for our audiences" (Hunter 134-135). Being a member of the television show's cast, "There was never a dull moment, whether we were just clowning around on the set, or else laughing our way through those odd accidents of fate that always seemed to occur in the wrong place at the wrong time." Over the years, Country Hoedown included fiddle contests and ethnic dance segments from across Canada, including Indigenous performers (139-144).

The cast came from a variety of performing backgrounds, but the one thing they had in common was the fact that, except for King Ganam, no one had worked previously on a regular television network. Hunter stated: "I guess that element we all shared at the beginning had a lot to do with the way we all banded together and really pulled for each other; and our enthusiasm and eagerness must have been infectious, because all the cameramen and other crew members very much joined in the feeling of togetherness that made Hoedown so much fun and such an instant success" (130).

Crossan opined: ". . . the cast are naturally nice people, on or off camera. They have a happy relationship. . . . They like each other and respect each other's talents. That fact enables them to work as a group outside television. They travel and do personal appearances together, always with fantastic success. Some of them once played to 25,000 people in two nights in a town of 900'" (as qtd. in Blackburn).

Popularity

On January 10th, 1958, The *Toronto Telegram stated that Country Hoedown* was drawing 2.5 million viewers each week (Rutherford 548). "The show consistently topped the TV ratings" (Bye). International Surveys ratings of November 1960 and 1961 found, to no one's surprise, that C*ountry Hoedown* was "much more popular in the Maritimes and

on the Prairies and in farm and town than elsewhere in the country" (Rutherford 458). Due to their exposure on Country Hoedown, the Hames Sisters' fan base grew. "We got a couple hundred pieces of fan mail a week and wrote back to many of them,' said Marjorie" (as qtd. in Tong).

The critics found the popularity of the so-called "old-fashioned variety" shows like *Country Hoedown* to be astounding. "Country Hoedown' consistently outscored rival 'showbiz' programs made by CBC-Toronto. When Norma Hames's baby was born, cards, letters, and even gifts were sent in by devout fans – 'a handknit sweater,' 'a bunting bag,' 'two sets of jackets and bonnets, with matching booties,' 'a pair of beaded moccasins'" (Rutherford 206).

Bob Blackburn wrote in 1963: "Hoedown is the longest-running variety show in Canada." For many years it was often in the top 10 favourites across the nation and could compete successfully with other popular shows like *Hazel* and The *Beverley Hillbillies.* Although low-budget, it was "one of the CBC's greatest triumphs."

In 1964, "Variety" stated: "One of the oldest shows on the national network, *[Country Hoedown]* can still, after eight consecutive seasons, outdraw most U.S. and Canadian programs." It was a Canadian show with Canadian performers that appealed to Canadians. The show exuded a warmth and there was an evident relaxation among members of the cast that made its success easy to understand.

Personal Appearances

In addition to the television show, the *Country Hoedown* cast travelled from coast to coast, "doing service clubs, exhibitions, winter carnivals, trade fairs, rodeos, and all the other terrific local events that are so characteristic of small towns across Canada." On the road, Hunter described the group as more of a family who, after the shows, would order in a couple of pizzas and get together in somebody's hotel room, sitting around in their pyjamas, talking (Hunter 164).

The Hames Sisters were featured on the Arthur Godfrey radio show in New York and in Missouri on country music legend Red Foley's show (Tong). In a *Toronto Daily Star* article on August 22nd, 1957, entitled "Top Artists Feature Star Free Concerts at Bandshell," they appeared with King Ganam on August 27th and September 5th. In the summer of 1959, "the crowd went wild" when the trio walked on the stage of the Canadian National Exhibition Grandstand in Toronto, opening for Danny Kaye. They performed at Maple Leaf Gardens, Toronto, as part of skating champion Barbara Ann Scott's ice show (Tong). They sang in a concert at the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) headquarters in Downsview, Ontario, along with Pat Hervey [who later joined the *Country Hoedown* cast], Gordie Tapp, Tommy Hunter, Tommy Common, and John Davidson, leader of the Singing Swinging Eight (Tapp 94, *CBC Still Photo Collection*).

The sisters also made personal appearances in Saskatchewan at the Grand Opening of the Sherwood Co-op, Regina's first complete downtown shopping centre; for "CKRD presents The Stars of Country Hoedown" at the Red Deer Arena in Alberta on December 8th, 1962; at the Cockshutt 1963 Variety Show in Caledon, Ontario; and at the Stampede Corral (Gordie . . .). In 1964, the Hames Sisters performed in France and Germany for the Canadian Army and travelled across Canada doing shows like the Fisheries Exhibition in Nova Scotia, Klondike Days in Edmonton, and the Calgary Stampede, both in Alberta (Tong). In a September 3rd, 1994, edition of the Toronto Star, at 7:30 p.m. on Channel 5, "Country Hoedown's Hames Sisters" were listed under a program called "Jubilee Years."

Being a Female Country Music Singer in the 1950s

Throughout the 1950s, middle class women's prime identity was usually constructed around being a wife, mother, and homemaker. Kitty Wells, whose real name was Muriel Deason, was 33 years of age when she became a country music star. In their seminal tome, *Finding Her Voice, Women in Country Music 1800–2000,* Mary A. Bufwack and Robert K. Oermann stated: "Publicly, [Wells] sang of guilt and remorse, of illicit romance and sin, of betrayal and broken dreams. Privately, she was the polite mother of three

and a shy, soft-spoken, dutiful housewife. She was steeped in tradition but became a star as an innovator" (150).

Stephanie Vander Wel writes in *Hillbilly Maidens, Okies, and Cowgirls,* how "the country music industry strove to market its female performers as examples of domestic respectability." Men, too, were pushed to portray "middle-class propriety in the 1950s" by the mostly male, conservative country music industry, even if the reality was often far from the truth (175-176). Any woman during this era, who did not behave in what was then considered to be within the "normal" range of 1950s' female decorum, would be labelled as "abnormal" or psychologically "sick" (Bufwack and Oermann 149).

Country music star Jean Shepard, in her autobiography entitled Through the Years, explained how difficult it was to become a headlining female singer in the early days. It was only through her association with established country music singer Hank Thompson, who believed in her talent, that Shepard received her "big launch." She recalled, "Hank told his producer at Capitol, Ken Nelson, 'I've found this little girl who can sing; I think she's going to be big.' At the time Ken didn't want to give me a contract. He said, 'There's no place in country music for women. But every band needs a girl singer'" (54-55). With the help of Thompson, Shepard eventually secured a contract with Capitol Records at the age of 19 (63-64). But encouragement was hard to come by. In 1952, Shepard remembered meeting Hank Williams at the Happy Go

Lucky Dance Hall. “He told me ‘There ain’t many women in country music.’ I told him that I was about to change that. He said, ‘Good luck to you, sweetheart’” (64). By 1955, Jean Shepard had become a member of the Grand Ole Opry, when there were only three other women on the show: singer Kitty Wells, comedian Minnie Pearl, and pianist Del Woods (Bufwack and Oermann 159).

In the 1950s, women were usually given the role of a “girl” singer in a male-led band or were part of a husband-wife duo. Shepard was among the first women in country music to front her own tour and sing on topics that dealt frankly with love, helping pave the way for artists such as Loretta Lynn and Dolly Parton” (Burns).

Media Representation

The way in which the Hames Sisters were portrayed by the media during their time on *Country Hoedown* and after leaving the show in 1965, supported the notion of how females were expected to look and behave during the 1950s and early1960s. The trio’s marital status was often highlighted but, interestingly, they were still referred to as “girls.” Family was important. For example, the liner notes of their album *Meet the Hames Sisters* stated: “Although Norma, the oldest, and Jean the youngest, are married, the girls still meet at the comfortable home of their parents to rehearse” (Hames Sisters – Meet The).

"Hames Sisters Enjoy Homelife" was the headline of a June 14th, 1958, article in the *Toronto Daily Star,* which included four photographs. Under the first was the caption: "The Hames Sisters, Norma, Jean and Marge." They were dressed identically in striped, long-sleeved blouses and full, dark skirts almost reaching their ankles, wearing high-heeled shoes. All the sisters were looking directly at the camera, smiling, their conservative dress a part of their "girl-next-door" image.

Photograph two, entitled "Mother and Dad Join Sisters in Jam Session," emphasized their family ties, not only with each other, but with their parents as well. Marjorie stood beside the upright bass, Norma sat at the piano, and in the background, Jean played the vibraphone. Their parents were also playing instruments. All the females were smiling dutifully (Ibid.).

The third photograph, "Jean, Marge and Norma Work in Kitchen," displayed their domesticity. One sister washed the dishes while another dried them. The third was leaning on what looked like the handle of a broom. They were all wearing aprons around their waists. Photograph four revealed their sex appeal by showing the siblings in bathing suits with the questionable explanation: "Norma, Marge and Jean Ready for Swim" (Ibid.).

As gifted singers and instrumentalists, the last two photographs were blatantly sexist and incongruous. How did doing everyday chores in a kitchen or posing in bathing suits relate to the Hames Sisters' talents for which they

had become known nationally? Clearly, the author was trying to assure the readers that the Hames Sisters were fulfilling the expected role of the 1950s' female and not neglecting their duties at home while, at the same time, being television stars.

The author's attempt to portray the sisters as "normal" women of the fifties was found in a paragraph which followed the four photographs described above. It asserted: "Life in the Hames [sic] household is much the same as it is in any other house in spite of the fact that Norma, Jean and Marge Hames have risen to stardom on CBC's Country Hoedown show. Like most girls, the sisters are interested in housework and enjoy making their own clothes" (Ibid.).

Being "interested in housework" and "making their own clothes" was in line with acceptable female activities during this era. Although one photograph showed the sisters playing their instruments, their musicianship was not discussed in the article. To end the piece, the author stated that the Hames Sisters would be going on a summer tour across Canada and made sure to point out the fact that they would be wearing western outfits they had "fashioned themselves" (Ibid.).

Paul Rutherford noted that the Liberty magazine article about the Hames Sisters, written by Cathy Perkins, seemed more interested in their television personalities than with their artistry. Perkins assured the reader that the Hames Sisters, whom the viewer watched on television, who dressed the same and sang traditional songs, and were

"noted for their warm simplicity," were, in fact, no different away from the camera than in front of it. They were "the same sincere, home-loving, affectionate folks" whether at home or on television (as qtd. in Rutherford 203).

In the fifties, keeping the average woman content with staying home and fulfilling the duties of a housewife and mother was important. Nothing in the article written by Perkins alluded to the talented trio's sheer joy, excitement, and personal fulfillment with respect to their interesting lives as performing artists.

Life After CBC's Country Hoedown

By the middle of the 1960s, CBC had begun to "retire or spruce up or replace existing shows and stars." *Country Hoedown* was losing its appeal, even with the attempt of "better sets and sophisticated sketches, both of which made the regulars uneasy because the innovations ill-suited the show's temper." In the fall of 1965, it was replaced by The Tommy Hunter Show, supposedly "a more youthful style of program" (Rutherford 217).

After the trio left *Country Hoedown* in 1965, Betty Stapleton wrote "Hanes [sic] Sisters show that family and showbusiness can mix" for the *Toronto Daily Star* (1900-1971) on April 26th, 1967. The Hames Sisters were photographed with a young child seated on each sister's lap. The commentary established the fact that the sisters, once again, were able to be professional entertainers while

at the same time cheerfully doing domestic chores and taking care of their children. Norma Hames was referred to as "Mrs. Ronald Manson" who had two children, one of whom sat on the lap of her unmarried sister, Marjorie. Jean was now "Mrs. David Newberry" and was the "proud mother of a daughter." Strong family ties were once again accentuated.

In a 1982 *Toronto Star* article, "Part-time fame is all right for Hames," William Burrill stated that the sisters tried performing full-time after *Country Hoedown* ended but decided it did not suit their lifestyle. Travelling and working in bars was not what they wanted to do, even though they admitted to still loving to perform. They considered themselves lucky to have been on a show like *Country Hoedown* for nine years and had enjoyed entertaining on television, learning new work every week. The accompanying photograph showed the sisters at a *Country Hoedown* Reunion in 1981, with the caption "Hoedown Hames: The Hames Sisters helped make Country Hoedown a hit in the 1950s."

Marjorie played electric bass with a trio in Toronto nightclubs and the sisters got together frequently to entertain hospital patients, do an annual concert at the Scarborough Civic Centre, and accept the occasional singing engagement, "keeping an eye on the latest musical member of the family – Norma's son, Allan." Norma Hames stated, "'You know, we sang at Earl Haig recently as part of their 50th anniversary celebrations, and it was

such a thrill to be back up there on that same old stage, with my son playing in the orchestra'" (as qtd. in Gamester).

Norma's daughter recalled her mother's continual sense of humour when she described a show in which "Mom dressed up as a very voluptuous older Dolly Parton as she comically sang, 'Here You Come Again.' She got a good laugh out of everyone'" (as qtd. in Tong).

Conclusion

Stephen Cole considered the success of *Country Hoedown* and others of the same ilk, to being down-to-earth: " . . . it was the performers who tried to be themselves (or at least ordinary Canadians) as opposed to stars who had the longest run on CBC-TV. The featured performers on *Country Hoedown* (1956-1965) . . . were always called 'regulars.' And their shows attempted to be no more than end-of-a-hard week reprieves for ordinary working folk" (19).

Canadians seemed to enjoy watching "real, unvarnished people" and the regulars on *Country Hoedown* were authentic. The Hames Sisters were real sisters and the other stars on the show, such as Gordie Tapp and Tommy Hunter, were known to go fishing together on their time off when doing summer tours like the Medicine Hat Rodeo, Red River Exhibition, or Calgary Stampede (20). The cast seemed to enjoy each other's company and "performed each show with obvious enthusiasm and little evident strain" which delighted their audiences (21-23).

The three redheads, who had started out on *Country Hoedown* as three rather nervous young women, became a polished act whose versatility broadened throughout the years into accomplished performers. They had a natural ability for comedy which made them a highlight on a show known for its "natural corn." But they could also sing "a sincere song of a spiritual nature, or swing along with a bright novelty number" (Hames Sisters – Meet The).

Over the years, millions of Canadians watched with delight as the Hames Sisters performed on Country Hoedown (Ibid.). In 1978, George Gamester wrote: "The Hames Sisters. There's one that should bring back memories for anyone who watched CBC-TV back in the late 1950s and early '60s – memories of three pleasant redheads who seemed to personify such words as "sweet," "nice" and "demure." But not only were they nice people, they were talented musicians who sang beautiful harmony and played their own instruments. The Hames Sisters were a Canadian treasure from the country's early days in television and will be remembered as one of its first talented female trios.

Partial Discography

Hames Sisters – Museum of Canadian Music.
http://citizenfreak.com.

Hames Sisters

I Promise b/w Tell Me the Story of Love

Format: 45
Label: Chateau C 102
Year: 1958
Origin: North York, Ontario
Genre: country

Meet the Hames Sisters

Format: LP
Labels: Chateau CLP 1004 and Canatal Records
CTLP 4019
Year: 1960
Origin: North York, Ontario
Genre: country, pop
Recorded at Newberry Sound Studios, Toronto, Ontario
Recording Engineers: Dave Newberry and Art Snider
Producer: Art Snider
Cover Photo: Robert Ragsdale
The following information is found on the album cover:

Side One:

1. One Time Too Many – by Boudleaux Bryant, Acuff-Rose – BMI
2. Red River Valley – PD
3. Walking to Missouri – by Bob Merril, Hawthorne – CAPAC
4. Just a Little Lovin' – by Arnold-Clements, Hill & Range – BMI
5. I Forgot More – by Cecil Null, Fairway – BMI

6. Poor Old Heartsick Me – by Helen Carter, Acuff-Rose – BMI

Side Two:

7. Fantasy – by Bob Lavigne, Hill & Range – BMI
8. Indiscrete Love – by Les Pouliot, Arod – BMI
9. Billy McCoy
10. Chat-Chat-Chattanooga
11. Without Love – by Ruth Nash, Ardo – BMI
12. Moaning the Blues – by Hank Williams, Acuff-Rose – BMI 3345.ca, https://3345.ca

Singles:

13. We Were Walking / Where Mommy Hid The Easter Eggs. Apex, 9, 76138 M, 7" 45 1957 [with Denny Vaughan Orchestra].
14. Hey Boy / One More Kiss. Regency, R 725 M, 7" 45 1958 [Orchestra Conducted by Art Snider, Made in Canada].
15. For Always / Tiger Rag. Regency, R 772 M, 7" 45 1959.
16. I Promise / Tell Me The Story Of Love. Chateau, C, 102 M, 7" 45 1960 [Arr. & Cond. by Art Snider].
17. One Song / I Smell Something Burning. Chateau, C, 110 M, 7" 45. [Arr. & Cond. by Art Snider, Made in Canada]

18. Ray St. Germain with the Hames Sisters: Orchestra Conducted by Bob McMullin. LP. http://citizenfreak.com.
19. Ray St. Germain (b. 1940) is one of Manitoba's best known Metis singers and songwriters. The Hames Sisters joined Ray in six of the numbers on his album.
20. Recording Engineer: Bill Giles
21. Recording Supervisor: Johnny Burt
22. Executive Producer: J. Lyman Potts.

Side One

23. Traveling Shoes (vocal support by the Hames Sisters), Composer: Wayne P. Walker, Year: 1967, Performing Rights: BMI
24. Don't Tell Me Your Troubles, Composer: Alex Paris, Year: 1968, Performing Rights: BMI, a Canadian composition
25. Nobody's Darling But Mine (vocal support by the Hames Sisters), Composer: Davis, Year: 1935, Performing Rights: CAPAC
26. There's a Goldmine in the Sky, Composer: Charles & Nick Kenny, Year: 1937, Performing Rights: CAPAC
27. One (vocal support by the Hames Sisters), Composer: Ray St. Germain, Year: 1968, Performing Rights: CAPAC, a Canadian composition

Side Two

28. Everybody Has to Fall in Love (vocal support by the Hames Sisters), Composer: Ray St. Germain, Year: 1968, Performing Rights: CAPAC, a Canadian composition
29. Half As Much, Composer: Curley Williams, Year: 1951, Performing Rights: BMI
30. King of the Road (vocal support by the Hames Sisters), Composer: Roger Miller, Year: 1965, Performing Rights: BMI
31. Happy Days and Lonely Nights, Composer: Rose-Fisher, Year: 1928, Performing Rights: CAPAC
32. Make the World Go Away (vocal support by the Hames Sisters), Composer: Hank Cochran, Year: 1966, Performing Rights: BMI
33. Midnight Moon, Composer: Lloyd McGuire, Year: 1968, Performing Rights: BMI

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Johnny Cash's *Forever Words*: Country Music, Poetry, and Multi-Platform Storytelling

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The posthumous publication of Johnny Cash's poetry in *Forever Words: The Unknown Poems* (2016) adds an important dimension to Cash's work and legacy, as does the accompanying tribute album, *Johnny Cash: Forever Words* (2018). Produced by his son John Carter Cash, the album features collaborative songs other artists developed from Cash's poems. Cash's book of poetry is a key case study for how country music has vital relevance to literature, particularly since country music is a story-telling genre whose lyrics and forms have often drawn from ballad traditions and poetry. In the poems included in the collection, Cash further develops key themes evident in his larger oeuvre, including the tensions of selfhood and ideas of authenticity.

The poems in this collection that constitute his later work even further emphasize themes of mortality and spirituality. In my book, *Johnny Cash and the Paradox of American Identity* (2009), I analyzed the cultural work Cash's oeuvre does in its consistent themes of contradiction; I traced how his work questions seemingly opposed ideas

like the sacred and profane, how it makes social critiques by complicating those ideas and leaving them in productive tension, and how it draws attention to larger issues such as the vagaries of freedom. Here, I discuss how the *Forever Words* project fleshes out Cash's key themes more fully, how it reflects his engagement with literature, and how it illuminates the relevance of his work to new media contexts.

The tribute album drawn from those poems speaks to the spirit of collaboration in Cash's work. Cash's poetry provides the lyrics and inspiration for songs composed by artists such as Rosanne Cash, Willie Nelson, Kris Kristofferson, Chris Cornell, Kacey Musgraves, Alison Krauss, Brad Paisley, Elvis Costello, Bill Miller, Robert Glasper, Ro James, Anu Sun, and T-Bone Burnett. Their collaborative musical enactments of his poetry and their engagement with his oeuvre provide further reflection on Cash's cultural legacy and meaning.

In particular, the *Forever Words* project speaks to how both Cash's work and country music as a genre are particularly well-suited for the recent media trend of multi-platform storytelling, in which artists tell stories in a coordinated way expanded across different mediums. The *Forever Words* project expands Cash's book of poetry across the tribute album and accompanying music videos. Multi-platform storytelling, or what scholar Henry Jenkins terms "transmedia storytelling," involves more than mere adaptation because it extends the story or artistic content, adding something more to it when it adds new content in

new mediums. For the *Forever Words* project, the tribute album involved collaborating musicians composing songs to add a musical dimension to Cash's poetry, and it also drew on additional Cash lyrics and letters not included in the published poetry collection. Meanwhile, the associated music videos and an extensive accompanying website added visual storytelling to the poetry and music, as well as additional material, introducing even more new content and meanings.

I have argued elsewhere for the value of applying this idea of multi-platform storytelling in country music studies scholarship. While the transmedia concept has more often been applied to franchises that focus on film, television, novels, comics, and video games, the concept is equally applicable to popular music, and I argue that it should be more discussed in that arena, particularly for country music and its focus on cogent storytelling. Indeed, the multi-platform storytelling trend depends on strong stories and engaged audiences who will follow those immersive stories as they stretch across mediums, and country music is particularly well-suited for that trend, precisely because it focuses so crucially on storytelling. I have elsewhere detailed how Dolly Parton has long been doing that kind of transmedia storytelling that she expands across mediums, most recently with her novel *Run, Rose, Run*: *A Novel* (2022), written with James Patterson, which she expanded into an album and a planned film, or her Netflix television series, *Dolly Parton's Heartstrings* (2019), where she extended some

of her classic songs like “Jolene” into television stories. In the case of the Johnny Cash *Forever Words* project, as I will discuss below, the complexity of how it uses its different mediums speaks to how Cash’s work is apt for this kind of transmedia storytelling.

Country Music and Literature, Authenticity Narratives

Cash had an on-going engagement with literary forms, writing two autobiographies, *Man in Black* (1975) and *Cash: The Autobiography* (1997), as well as a novel about St. Paul, *The Man in White* (1986). For this book of poetry, while John Carter Cash gathered the materials and wrote the forward, Pulitzer-Prize winning Irish poet Paul Muldoon edited the book and wrote an introduction. Muldoon notes Cash cited Scottish ballads as an important songwriting influence, and he traces links between Cash poems and Scotch-Irish folksongs. As evident from the Nobel Prize for Literature awarded to Cash collaborator Bob Dylan for song lyrics (2016), the important relationship between literature and popular music includes the generative links between lyric forms, ballad, and poetry across time. For their collaboration on Dylan’s album *Nashville Skyline* (1969), Cash won a Grammy award for his liner notes, including his verses about Dylan as a songwriter. Thinking about country music in relation to literature allows scholars to draw out more fully the engagement country

artists have with literary traditions of poetry as well as narrative storytelling, and it further illuminates their strong relationship. Cash's book of poetry, alongside the album, offers a valuable example of that relationship.

The *Forever Words* collection includes poetry Cash wrote from the 1940s until his death in 2003. The 41 writing selections, arranged alphabetically, are also drawn from Cash song lyrics or letters, and include poems ranging from murder ballads to metacommentaries on Cash's fame. Some recurring themes include labor, poverty, violence, religious faith, love, and freedom and imprisonment, themes familiar from his oeuvre. As I argued in my book, Cash's work moves beyond escapism or compensatory fantasies into a critique of social conditions and a questioning of stereotypes and constructed ideas of authenticity. Here, as with the poems that consider religious themes of saint and sinner, sacred and profane, Cash imagines a contradictory, both/and position, holding seemingly opposed ideas in productive tension, often questioning the distinction between those ideas.

Amidst Cash's oeuvre, the poetry collection is distinctive for an even greater emphasis on themes of mortality, spirituality, and the idea of an artistic legacy living on after one's death, as some poems Cash wrote towards the end of his life dwell on these themes. The collection features a significant poem, "Forever" (2003), written within the last month of his life. There, Cash contemplates his mortality with a hopefulness, imagining

his songs living on after him, like the trees he planted that "still are young": "The songs I sang / Will still be sung" (59). In further analogies between human life and a natural cycle of birth and death, he writes that he knows he must "perish," much like cherished flowers, and that both his "name" and "fame" will not be remembered, however his songs will endure. The poem insists on the endurance of art in the face of human mortality, just as Cash uses the poetic form to express and inscribe that endurance. Cash imagines his fame fading. Muldoon argues of this poem that much like folk poetry, the writer's identity can even vanish, leaving anonymous poetry circulating (17-18).

However, other Cash poems in the collection exhibit a keen awareness of the machinery of stardom and mass media, registering how Cash navigated that media landscape by creating his stage persona as well as multiple narrative personas in his work. While his cultural legacy involves his words and music living on, Cash nevertheless acknowledges his work will remain attached to the vehicle of his stage persona and media image. In the poem "Don't Make a Movie About Me" (dated "Christmas 1982"), Cash argues there should be no Hollywood movie made about his life, because he fears producers would get it wrong and sensationalize it. He imagines them dredging Old Hickory Lake at his house (outside Nashville, in Hendersonville, Tennessee) for artifacts he threw there, from musical instruments like harmonicas, to a gun, to tapes of recordings he "threw from the lakeside door" (48).

In this poem, Cash carefully distinguishes between himself and characters he has written about in his songs or even the stage persona he has inhabited. He asserts he is not the same as his narrative personas, writing "I don't talk about me in *Man in White*," suggesting his novel about St. Paul is not an analogy about Cash himself, and he notes he owns the rights to his autobiography, *Man in Black*, implying he has told a certain version of his life story, and he intends to control that version. He writes: "Everything has a story that should be let be / So don't make a movie 'bout me" (48). However, he admits they will make a movie about his life anyway: "Aw, I might as well face it cause they will someday / So while I can I've got a thing to say" (48). He insists they should make it not in Hollywood but rather Arkansas, implicitly insisting on a pastoral setting in contrast with the mass culture of Hollywood. Cash grew up in Dyess, Arkansas, on a Depression-era federal farm colony where his family worked as sharecropper cotton farmers. However, even while the poem gestures to his pastoral background, it conveys an awareness of how the commodification of the Hollywood star system works. While it critiques that system, it nevertheless acknowledges that the media industry will continue to use his media image.

Crucially, that poem creates a narrative persona, a Cash who can observe the potential for biographical movies about him even after his death, but who can provide a preemptive meta-commentary on them in this poem. *Forever Words* prints an image of this poem's original manuscript, which

Marty Stuart had in his possession, that includes Cash's hand-drawn illustrations. Cash drew a movie theater called "Schmaltz Theatre" with a "Closed" sign on the building (51). Cash's illustration rejects the potential sensationalism and trivialization of a Hollywood film version of him. Nevertheless, the poem concludes by accepting that the star image will continue to be a container for his work, and Cash implies that he hopes the work itself is what echoes in people's minds in spite of the mass mediation of it. Indeed, Cash did approve of the script for the *Walk the Line* (2005) Hollywood film biopic before his death.

On one level, in this poem as in others in this collection, even as Cash imagines a pastoral retreat from mass media, he acknowledges that it is not possible, as the two are imbricated. Likewise, he imagines multiple personas for himself. He also thereby imagines multiple projections of authenticity.

Extending from those themes, as in his larger oeuvre, Cash implicitly considers the tension between folk culture and mass culture. The country music genre's long-running authenticity narrative favors a supposedly "true" country music over "sell-out" or "fake" country music, an idea of organic folk culture over a manufactured or tainted mass culture, rawness over commercial sheen. Cash's work shows how that idealized distinction between folk culture and mass culture breaks down, implicitly questioning such authenticity narratives. Scholars have demonstrated how country music and earlier folk musics have always had

commercial elements. Likewise, critics have shown how the distinction between the industrial-era categories of folk culture and mass culture is an arbitrary, permeable one; folk music always combined folk and commercial elements, and other folk practices did not register a tension between folk culture and the market.

The tension between the categories of an "authentic" folk culture as opposed to a "fallen" mass culture was created by academics in the early twentieth century who began cataloging and collecting folk music. As scholar George Lipsitz has noted, modern mass culture expresses nostalgia for earlier folk culture it has marginalized or commodified. In the case of country music, lyrics frequently foreground a pastoral nostalgia for a "simpler life" on the farm as opposed to what they portray as the corruptions of mass culture. That kind of reaction against mass culture is a reaction to modernity (meaning the conditions of social life post industrialization). However, country music also displays what is a common contradiction, because those songs are of course mass culture commodities themselves, meaning they are mass culture products that are produced by the same commercial systems that the lyrics decry. As scholars continue to interrogate country music's authenticity rhetoric, this questioning of folk culture and mass culture is relevant to those discussions.

Cash's poetry and his oeuvre display an awareness of the both/and of folk culture and mass culture. In "Don't Make a Movie of My Life," when he suggests that Hollywood

filmmakers could make the film in Arkansas, and thus set it in the pastoral roots of his farm life in the cotton fields where he grew up, Cash implicitly acknowledges that filmmakers would be doing so using the mass culture medium of Hollywood film. Cash's work gestures towards both folk culture and mass culture in ways that complicate the distinction between the two.

Multiple Narrative Personas for the "Man in Black"

In a related dynamic, one of the significant literary aspects of *Forever Words* is that it highlights how Cash himself played with the idea of multiple narrative personas, both in his stage persona and in his songwriting and literary work. Cash's self-presentation more generally insists on a kind of irreducible complexity, creating a model of selfhood that is multiple. In his second autobiography, *Cash*, he describes how he used different narrative personas to navigate stardom and his daily life; he has different names for the different versions of himself that he projects in various settings, implicitly registering how much a performance of selfhood depends on context and how authenticity itself is a constructed idea. He writes of slipping in and out of character: "I go by various names. I'm Johnny Cash in public and on record sleeves, CD labels, and billboards. I'm Johnny to many people in the business.... To June, I'm John, and that's my name among my intimates.... Finally, I'm J.R., my name from childhood. My brothers

and sisters and other relatives still call me that." He says he feels the need to "operate on various levels," and that he stages tension between the private "John R. Cash" and the public "Johnny Cash" as global icon. He describes playing a character as "Johnny Cash": "I prefer to meet people before my shows, not after. When I walk off that stage I'm no longer the character I was in the songs I sang--the stories have been told, their messages imparted--but often it's a while before I'm J.R. again. When I meet people, it's important for both of us that I'm J.R." As Cash ponders his own performance of selfhood, calling himself "complicated," he also endorses Kris Kristofferson's line from the song "The Pilgrim; Chapter 33," calling him a "walking contradiction." Cash thus presents "Johnny Cash" as a complex, often contradictory narrative persona he performs and also sheds.

One of his most famous narrative personas, "The Man in Black," is a figure that echoes in this poetry collection, especially in the poem "The Walking Wounded." That poem shares a similar 1970s context, involving Cash's support for Vietnam veterans and troops as well as for the right of Vietnam protestors to protest, and a call to end the war. The poem's composition date ranges. Cited as "1970s," makes it relevant to Cash's *Man in Black* album (1971), whose title song fashioned the narrative persona for Cash as the black-clad figure speaking for the impoverished, disenfranchised, sick and elderly, prisoners, Vietnam protestors, as well as victims of war, a symbol to critique hypocrisy. In "Man

in Black," Cash sings: "But just so we're reminded of the ones who are held back, / Up front there oughta be a Man in Black." On the *Forever Words* website, Carter Cash proffers biographical context: "'The Walking Wounded' is something my father wrote when he was suffering from extreme physical pain," he said. Cash read books about the Vietnam War and post-traumatic stress disorder and identified with those carrying injuries and trauma.

In "The Walking Wounded," Cash imagines becoming one among many; the speaker identifies with an almost-Whitmanian multitude of laborers who carry invisible pain with them: "we're in the mills and factories" wearing "a thousand-yard stare." Amidst lost dreams, "traumatic spells," and a "fake" society that ignores them, the speaker argues hopefully: "But resurrection's in our face / We are the walking wounded" (125). There, the speaker becomes part of "we," proclaiming "we are legion." The poem calls for social acceptance, "we demand that you let live" (126). The speaker insists those who are not experiencing that trauma "can't understand" but lauds fellow "walking wounded" who are "honest with each other," declaring society would be shocked by their number, from Vietnam veterans to others experiencing pain and trauma. The poem imagines salvatory spiritual redemption for them alongside resurrection imagery. Linking back to the "Man in Black," as Cash turned himself into a walking symbol there, the symbol is always multivalent, allowing for complexity.

Redemption Themes

Many Cash poems thematize religion and love as salvatory responses to impoverishment, difficult working conditions, addiction, and violence. Again, Cash frames those responses not as escapist compensation but as part of social critiques, just as his larger oeuvre advocates for efforts such as prison reform, job opportunities, improved working conditions, and treatment for drug addiction. One of the significant contributions of this collection is a poem that rewrites Cash's hit song "Don't Take Your Guns to Town" (1958). In Cash's classic song, a mother laments because she warns her son not to engage in gun fights, but he dismisses her warning and is shot. In contrast, in the poem, "Don't Take Your Gun to Town" (dated "1980s"), the character chooses not to commit violence, throwing his gun in the river. His anger stems from specific complaints he has against hypocritical religious and political leaders, singers, and actors. He heeds his girlfriend's exhortations to peace: "with love she turned around / a tragedy unsound." The poem asserts that "heaven answered down" the refrain "Don't take your guns to town" (55). Here, love and religious salvation triumph over violence.

In other Cash poems about labor, religion, and love, one poem depicts love yielding metaphorical wealth. In "Gold All Over the Ground" (dated 1967, which John Carter Cash says Johnny Cash wrote to June Carter Cash), the speaker woos by saying "I'd turn your green to emerald

/ And give you gold all over the ground" with "your skies full of diamonds" (66). The poem imagines love powerful enough to transmute nature into the wealth of gold and diamonds. Meanwhile, "Gold in Alaska" depicts the labor involved in actual gold mining, as a man mines for gold and gives some to his girlfriend. Another poem imagines labor succored by religious faith, "He Bore It All For Me." The poem begins by quoting Matthew 11:28, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." It ponders Christian religious faith, saying "he bore the pain for me," concluding "With nothing required / but faith in the Lord / Who bore it all for me" (70). Amidst labor and pain, the poem underscores religious faith. Some of Cash's religious poems emphasize sin and redemption held in on-going tension. In "Job," Cash examines suffering and calls for humility: "What's needed here, it seems to me / Is a little thing called humility" (93). There, the speaker urges Job to react with humility and religious faith.

Likewise, in poems addressing violence or difficult working conditions, Cash emphasizes social critiques or salvatory responses. In a poem about the suffering of war, the speaker bemoans men killed in war and wives left behind ("Ballad of Johnny Capman"), while another poem implies an indictment of domestic violence ("California Poem"). One murder ballad features a speaker who misses a woman "in a wild Kentucky town"; he fled because he killed a man there who abused her (42) ("Dark and

Bloody Ground"). Critiquing elitism, one poem decries how a sea captain forbade his daughter from marrying an impoverished farmer; she chooses to leave with the young man ("The Captain's Daughter"). Meanwhile, a cotton farmer's wife fled difficult times to her parents' home, but he gets her to return with him for love, because "For like the cotton / Love grows good / In ground like that" (39). The poem implies a Depression-era setting, referencing a washed-out "WPA bridge" and river the man must cross by horse to reach his wife. Another poem's speaker seeks love as respite from "a cold and cruel world" ("Does Anybody Out There Love Me?") (43). Meanwhile, "Going, Going, Gone (version 2)" establishes the tragedy of drug addiction. It describes "liquid, tablet, capsule, powder" as merely "ways to get the poison in" as the drugs kill brain cells, and "a cold, dry wind is blowing" through "the lifeless valleys of your mind." Using the second person to describe a harrowing mental state, the speaker ponders how "you're only happy when you're alone" and describes chasing highs, struggling with lows, and self-isolating and turning on loved ones, making them "recoil," "afraid and crying." The poem concludes with existential force: "Oh well, it doesn't matter / You've long been going, going; now you're gone" (62). The ambiguous ending suggests the addict could be figuratively "gone" into endless addiction or literally dead from an overdose, depicting addiction as a brutal rollercoaster causing grief and tragedy for all.

More hopefully, in a significant poem about music as a divine gift, "My Song" describes the speaker as being "born to sing" as a "gift from God," and expresses the need to sing to listeners and uplift them, imagining being on "singing mountains" and singing "from the heart" and "to their hearts" (104). The poem highlights emotional authenticity, or constructed ideas of genuineness; singing and listening with "hearts" reveals uplifting faith but also sincerity. The poem implies a version of what Jimmie N. Rogers called country music's "sincerity contract," in which performers promise not to "sell out" and thus earn audience devotion.

Multi-Platform Storytelling

On the *Forever Words* album, musicians engage with those themes and set Cash's poems to music. Produced by Carter Cash and Steve Berkowitz, the album exhibits a stylistic range, with artists working in genres including country, folk, bluegrass, Americana roots music, rock, R&B, hip-hop, and gospel. The songs vary from Rosanne Cash's folk rendition of "The Walking Wounded" to Robert Glasper's hip-hop version of "Goin', Goin', Gone," featuring Ro James and Anu Sun. Cash earlier covered rock band Soundgarden's "Rusty Cage" (1996); here, Chris Cornell's song for Cash's poem "You Never Knew My Mind" was one of Cornell's last solo recordings before his death. A later "deluxe" version of the album

added 18 songs, with artists like Marty Stuart, Sam Bush, Jamey Johnson, Ronnie Dunn, Jewel, Runaway June, and The Lumineers. Many songs were recorded at the Cash Cabin Studio, built by Johnny Cash on his property in Hendersonville, Tennessee, and some used a piano from June Carter Cash's collection, an 1867 Steinway upright.

Taken together, the combination of poetry, songs, website, and music videos lends an immersive storytelling world for the Cash *Forever Words* project. An extensive website features music videos for each song and behind-the-scenes interviews with artists and producers, such as John Carter Cash, discussing Cash's legacy. Each element adds additional content in a new medium, taking advantage of the features of each medium. The music videos each use a similar black-and-white aesthetic and many reference Cash's life. Rosanne Cash's is set in Johnny Cash's childhood farmhouse (built in 1934) in Dyess, Arkansas, which is now the Johnny Cash Boyhood Home museum; the inclusion of the museum, which hosts its own annual conference and tribute concert, adds another dimension to immersive storytelling.

Forever Words exemplifies multi-platform storytelling, an example of how country artists can extend their music into poetry, novels, films, television, or videos. While posthumous, the Cash project was coordinated by John Carter Cash and the estate, effectively the corporate author, lending it coherence. While transmedia storytelling has long existed, as with Medieval illuminated manuscripts,

the modern transmedia trend became more popular with media deregulation in the 1980s as media companies consolidated and bought interests in different mediums and platforms. The trend has also gained prominence in the context of media convergence, a digital-era development in which formerly separate media have come together on the same devices, combining old media and new media. While the current booming transmedia trend obviously reflects corporate synergy, it nevertheless also speaks to how artists can deepen their storytelling universe, engage audiences more fully, and cultivate the affordances of different mediums.

In the album's introductory song, Kris Kristofferson recites Cash's poem, "Forever," while Willie Nelson plays acoustic guitar, sparsely picking out the tune to Cash's earlier song "I Still Miss Someone" (1958), here recontextualized to signify missing Cash himself. A black-and-white video features Kristofferson walking farm fields, grabbing dirt in his hands, intercut with images of Nelson playing guitar. Both men signify Cash's collaborations, as part of the supergroup The Highwaymen with Cash, along with Waylon Jennings. In a behind-the-scenes video, Nelson discusses their world tours and missing Cash's music and companionship. The hand-written manuscript of Cash's poem occasionally appears in the video's background, while Kristofferson says of Cash: "He may be the most spiritual person I've known, because he was conscious of his own mortality and his own weaknesses,

but used his life to raise the perception of other people into the infinite." Kristofferson's comments capture Cash's projection of authenticity. Carter Cash explains he used the Nelson-Kristofferson clip to introduce the project and other music videos because it encapsulates the project.

Other music videos continue the same black-and-white photography and sparse aesthetic. Kacey Musgraves's duet for "To June This Morning," a collaboration with then-partner now ex-husband Ruston Kelly, pictures Kelly playing guitar and the two singing at the remains of Cash's house on Old Hickory Lake (several years after Cash's death, the home burned during renovations [2007]). In behind-the-scenes interviews, Kelly describes how as a teenager, he wrote a song using Cash's previously-published letter to wife June Carter Cash. This song is an example of new content in the album not drawn from the poetry collection. Again, it uses affordances of different mediums to add to a larger story.

These dynamics are epitomized by Rosanne Cash's folk song for her father's poem "The Walking Wounded," and the accompanying music video of her walking around his childhood Arkansas farmhouse. Her collaborative contribution demonstrates how Cash's work continues to speak to audiences through these increasingly immersive media forms. Her piece fully realizes the Cash poem as a song and music video. The black-and-white video pictures her walking around his childhood home, sitting at the piano there, and walking in the fields outside. As she sings

Cash's poetry about Vietnam Veterans suffering the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder or others suffering under contemporary labor or social conditions, the video pictures people standing outside in front of the house. The video visually references current human rights efforts as well as the contemporary issues in Cash's earlier poem, including a current-day image of a man wearing a Vietnam Veteran's hat and a woman holding a cotton stem, signalling the difficult farm labor in the Dyess cotton fields that the setting of Cash's childhood home also references. The video conveys the metaphorical image of the "walking wounded" experiencing on-going trauma, as Johnny Cash's poem and Rosanne Cash's song and video use art to convey this sense of trauma and need for healing.

The video reads like a contemporary update of the Robert Elfstrom-directed documentary film, *Johnny Cash: The Man, His World, His Music* (1969), which followed Cash on tour as he stopped by his childhood farmhouse in Arkansas. That film pictured Cash walking around his deserted childhood home and cotton fields, gazing through the windows much like his daughter does in her video decades later. Taken together, those texts symbolize Cash's own personal history, from growing up working cotton fields to becoming a country star who advocated for marginalized members of society. Separate from *Forever Words*, other videos over the years have used that same Elfstrom footage of Cash visiting his childhood home, like Cash's "Hurt" video (2002). The posthumous video for "Ain't No Grave"

(2003, Cash's last studio recording), used that same footage for an interactive music video made by director Chris Milk (2010); via *The Johnny Cash Project* website, fans used an online tool to draw on frames from Cash documentaries, including that footage of Cash visiting his childhood home, and Milk made them into a video. Because that "Ain't No Grave" video was a crowd-sourced interactive digital music video that depended on fan contributions to the website, it also speaks to how Cash's work has appeared in new media projects and how his fan cultures endure.

It is important to account for the complexity of such cultural expression still emerging about Johnny Cash, and how Cash's words and music have on-going cultural impacts, just as his family and producers adapt his work to new media contexts. The Cash posthumous book of poetry, tribute album, and music videos constitute a vital case study, as other musicians bring his work forward to speak to new socio-historical contexts, echoing across time. The Johnny Cash *Forever Words* project is illuminating for how it speaks to the strong relationship between literature and country music, and for how it makes use of recent media trends such as multi-platform storytelling, revealing the immersive ways Johnny Cash's oeuvre continues to circulate in contemporary popular culture.

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Northern California's "Singing Cowboy": Moriss Taylor, KHSL television, and a Life in Country Music, 1956-1997

(Moriss Taylor, 1955. Photo courtesy of Moriss Taylor, 2014.)

"I went on television in 1954 and I haven't been off since"
---Moriss Taylor (2006) (Used with permission from
Morris Taylor, 2014.)

Moriss Taylor can be described as the definitive ambassador of western music in Northern California. Multi-talented, he is a singer, songwriter, bandleader, and astute businessman. He was a long-time host of his own radio and television programs. Over the decades, after he served with distinction in World War II, Taylor became the most recognized personality in regional country music through his longevity at KPAY radio and KHSL television based in Chico, California. In 2011 he received a first-ever

"Official Chico Icon" award in 2011 for his contributions to local culture through *The Moriss Taylor Show* (1956-1997). Taylor's life story reveals the work ethic and determination of a self-made man and broadcasting pioneer. In the context of country music, Taylor's formation in the "singing cowboy" tradition—exemplified by Orvon "Gene" Autry (1907-1998), explains the historical context for his style and renown to his postwar audiences.

Originally from Miami, Oklahoma, Moriss Taylor was born on December 3, 1924. He grew up in Picher, Oklahoma--a rural community approximately ten miles north of his birthplace burgeoning in the midst of a lead and zinc mining boom. The austerity of the region reflected its labor-intensive industries in natural resources and agriculture. The challenges of rural living during tough economic times did not spare his family despite their hard work. "We all were so darn poor," Taylor notes, trying "just about anything to put food on the table." The extreme climate of the region added to the hardships of this era. The family could not bury Moriss' favorite childhood dog, Rin Tin Tin, Jr., for example, when it died due to the permafrost in the soil. Instead, they had to "put the dog in the back storeroom on a shelf where he was rock hard" until spring when the ground thawed enough to permit digging.

Morris Taylor (Picher, OK, 1924)

Taylor demonstrated early his inclination to work as a young boy. He worked throughout the week both at home and in town at the family business in this manner:

"I worked hard all week long: feeding the chickens and turkeys, riding horses, hoeing potatoes, cutting grass, milking six to seven cows before going to school, farming wheat, corn, and selling vegetables with my uncle in the family truck. We called out to residents while driving door-to-door in local neighborhoods."

Taylor completed "regular chores" on the home place helping change oil for customers at the Sinclair station, all outside of going to grammar school.

Moriss Taylor (Oklahoma, 1935)

The highlight of the week for young Moriss was the special treat of going to Miami, Oklahoma on Saturdays to either the Coleman Theatre or the Glory B Theatre to see the "great cowboy shows" featuring the leading western movie stars or "big money-makers" of the day: Ken Maynard, John Wayne, and Buck Jones. Young Taylor went door-to-door selling Cloverine salve in order to earn "show money" for this weekly, cherished outing. "At age seven or eight," he recalls, "I sold the heck out of that by knocking on doors." The Saturday cinema involved a three mile walk and a bus ride but of no matter for the youngster who delighted in the chance to "see 'em all" especially his favorite: fellow native Oklahoman, the "singing cowboy,"

Gene Autry (1907-1998). It would be this screen star who inspired a young Moriss to learn guitar and try his own hand at the craft of songwriting and singing in the manner of the popular cowboy movie star.

The "singing cowboy" personalities of the 1930s, exemplified by Maynard, Roy Rogers, and Autry, represented a clean-cut, heroic figure in shining western wear with signature cowboy hat and acoustic guitar. These on-screen personas, as analyzed by historian Don Cusic (2011), sang reflective songs about prairie life, herding cattle, and facing the challenges/hardships of life on the open range. Action scenes, triumph over corruption, and featured musical numbers guided this genre of films.

The Range Feud (1931) starring Buck Jones (1891-1942). Honor of the Range with Ken Maynard (1895-1973), the first American film star to incorporate singing in a cowboy movie, according to historian Don Cusic.

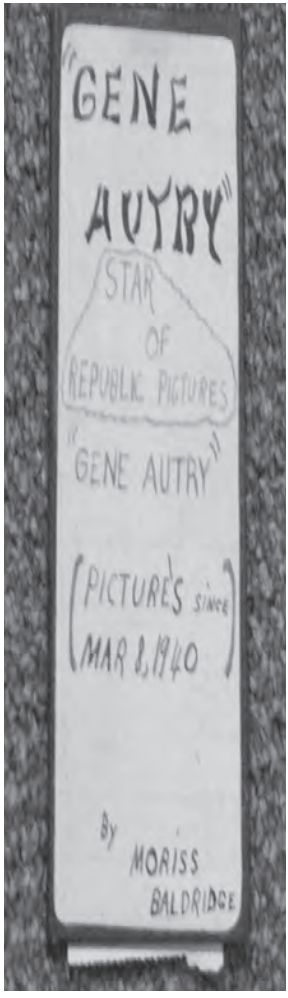
The singing cowboy, according to Cusic, became "deeply embedded" in the origins of country music as its "first positive image and national exposure" through popular movies. This romantic image differed greatly from the reality as the silver screen hero "wasn't exactly the same cowboy who drove cattle up the trails in the nineteenth century [as a] low-paid hired worker who had a mostly boring though sometimes dangerous job." It was this reality or "sort of stuff that didn't sound very glamorous," recalled Gene Autry, as "ranch life included aching muscles and endless days in the sun and dust"—much less savory than the aspiration of a "dreamy eyed singer of love songs like Rudy Vallee" for audiences.

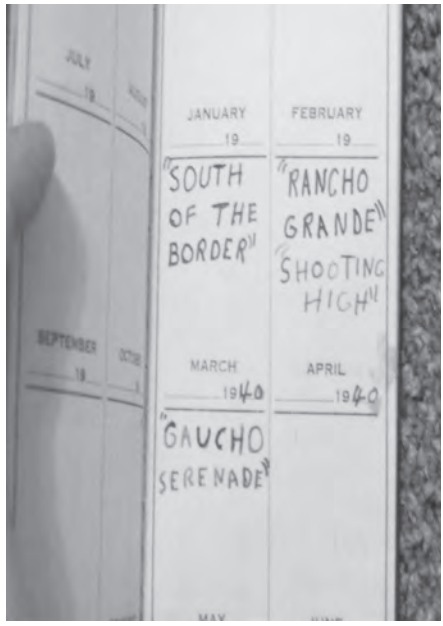
The significance of this genre in context, in sum, is that singers in cowboy attire "changed the image of country music" by replacing the "hillbilly or hayseed performers" with a more polished and attractive image along with a new, popular "huge body of songs." It was this—"more than any other source"—that merged country music into popular songwriting and performance while serving as the definitive inspiration that would guide Taylor's later approach to music. "The cowboy pictures," according to Holly George-Warren, "were aimed at rural audiences who lived in the working class world." The appeal of this character and these films sustained a refinement for greater romantic imagery.

Autry, as a regional performer, appeared on KVOO in Tulsa, Oklahoma by 1931. Taylor became enamored with

Autry as the motion picture and radio star for his clean image ("he didn't smoke or drink in the pictures") and his "nice, pleasant vocal style." Taylor recalled how Autry "didn't have a lot of competition because he was the total package" of polish, acting and musical skill, and stage presence as a popular entertainer. In short, Autry's singular influence on Taylor as a musician and entertainer cannot be overstated in this context as assessed by definitive Autry biographer, Holly Warren-George:

> "During the period 1935 to 1955 Gene Autry influenced countless youngers—most now (2009) over 50 years old. That is the true, lasting legacy of Gene Autry: to have been a person that others wanted to emulate. Kids who grew up in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s carry the memory of Gene Autry as a straight-shooting hero—honest, true, and brave—with them their whole lives. He was a source of strength, an example of fairness and justice, and a model [and] in that way, he profoundly touched the personal lives of millions of Americans" as he did Moriss Taylor.





Moriss Taylor's Journal of Gene Autry movies (1940-1945). Note the last name—Baldridge—as he did not change his last name until after his mother married Mance Taylor. As Douglas B. Green "once astutely observed, "No youngster in the thirties and forties ever wanted to grow up to be a hillbilly, but thousands upon thousands wanted to be cowboys."

The importance of the singing cowboy to this young Oklahoma boy is captured best by Warren: “Autry did not single-handedly popularize the cowboy image, per se. But he did perfect one version of it, the ‘Singing Cowboy.’ And he did more than anyone else to advance the cowboy image during the century. What he did was keep the good guy image of the cowboy before the masses. At his height, Autry was the idol of red-blooded American youth. His like cannot be found today.”

America’s “Singing Cowboy”, Gene Autry (1907-1998)

This once-a-week opportunity for Taylor--“if I got all my work done”--resonated with lifelong implications as he reflects: “I kept going and got glued to the ‘singing

cowboy', Gene Autry. I thought to myself—'I'd like to do that'—so I got myself a guitar, played every day, and kept going only to see the westerns especially after the talkies came along." He furthered his musical development at a local "Holy Roller" church where he "watched them make the chords" during weekly worship services:

> "I learned D and G chords. This got me interested fast. I watched intently these guys up front playing the frets, so I got the idea to sing and try it out. I learned D, G, and then A which gave me a basis to try my hand at writing songs—little ideas and thoughts that just came to me that I could do—all without a teacher other than what I saw around me at the talkies and church."

Taylor augmented this guidance by the purchase of instructional method books but "never ever" had a formal lesson in Oklahoma preferring instead to work on his own while watching Autry—a "beam to follow" or inspirational "lantern to emulate" at the movies. This interest in singing and playing guitar, while aspiring to be like Autry, would be fulfilled years later away from Oklahoma after World War II.

Coleman Theatre, 103 N. Main Street, Miami, OK

Glory B Theatre, 23 S. Main Street, Miami, OK

Radio was another source of a musical foundation and entertainment for young Moriss. “I listened to every single program, all the time, especially the comedies.” He enjoyed the “Sunday funnies” with Buck Rogers as a favorite. Another childhood exposure to popular culture in Oklahoma, however, would hold a deeper influence for the future entertainer:

> “We would go to people’s homes once a week for social gatherings or dances. Folks would move all the furniture and open up space for dancing. I loved to hear the guitars and fiddles play. I sat and tapped my foot listening as a kid at these neighborhood home parties.”

This dominant musical expression for the miners and farmers of this time and place found singular expression in “hillbilly music” and church hymns, recalled Taylor, reflective of the rural Oklahoma context of his upbringing.

A lack of jobs in Oklahoma (“they got all they could out of the mine and the laborers were let go”) prompted the Taylor family to look to California for agricultural work. In 1939, Taylor left Oklahoma traveling alone by bus to join his family now in Northern California. Once with his family in Butte County, Taylor enrolled in Oroville High School while getting a job to help the family. “Dad did not have an education, so he had to go from job to job. I remember sleeping with four people in one room of the old house. I had to help put food on the table.” Taylor enrolled

at Oroville High School and found employment outside of school in a manner familiar from living in rural Oklahoma during the Great Depression.

Moriss Taylor (Palermo, CA, 1942)

Taylor admits he "lied about my age" to get a job in a local fruit cannery. His supervisor "sort of looked the other way" even though Moriss was under the legal age of employment because "I worked harder and could pack more crates than the other guys." He got along well in the crew: "Boy, you had to be on the ball working those machines.

The supervisor came to me one day and said, 'You say you're twenty-one and yet you happen to be in one of my boy's classes at the high school.' I told him that my family needed the money really bad. He said, 'you turn out more peaches for me than anybody here and then he just walked away." Taylor worked late into the night ("often until one or two in the morning") and emerged from the packing house with color-stained hands from sorting fresh fruit.

Upon graduation in June 1943, Taylor received a two-month deferment of his draft orders into the United States Army. (Incidentally, Autry, as chronicled by Holly George-Warren earned his Army Air Corp pilot wings on June 21, 1944—approximately one year after Taylor.) He reported for basic training in August of 1943 in Denver, Colorado at the newly-completed Buckley Airfield. It was "the saddest thing I ever felt," he cites, "they all came down to see me off and I watched them as the bus drove away thinking 'will I ever see them again'? What could I do, however, as I was just like everybody else at that time?" Taylor, anxious to get into aviation, was surprised at his initial training:

> "I didn't understand all of the rifle training and marching and shooting we received. I thought, 'why? I'm going to fly.' I got reminded by a superior officer: 'what will you do, soldier, if you are shot down and have to fend for survival by yourself on the ground behind enemy lines? 'Learn the same as a foot soldier!'"

Upon completion of basic training, he further training at Air Technical Service Command in Reno, Nevada in radio communications plus flying instruction. “We’d fly around the mountains to practice take-offs and landings” with classes on how to operate radio equipment. “It was great flying during the day and playing the slots at night,” he recalls. Taylor received orders for specified duty in the Pacific. “They shipped me to China, and I wound up in India.” Stationed at Missamari, India just south over the Himalayan Mountains from the Chinese border, he served for the duration of World War II as a pilot flying C-46 planes carrying gasoline, bombs, food, water, personnel, and even Chinese troops over “the Hump” into combat. He served for approximately one year before an honorable discharge following the end of World War II.

PFC Moriss Taylor, United States Army Air Force (1943)

Taylor's return home involved a flight into Japan that allowed him to witness firsthand the destruction caused by the atomic bombs dropped in 1945 as he remembers: "Nagasaki was flattened. We circled for about twenty minutes and all we could see was gray ash with only fireplaces or chimneys still standing." Taylor earned honors and commendations for his military service. He received the Distinguished Flying Cross among other medals. "The army wanted me to stay in, but I had plans," according to Taylor.

Moriss Taylor (1945)

Taylor landed in California in 1945 “nearly starved to death, weighing 129 lbs.” He remembers going into a restaurant in San Francisco promptly after arrival into California where he “just sat and drank three glasses of milk: it had been so long!” “I had to get a job,” he pointed out, so Taylor resumed patterns familiar from his pre-war days, namely: employment in the local fruit canneries, “working gyppo on the lumber chain” at the Feather River sawmill, and

continued self-study on guitar. He reached a level of proficiency by 1948: “I could lay down the chords and sing. I could play some lead but singing melody plus rhythm was what I had down pat.” He sought out “other guys trying to work and learn” and soon found dance jobs in the immediate area of Oroville. Taylor continued to enjoy western pictures as they fueled his ambition to accomplish “the dream” of becoming a singing cowboy in his own style.

A significant break occurred in 1948 when Taylor approached the owner of a local radio station—KDAN 1340 AM (Oroville, CA)—with the idea of on-air appearances. The station transmitted a range of approximately fifteen miles within Butte County through 250 watts. Taylor notes that the station manager, Arden Booth, finally agreed to an audition. Regarding the quality of music, he told Morris prior to the audition: “if you can sell it, I will buy it.” The audition went well, and Taylor received a weekly fifteen-minute spot that grew to a regular, daily time.

Taylor (black hat) performing at a department store grand opening in downtown Oroville (1948)

Looking to his familiar model, Autry, Taylor's early program, *Moriss Taylor and Songs of the West,* resembled the format of utilized by Autry in his *Melody Ranch* radio show (debuted on January 7, 1940) with an announcer, fifteen-minute length, and a closing theme.

Taylor, now working in an automotive parts store in Oroville, cultivated his persona as a country music performer. "I got to work learning songs and playing dances." He organized the "Sierra Melody Gang" as his first official band after the Second World War. This country western dance band included rhythm with Charlie "Bashful"

Robinson (b. 1934) on lead guitar and Moriss on rhythm guitar and lead vocals. There was ingress and egress of musicians in the ensemble—guys were "drunk or couldn't keep time or showed up late"—to where it was difficult "a lot of the time to just have you enough musicians on the stage." Regular sidemen with the Sierra Melody Gang in the 1950s included two signature members for Taylor: Robinson and Raymond Jensen (b. 1937) on steel guitar.

Moriss Taylor and his Sierra Melody Gang (1956)

Other notable members of the Sierra Melody Gang included: Vance Anthony (steel guitar, following Jensen, a former member of Billy Jack Wills western swing band,

brother of Bob Wills, who came to Chico to attend the state college), Bobby Yates (guitar), Ray Hecox (bass), and Stan Noe (drums). This would be the group that provided Taylor a foundation for his entry into television broadcasting as a recognized, familiar personality within the region.

Moriss Taylor and His Sierra Melody Gang (Charlie Robinson, third from right; Raymond Jensen, steel guitar, Chico, CA, 1954)

The "big news" in the media in 1949," writes Warren, "concerned television." The emerging home entertainment industry turned Hollywood "abuzz" as "most in the film community looked down their noses at the fledgling technology and tried to ignore the young upstart while, at

the same time, felt threatened by it." At the time, Hollywood studios and actors shunned television, who viewed it an inferior novelty that threatened their existing monopoly of the movie business.

KHSL radio (courtesy Dino Corbin, 2014)

KHSL 1290 AM radio (established in 1935) expanded its service to include the first television station in the Northern Valley area above Sacramento in 1953 with KHSL Channel 12 (a CBS affiliate). Taylor championed television among area local merchants uncertain about this "novelty":

> "Boy, the business owners got loud about the impact it might have on radio advertising so I went to down to tell them about this thing 'television' as it was the coming thing that would bring little theatres into the homes of the people where they could see the

wares and services offered by area businesses. Don't hesitate. Radio will last in the cars, I told them, but TV will let customers see your stores so embrace it."

Golden Empire Communications, namely its owners Harry Smithson and Sidney Lewis (the "-HSL" of the call sign) "pushed it really hard" and it soon was the "the best thing to come along in ages" as "everyone soon found out as they made more money."

Taylor's idol, Gene Autry, likewise expressed similar thoughts regarding the established motion picture interests and the new television proponents, as biographer Warren notes:

> "Autry responded, 'I am not an enemy or traitor - on the contrary, I have proved over a period of years that I am a friend of the [film] industry, but let's look it square in the face—television is here, television is going to stay here and the sooner we all start figuring how to benefit from it rather than run from it, the better off we all will be.'

Taylor responded to a call for local western groups to audition for a new regular music television slot on KHSL in 1953. He brought a three-piece band to the studio. The other talent, he recalls "was pretty dog gone good" yet Taylor knew what to do from his experience working in live radio. "I kept the guys behind me until it was time and then I went forward right up the microphone to announce:

‘Ladies and Gentlemen, it’s the Moriss Taylor Show!” This approach worked—“it got ‘em”—and Taylor landed the job.

> The rise of *The Moriss Taylor Show* occurred in the infancy of commercial television. Country or western music, according to Don Cusic, was “dominant” in network programming during the period of 1949-1962, including “recognizable western theme songs” such as *Gunsmoke, Cheyenne, Wagon Train, Maverick, and Rawhide, and Bonanza*. More importantly, the period of 1955-1963, Cusic argues, was the “era of the TV Western” with “plentiful and popular” choices such as The *Gene Autry Show* (1951 – 1955) and the *Roy Rogers Show* began just two years prior to Taylor’s start on KHSL. Thus, western images and sounds held a “prominent spot” in regular TV series (Ibid) especially with the decline of the singing cowboy pictures (“finished and no more”, writes Cusic, by 1955).

KHSL AND THE MORISS TAYLOR SHOW

The Moriss Taylor Show (1956-1997) ran for over forty years on KHSL. The weekly program began as a sixty-minute live show before switching to a thirty-minute format on recorded tape in 1968. The show featured Taylor’s band as well as periodic guests drawn from the region: a formula that Taylor adhered to without deviation.

Taylor's primary influence was his childhood fascination with the singing cowboy pictures he reveled in weekly while growing up in Oklahoma. This regular exposure centered on Gene Autry, who "wasn't' the only singing cowboy, who formed his aesthetic. Precise western attire was paramount. "I got us uniforms as fast as I could," Taylor remembers, "with as many as three different uniforms in a broadcast season all with the signature white, silk handkerchiefs." This choice—a direct influence of Autry—reflected the 1930s singing cowboy style with its "gaudy costumes no real cowboy would ever wear on the range." Taylor held fast to this end so that "anyone looking at the [show] is bound to think 'country music.'" This resonates with Don Cusic's stylistic assessment: "If someone dresses western (cowboy hat, boots, western themed outfits)," they "project the image of a cowboy" so that "all kinds of music may be considered 'western'" under this visual message.

The Moriss Taylor Show (1957)

Taylor exercised the definitive role in the repertoire and creative choices. “I was in charge of everything,” he summarizes. Professional stage presence reigned paramount for Taylor. “I trained my band,” he point out, “I made sure to teach ‘em how to hold a microphone, smile into the camera, and sell their story through the song.” Another priority for the bandleader was sequencing or “tight transitions□real tight” so that “we could do as much music as possible into the show” around the commercial breaks. “I sold the show and sponsors knew they could count on a regular audience” he continues.

Humor and "having a good time with a smile" factored significantly into Taylor's approach to radio and television. "I'd tell a little joke or two," he acknowledges, which earned him a lifelong infamy among local audiences. This trademark facet of one-liners in his on-air shows embraced a "corny but clean humor" that Taylor valued in Autry's work, given how the latter also "tended towards" similar jokes in his broadcasts.

At KHSL, Taylor's on-air duties included hosting a weekday morning show on radio as well as his weekend television program. The foundation was his constant selling of advertising spots ("selling my shows") and dedication to recording client commercials throughout the week. This aspect—Taylor's non-stop work—resulted in his broadcasting presence for over sixty years on the air in Butte County. "He was a one-man show—hard-working and highly-respected," observes Terry Petapiece of Impact Media (Chico, CA). Taylor had "energy galore" in sales and ads and "was never deterred by rejection. He was unbeatable."

Taylor, attentive constantly on how to refine his product, "took notes" from the success of television's most popular weekly music program at the time, *The Lawrence Welk Show* (1951-1955). Broadcast from KTLA in Southern California, Taylor incorporated modifications to his approach based on what he observed in the Welk format. "We shortened our songs to less than three minutes each—we came back on the bridge and ended it." This influence,

evident in the taped shows, conveys Taylor's desire to seek a more efficient broadcasting manner. Such changes, he notes, allowed for "one song after another" and a better pace "that kept it moving" for audiences.

Dave Gislon, former production director of the *Moriss Taylor Show*, moved to Chico in September of 1972 to work full-time at KHSL. A graduate of San Francisco State University, he received the job offer while in Montana with his fiancйe on a Wednesday and scrambled west to be in Chico to start work at the station the following Monday. Gislon served as the technical director for approximately five years on Taylor□s show as part of his rotations to the night shift.

Dave Gislon (left) with Morris Taylor (Chico, CA , 2013)
Photo: Brian Peterson (2013)

"KHSL television, at that time, went on the air at 5:00 a.m. until 2:30 a.m. seven days a week, Gislon recalls. "We worked every schedule conceivable" and it was the "night schedule" that included the production of *The Moriss Taylor Show* each week:

> "Moriss rehearsed on Tuesdays, and we taped the show on Wednesdays. KHSL had two evening news shows followed by one hour of syndicated programming before we switched to the network link at 8:00 p.m. Our window of time was 8:00 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. so as soon as the local evening news crew blew out, Moriss and his gang blew in to start setting up at 7:00 p.m."

Dan Carter, former KHSL production staff (1978-1983), served as director of *The Moriss Taylor Show* for approximately a year in the early eighties. He observes that Moriss ran a "well-oiled machine" in recording his weekly television show using a two-camera shoot with a blue screen for panoramic background stills behind the vocalist soloists and the decorated set for the band:

> "We used a giant nine feet wall on wheels with one side nothing but paneling and the other side finished for the backdrop to the band. I think it weighed a metric ton and stayed in the studio for use on other shows as well during the week. They set up phony plants for this set. The Chroma-key green screen set was the one they used for weather slots in the news.

Moriss put together a slide chain that was beautiful background scenes, vistas, and landscapes. I think he stole a lot of them from calendars because you could see the nail holes in many of the images."

Central to Taylor's show format was the use of the Chroma Key—a broadcasting technology for visual effects as described by Gislon:

"It was an easy way to insert a background for a solo singer or musician. It picked up a second video source, in this case Morris's landscape or nature slides, in blue (a color not in skin tones). Moriss put wood grain kitchen contact paper over his blue electric guitar so it could be seen. The blue screen worked great as long as the solo musician didn't wear a blue shirt. We had one singer with clear blue eyes so we couldn't do any close-up shots as the background image appeared in her eyes."

Blue Screen (1993)

The original KHSL facilities (Fourth and Wall Streets, downtown Chico) possessed significant limitations in space. A former automobile dealership, the building housed both radio and television in the same location. Gislon remembers the challenges about space with the original KHSL location:

> "Dressing rooms? We had a bathroom . . . literally, a bathroom: not even 'men's' or 'women's'. There was not enough room in the studio for a live audience which is why that never was a part of Moriss' format."

The vision that Taylor wanted akin to Autry's onscreen "singing cowboy" formula was not thwarted by such logistical or technical limitations. Wednesday production schedule began promptly at 8:00 p.m. "Moriss was set up and ready to go right on the hour once we went to the network line," Gislon recalls. Essentially, a live show was taped for broadcast on Saturdays as Gislon describes:

> "We used two cameras with one guy (me) in the control room and sometimes another guy to help out with audio. We could do one, two, three numbers in succession. Moriss would then tell a corny joke, hit laughter card, more music, and then another corny joke. We had to do a half hour station break for two minutes so we would just sit on a title slide for two minutes while Moriss set up for the next number.

> What we did was shoot a live show to play on Saturday before we had to stop down at 10:30 p.m."

No post-production occurred as all editing and audio inserts (laugh track/applause) happened during taping. "It was all done and in the can ready for broadcast on Saturday," according to Gislon. Dan Carter recalls similar circumstances in the overall efficiency of working on the show:

> "Rarely was there an issue about production design because it was a simple design repeated each week. We were very clock-driven because he had only so much time between evening news and before we had to be done in the studio by the eleven o'clock news."

A crucial aspect in the weekly success of *The Moriss Taylor Show* was the work of Taylor's wife, Velma (1936-2006). The couple met "at a dance in Paradise" and married not long after in Reno, Nevada. "We just knew once we took each other in our arms for that first dance. 'Vel' was the love of my life."

Velma Taylor and one of the production sets she created for *The Moriss Taylor Show* (1968)

Velma copied lyrics and sheet music in addition to preparing and running the teleprompter during rehearsals and production. According to Dave Gislon:

> "Vel was there every week, even if nursing a cold or cough. She held cue cards and then operated the teleprompter. She was a real nice gal and the sanity to the chaos that helped keep Moriss even keel. It was a whole family affair—they were in it for the long haul—and she often showed up with the children and snacks/sodas to make it a true family affair. Vel was the artistic component of the show and Moriss was the musical and production leader."

Vel's participation in the production of *The Moriss Taylor* Show continued the entire span of the program as Carter remembers from his involvement in the early 1980s. "We used the teleprompter from the news department in a closed-circuit TV system. It was great. That's why no one ever forgot the words to the songs." Taylor acknowledges how his wife often "worked all night" to decorate the sets and even "arranged the backgrounds so that we hid the sheet music for the musicians so that the audience didn't see it." Her contributions helped maintain the consistent quality of the show. In short, he summarizes, "without her there would not have been *The Moriss Taylor Show*."

Vel Taylor operating the teleprompter during
The Moriss Taylor Show (1975)

The Moriss Taylor Show originated as a regional show featuring local talent in a small market driven through its musical and advertising namesake. Again, Dave Gislon comments:

> "Local programming in those days was important for licensing and renewal by the FCC. The station was always looking for local programming and here was a local guy doing a country music program: a great variation on other news or talk programs just as a fishing show could be to station executives. Saturdays for KHSL television meant Saturday

morning cartoons followed by sports and then local programming until 6 pm (half hour network news) and more local programming until 8 pm when we went to the network line. There was lots of time to fill and Taylor thrived in this situation."

The Moriss Taylor Show (annual Christmas show, 1985)

Taylor's name grew because of his weekly television and radio exposure. His media fame facilitated more live

appearances all over the Sacramento Valley per his media reach. “We booked dance jobs from San Francisco to Oregon” including gigs at military bases and western dance halls “from the Blue Gum (Orland, CA) to the Palomino Room (Red Bluff).”

James Robert “Bob” Wills (1905-1975), Country Music Hall of Fame (1968)

Taylor, largely through his radio and television shows, received invitations to perform with seminal figures in American County Music, notably two members of the Country Music Hall of Fame. Bob Wills, western swing

pioneer, for example, invited Taylor to perform at Wills Point, his Sacramento-based family dinner/dancing venue. "He asked me to come to Sacramento and play Saturday night dances when he went out on the road with his band," Taylor recalls. He esteemed Wills as a "good guy" with a "certain style you could really recognize. All he ever did was go 'eee- ah!'"

William "Lefty" Frizzell (1928-1975), Country Music Hall of Fame (1982)

Taylor and his band got to work with another giant of country music at Wills Point during an engagement with William Orville "Lefty" Frizzell (1928-1975). Taylor met other superstars of country music as they appeared in the

Northern California market, such as Buck Owens at the Palomino Room in Red Bluff ("a nice guy") and Rose Maddox of Maddox Brothers and Rose ("wow, what a talent") in Chico. Taylor's public profile and longevity as the singular authority associated with country music in rural Northern California through KHSL radio and television put him into this proximity with visiting entertainers.

Taylor with Roselea "Rose" Maddox
(1925-1998)

Taylor retired in 2013. He acknowledges how in later years younger viewers tended to dismiss it as "corny" or "campy and tired out." This did not to dissuade him, citing context and his inspiration, Gene Autry, who also inclined toward "real fans of country music," as noted by Holly George-Warren, arguing that Autry's "movies did not fare well with the media critics during his time or even today,

while the rural audiences made him a hero and major star." Taylor attributed his success to the loyalty of "everyday folks" while his efficacy in "getting advertising dollars" secured his show until 1997, when a corporate purchase of KHSL ended it--only in terms of new production "but not in reruns," which stopped in 2015.

Moriss Taylor passed away in Chico on January 8, 2018. The longevity of *The Moriss Taylor Show* reflects the tremendous cultural influence and impact of Gene Autry's "singing cowboy" in country music. Dan Carter, summarized Taylor's enduring fame in the Chico area of Northern California as a distinct personality through years of media presence:

> "He had a little different world view—entertainers and artists can tend to be a little narcisstic. This was certainly true for him. Moriss was an anomaly: quirky, kitschy . . . like an automobile accident you see but can't avert your eyes. He had currency among the people, and it was largely because he truly tried to be nice to everyone."

"I honestly never considered myself an actor. An actor would be someone like Paul Muni or Spencer Tracy. I was more of a personality." –Gene Autry

Endnotes

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Tear In My Beer: The Standoff Between Alcohol & Country Music

By Hannah Khoury
Cornell University

Hannah Khoury is a graduate student at Cornell University SC Johnson College of Business where she is attaining her Masters of Hospitality Management in 2022. This research paper was written in conjunction with a class called Culture & Cuisine, led by Lilly Jan. It was inspired by her time living in Nashville, Tennessee where she saw first hand how alcohol and country music danced together. She grew intrigued by the relationship and wanted to understand if her experience at honky tonks were unique or if they could be further analyzed with data to provide new up and coming musicians with encouraging research that could potentially save lives.

The Origin of the Heartbroken Cowboy

Country music and alcohol have been in a long relationship since the early 1900s. Many musicians at the time came from Appalachia, which was known as moonshine (an untaxed illegal form of whiskey-like alcohol) territory. During the 1950s honky tonks became increasingly popular. Honky tonk bars are bars filled with country music and alcohol, and have been made famous by singers such as George Jones, who wrote a song called "Honky Tonk Song," and references Hank Williams' drinking songs. One of the main themes commonly found in honky tonks was getting over heartbreak by drinking alcohol to numb the pain. Historian James C. Cobb described it as "World War II-era 'honky tonk,' a music born in the midst of drinking, dancing, and often brawling." This era was followed by what was known as "Outlaw Country" where singers who were considered outcasts and lonesome thrived on creating music about freedom and recklessness. It is specifically noted that they often recognized their lack of attention received from women which resulted in lonely heartbreak themes. When the album entitled *Wanted! The Outlaws* were released, it sold over one million copies and led to a huge increase in the popularity of Jack Daniels whiskey, which demonstrates how success in country music ties back to heartbreak and alcohol use.

The Hank Williams Syndrome

One of the earliest associations between country music heartbreak and alcohol use, such as beer, can be seen through the career of Hank Williams and what came to be known as the "Hank Williams Syndrome". Hank Williams was an influential country singer in the 1930s to 1940s who represents how alcohol use can be a significant factor in one's success in the country music world. His music was so well known in the early 1950s, before he passed, that his songwriting was translated for even pop singers to cover. He was statistically one of the most successful touring musicians in the country music genre. Williams started drinking alcohol at the young age of 13, when he first started playing shows. He wrote and sang about how alcohol played a role in his relationships as well as his heartbreaks. One of the most famous songs in country music, "Tear In My Beer" was written by Williams in 1951 when his manager requested a song about drinking beer because it was in demand at the time. The song was not released until forty years later when it was rediscovered, but managed to secure the #8 spot on the *Billboard* Hot Country Songs chart, won a Grammy award, a CMA award, and an ACM award. Although there was a forty year gap between the creation and release of the song, it shows that the theme of heartbreak and drinking beer still played a significant role in the success of country music.

Hank Williams' legendary career was built on songs about love and heartbreak that all incorporate beer or alcohol in some way. The more successful he became as a singer, the more he drank on tour and quickly became addicted. Due to a back disability Williams had, he also grew dependent on painkillers, like Morphine, and alcohol to help ease the pain. Williams' long term substance and alcohol abuse provided him with several health concerns over the decade. In 1953 Williams passed away in the backseat of his Cadillac in Tennessee on his way to a concert venue. The cause of his death has been blamed on his body's continuous struggles with alcohol and drugs, and eventually failed him.

The death of Hank Williams increased his popularity and set a pathway for his son to pursue a career in country music as Hank Williams Jr. The life of Hank Williams was found as inspirational to many rising country stars and their attempts to copy his success through his alcoholic lifestyle became known as the "Hank Williams Syndrome".

The Lasso That Caught Everyone

Bobby Bare, a country singer from the 1960s, who recorded a song called "I Drink" about alcohol abuse, recalled that at the time all the musicians in Nashville, Tennessee were trying to copy William's dangerous career path. It soon became a norm for country musicians to heavily drink during songwriting and while performing.

Country legend Waylon Jennings wrote a song called "Hank Williams Syndrome" that speaks about how Hank was a hero and inspiration to many artists such as himself but that he had to quit the Hank Williams Syndrome in order to save his own life. He writes that "the new hats are here . . . they're not like me and you. But that's alright, too. They could keep the music alive" to express his hopes that new musicians would not fall to the infamous syndrome and avoid alcohol addiction but also create authentic music. This was ingrained in the culture of country music for years, and still is for many singers chasing that same success as Williams.

Williams was not the only country musician to sing and drink to his death. Keith Whitley died at thirty three due to alcohol poisoning and stated in a previous interview that he "thought everybody had to drink to be in this business. Lefty drank, Hank drank, George Jones was still drinking, and I had to. That's just the way it was. You couldn't put that soul in your singing if you weren't about three sheets in the wind."

It was a clear belief among artists in the industry that alcohol is what made country music authentic, but unfortunately many of them abused it to the point of death, literally killing themselves for their heartbreak beer art.

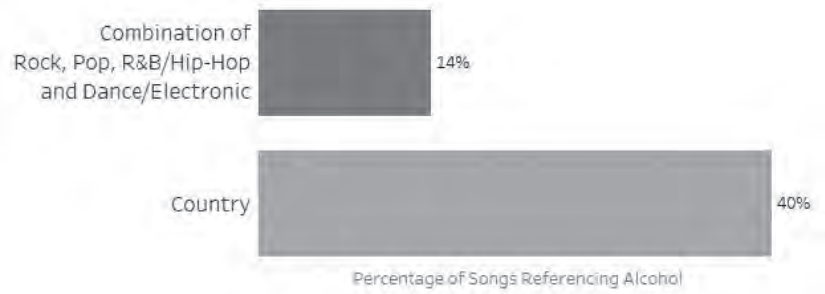
The Empty Bottle that Divorced the Charts

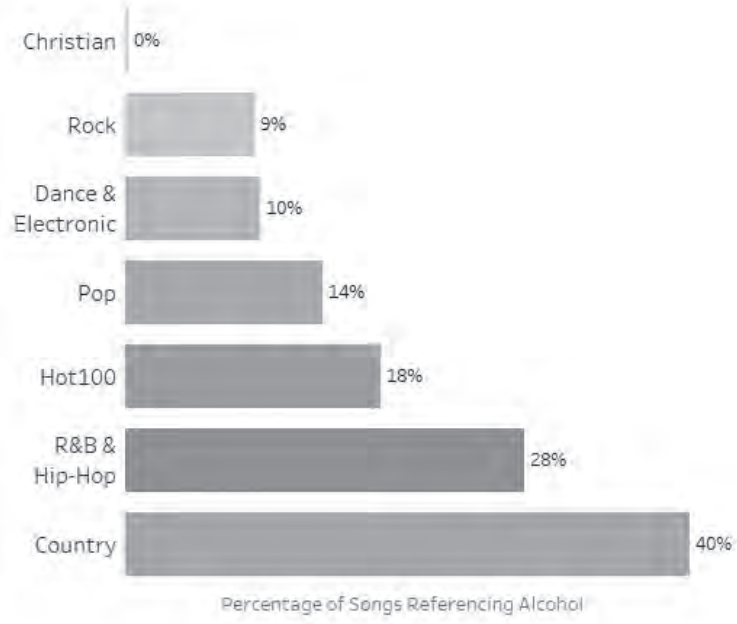
In the 1980s, education on the dangers of alcohol consumption was increasing and more people were aware of the effects of it. This caused a shift in the success of country music at the time. Specifically, in 1983 a group called Mothers Against Drunk Driving protested a popular drinking song by Gene Watson called "Drinkin' My Way Back Home". His song froze on the charts. The decrease in popularity around alcohol had a clear effect on the success of country music for Gene Watson. It also led other singers and record labels to avoid releasing their alcohol related songs for some time. In the 1990s country music became more popular and songs that eventually became hits were being written about heartbreak and drinking alcohol once again.

The 8 Second Ride of the Statistical Bull

It is significant to have data to analyze that presents the amount of alcohol actually mentioned in country music songs as compared to other music genres as reference. This confirms the existing correlation between drinking alcohol and mainstream country music. Marc MacArdle, a data engineer at WeFox, investigated lyrics within the country music genre to analyze the data on the amount of drinking related terms found in the song lyrics. First, he used the year end charts from *Billboard* from 2013 to 2017 to grab a large array of music spread over a five year period. It is

significant to note that some duplicates were found across multiple charts; however, the data remained the same so as to not jeopardize the original content found within the pulled year end charts. Using Python Beautiful Soup library, he pulled songs and artists, then used Genius's API and LyricsGenius' Python program in tandem to find the lyrics for 2,840 songs. Out of this total amount, 490 of these songs were country music, and other genres were still analyzed to be used later for comparison. Also, lemmatization was utilized to group words together so that the data would be concise in terminology regardless of what tense a verb was written in. Lastly, MacArdle created a list of forty four terms that related to alcohol as keywords to be searched for. The data found revealed that over 40% of country music songs from the charts used in the five year period mentioned a keyword at least once, though there was one false positive found. The country music genre had the highest percentage, followed by R&B and Hip Hop at 28%.



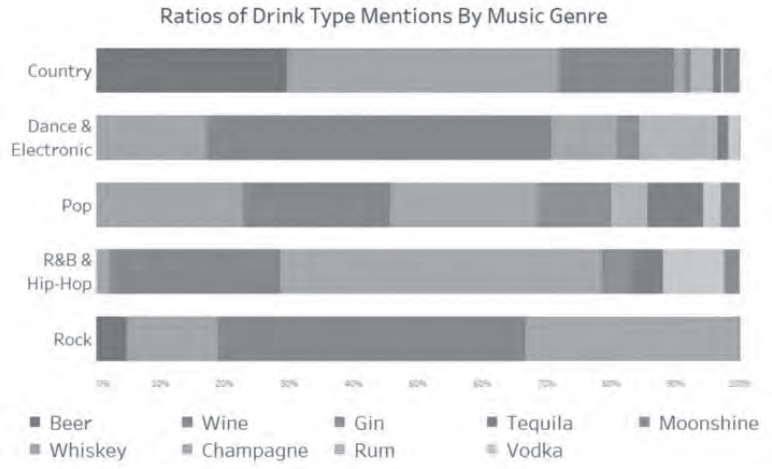


To further this research MacArdle compared country music as a whole to the other music genres as a combination, excluding Christian charts and the Hot 100 chart this time. These charts were concluded to be outliers and were therefore excluded from this chart.

To test the significance of his data MacArdle performed a Chi-Squared test for independence. The test resulted in a P-value=2.71698301e-34 which rejected his null hypothesis and confirmed that country music songs are statistically more likely to have alcohol related lyrics than any other genre.

To specify the type of alcohol mentioned in these songs, he used specific key terms related to various liquors and

beers. This revealed that the primary mentions in country music were beer and whiskey. It is necessary to mention that beer and whiskey were the largest in this category compared to other music genres. Scotch and bourbon had the lowest amount of findings and were excluded from this chart analysis.



Biggest Belt Buckles at the Rodeo

What is considered success as a singer will be measured here through rankings on some of the top music charts, as well as monetary sales of individual songs. Please note that not all charts across various brands were researched, but for consistency *Billboard* was the main source. *Billboard's* 2022 Year-End Charts for the 50 Top Country Artists include names like Morgan Wallen, Luke Combs, Chris Stapleton, Walker Hayes, Zach Bryan (#1-5 respectively), Carrie Underwood (#10), and Alan Jackson (#50). Of the

top twenty singers on the list, they all have at least one song with lyrics related to alcohol use, or songs with some of the keywords in the title. Billboard's 2022 Year-End Charts for the top 100 Hot Country Songs include songs "Wasted on You" (#1), "You Proof" (#2), "AA" (#10), "Wishful Drinking" (#13), "Beers on Me" (#29), "Whiskey on You" (#34), "At The End Of A Bar" (#57), "Dear Alcohol" (#73), and "Handle on You" (#98). Of the top ten songs, seven of them contain lyrics related to alcohol consumption, three of them do not.

Taste of Country's "50 Best Country Songs Of The Decade: Inside The Numbers" revealed that five out of the top ten songs on the list were about or included alcohol use. The author, Billy Dukes, provided stats for specific keywords he searched for in all fifty songs. These words were "girl" (4), "man" (3), "Whiskey" (2), "Beer" (2), "tequila" (2), "mama" (2), "heart" (2), and "die" (2). Of all keywords searched for, three of them regarded specific alcohols; whiskey, beer, and tequila. These keywords appeared to be in a total of six songs out of fifty but it is significant to note that other songs included other alcohol related terms and were not included in his search.

Miranda Lambert was the artist with the most songs on the list, three out of five of them included alcohol related keywords. It is clear that the top country artists of the year, the top songs of the year, and the top songs of the decade all include some form of reference to alcohol. However, MoneyInc's "The Top 20 Selling Country Songs

of All-Time" that was published in 2020 revealed that only five out of the top twenty songs were about alcohol. It is significant to note that there is a clear difference in the amount of songs pertaining to alcohol following the year 2020, as presented by the data from the top artists and songs of the decade analyses.

Seeing The Truth Through Whiskey Glasses

Country songs related to alcohol have increased in popularity over the past couple of years as seen in the evidence behind the top music charts. 75% of the top selling songs of all time, until 2022, do not reference alcohol use, but many country singers still choose to incorporate alcohol into their songs. Though Hank Williams was a staple in creating the drunk artist lifestyle in the country music scene, many musicians still followed in his footsteps as seen through the various deaths of those with Hank Williams Syndrome. Almost all country songs that reference alcohol refer to it as a harmful substance or as a cure to some type of emotional pain. Both the pros and cons of drinking alcohol are seen in this year's top songs chart, but there is a stronger pattern prevalent within these songs. Alcohol has been portrayed as the solution to the individual's problems. It has become a God-like cure sought after by those struggling to heal or those looking for an escape from reality.

Even country artists who are now sober, but formerly had an alcohol addiction, continue to write and sing songs about alcohol. Brad Paisley, now a sober musician, still closes his shows with one of his biggest songs called "Alcohol" because he knows his fans love the song and come to his show to have fun. He is known for inviting his opening act back onto the stage where they make drinks at a makeshift bar. It was revealed that Paisley actually made lemonade Vitamin Water but made it appear to be an alcoholic drink. Though he doesn't drink alcohol anymore, he still feels the need to be a part of the community by singing about it and participating in "fake drinking" on stage.

It is clear that for Paisley, he feels the need to satisfy his fans by performing the songs they want even if it no longer relates to him and encourages them to enjoy drinking at his shows. It connects his audience as a form of concert family. Paisley is a strong representation of what alcohol means to country singers and fans alike in his act of fake drinking on stage.

Alcohol is promoted as an escape from reality and a necessity in partying to have fun. It creates a connection between country music and the culture of the middle class, according to historian Diane Pecknold. Many country singers still believe that, regardless of the charts, they must connect their music to alcohol to remain "authentic" in the industry. Though this started with Hank Williams in the form of drowning one's sorrows away, it is used in a celebratory and upbeat form. Travis Stimeling, a musicology associate

professor from West Virginia University stated that, “If you want to establish you’re a real country musician□you go back to the same imagery and same symbolism”. This relates back to Williams, but also the root of what it means to be “authentic” or “real” as a country singer.

It is significant to note that many country musicians have taken advantage of the connection between heavy alcohol consumption and country music by selling their own brands of alcohol and owning bars in the infamous Music City of Nashville, Tennessee. There is an almost absolute monetary gain for liquor companies partnered with musicians, such as Fireball Whiskey and Florida Georgia Line. There is also a profit provided for singers who have created their own brands, such as Kenny Chesney and Blue Chair Bay Rum. He had great sales of his rum, of which he owns 100%,, during a time where rum sales have decreased because of his marketing and branding tactics as a country singer.

Despite the monetary gain that is evident in the music and alcohol industry, singers and fans still have a deeper connection to the lifestyle.

Many songwriters typically drink during or after writing sessions and collaborations which demonstrates how drinking alcohol can create a bonding experience between musicians. Brantley Gilbert, another country singer who found sobriety after an alcohol addiction, said in the *Tennessean* that “Or writing, I was worried my songs

wouldn't be the same, that I wouldn't be on everyone else's level. It's a drinking environment".

Country musicians who want to fit in with other musicians and feel like they belong in the music scene drink as a shared hobby between artists. It creates strong bonds, connects musicians to each other, and provides substance for songwriting. Most importantly, drinking is recognized as an activity of the greats in country music and as a way to ensure one's songs are authentic to the genre.

It is clear that this research reveals that country musicians do not need to incorporate alcohol into their songs to get on some of the charts, such as the Top Selling Songs of All Time. It is however useful in bonding with fans and other musicians, providing that "cure" for one's emotional pain or vacation for one's celebratory desires, and creating "authentic" country music. Though country singers like Hank Williams may have started a toxic drinking culture for country musicians, it is prevalent that it is not necessary for other singers to follow this path to succeed in the industry although it may seem like the environment requires it. Alcohol is chased after in this industry for that deeper emotional connection found in what is considered the authentic country music culture. New and old musicians should remember that as Harlan Howard once said, "All you need to write a country song is three chords and the truth."

Endnotes

1 Don Cusic, *The Cowboy in Country Music: An Historical Survey with Artist Profiles*. Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2011, 11.
2 Ibid, 2.
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Hillbilly Bop

Shawn Pitts

Outside of a few music historians, almost no one's list of influential, Memphis musicians would include country artists. B.B. King, Elvis Presley, Howlin' Wolf, Jerry Lee Lewis, Booker T. Jones, The Staple Singers or Three 6 Mafia? Certainly. The Snearly Ranch Boys or Starlite Wranglers? Who?

Memphis, Tennessee was never a commercial country music mecca—not like Nashville anyway—but the city produced more than a respectable crop of postwar hillbilly pickers alongside more well known blues and R&B artists. It also attracted an incredible number of aspiring artists from surrounding communities in rural West Tennessee, Mississippi and Arkansas who converged on a surprisingly lively country music scene.

Memphis clubs, like the Bon Air and Eagle's Nest, among several others, catered to large crowds of honky tonk and western swing fans, while West Memphis, Arkansas—just across the Mississippi River—boasted the popular Cotton Club, as well as a number of busy gambling dens and other country music joints. Just as importantly, West Memphis's WKEM radio regularly broadcast live hillbilly music shows, and barn-dance type jamborees to the sister cities and surrounding countryside.

The artists who performed in these venues were a combination of backwoods pickers who came to the Memphis area with diverse repertoires of vernacular music and hybrid country forms, road-tested in the seedy honky-tonks, and their urban counterparts, who were often influenced by R&B and boogie-woogie piano styles, as well as the slick sounds of western swing. The result was an infectious, and deeply influential, brand of regional country music, widely played and enjoyed by fans across the mid-South.

It was this environment that gave birth to popular bands like the Snearly Ranch Boys who performed electrifying lives sets in Memphis area clubs and served as the house band for WKEM. The Ranch Boys drew their name from a Memphis boarding house known as the Snearly Ranch, where many of their early members hung their western hats and honed their musical chops. The Starlite Wranglers were a talented group of musicians with a similar sound and a shared history of blending a variety of country styles to the delight of Memphis hillbilly fans.

These two groups, and a vast number of individual artists who streamed into Memphis in search of wider audiences for their music, are largely responsible for putting the "billy" in rockabilly music—rock 'n' rolls twangy antecedent. Together, they created a rich catalogue of Memphis music that formed the foundations for the earth shattering cultural revolution that emanated from the fabled studio at 706 Union Avenue. And It wasn't just the

considerable influence of these bands on the Sun recording artists who followed in their wake, many of the same musicians would become important Sun sessions players, if not Sun stars in their own right.

If the Snearly Ranch Boys and Starlite Wranglers are unfamiliar to the average music fan, the names of the individual players will surely have a more familiar ring. Scotty Moore and Bill Black, primarily known to the world as two thirds of Elvis Presley's first band, The Blue Moon Boys, were core members of the Starlite Wranglers. Moore was, in fact, the Wranglers' bandleader and chief arranger. Black had done a short stent as the bassist for the Ranch Boys before joining Moore in the Wranglers. The group had cut a couple of original hillbilly sides for Sam Phillips before a Sun session with the future king of rock 'n' roll permanently altered Moore and Black's professional trajectories.

Black was a seasoned bassist who went on to front his own successful combo after the heady Sun days, but Moore's guitar work with Elvis Presley—both at Sun and later RCA Victor—are arguably among the most consequential instrumental performances committed to record at the dawn of the rock 'n' roll era. Moore and Black—country pickers both—are rightly considered key architects and founding fathers of rock 'n' roll.

The name that eventually stuck to the sound Sam Phillips first captured that fateful day in July 1954 was rockabilly. At its core, it was an infectious interplay

between Moore and Black's high-energy, hillbilly style and Presley's playfully ebullient vocal interpretation of Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup's, *That's Alright*. It was the blues, gliding effortlessly atop a wave of swinging honky-tonk rhythm. If it revealed anything, it was the artificiality of the long-accepted marketing categories for R&B (otherwise known as "race music") and country music, which was primarily made by and for white audiences. It's worth noting here that the B-side of *That's Alright* was an uptempo, standard time cover of Bill Monroe's, *Blue Moon of Kentucky*. In retrospect, the decision to back a blues side with a bluegrass number, performed in much the same style, hints at what was coming, but it's clear that Sam Phillips was still unsure what kind of tiger he had just grabbed by the tail. The answer wouldn't be long in coming.

As for the Snearly Ranch Boys, the archives were not always crystal clear on the identities of every Sun session player, but between what was preserved, and the dedicated sleuthing of Sun historians, it can be comfortably stated that members of that band collectively played on more Sun sides than any other group of musicians. A steady turnover of Ranch Boy members that overlapped Sam Phillips's most productive hit making period, produced an impressive number of quality musicians and vocalists. There is substantial evidence that from the time Phillips shifted his focus to the white artists who followed in Elvis Presley's wake, the Ranch Boys were regarded as an informal Sun sessions band. Phillips leaned heavily on their deep, and

ever-evolving, pool of musical talent for versatile, seasoned pros, capable of rounding out nearly any recording session.

Stan Kesler, a gifted multi-instrumentalist and songwriter for the Ranch Boys, played on numerous Sun hits for the likes of Carl Perkins, Roby Orbison and Jerry Lee Lewis, even as he cowrote several of Elvis Presley's earliest recorded tunes. Quinton Claunch, Johnny Bernero and Clyde Leoppard filled similar roles for Phillips in the studio, while Snearly Ranch veterans, Smokey Joe Baugh, Barbara Pittman, Warren Smith, and Jerry Lee Lewis made their own Sun sides with varying degrees of success.

This is to say nothing of Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame saxophonist, Ace Cannon, legendary sessions guitarist, Reggie Young, or Stax Records cofounder, Jim Stewart who all took turns as a Snearly Ranch Boy. All told, the Ranch Boys probably had more than thirty musicians come through their ranks between 1950 and 1960. Several of them recalled, on any given weekend, there might be two are three bands performing under the Snearly Ranch name at nightclubs across the mid-South. That's certainly a testament to the group's popularity in its heyday, but the lasting impact of the historic recordings at Sun, combined with the later accomplishments of group members, make an almost forgotten, Memphis hillbilly band among the most influential forces in the development popular music.

And then there was Carl Perkins.

Scarcely more than three months after the release of *That's Alright*, a rangy, country guitarist turned up at Sun

Records eager to audition. One look told Sam Phillips the kid was country as cornbread. He would later recall "I knew Carl could rock [but] I was so impressed with the pain and feeling in his country singing, that I wanted to see if this was someone who could revolutionize the country end of the business."

Consequently, Carl Perkins's first Sun single wasn't a Sun single at all, nor was it the sort of material one might expect from the future standard-bearer for rockabilly music. It was a cry-in-your-beer, honky-tonk weeper released on Phillips's experimental country label, Flip. Perkins's *Turn Around* (Flip 501) was the first single issued on Flip and, perhaps unsurprisingly, the second title on the short-lived label was *Lonely Sweetheart* (Flip 502) by the Snearly Ranch Boys. It was the Ranch Boy's one and only appearance under the band name on any of Phillips's ventures. It doesn't take an expert to hear the common thread running through the music of Carl Perkins and the Ranch Boys, or that what followed from the up and coming Perkins was far more country than rock 'n' roll.

Carl Perkins came to Memphis from Jackson, Tennessee, by way of the deeply rural Lake County, Tennessee. He had grown up admiring and imitating the vocal styles of the Grand Ole Opry stars and honky-tonk artists of the 1940s—especially Earnest Tubb—but was powerfully influenced by the field hollers, and guitar styles of African American neighbors in the cotton country of Tennessee's Mississippi River Delta. The result was a white country artist who was

equally at home with the blues, so much so that he had incorporated popular R&B tunes into the lives sets he played for redneck patrons of the honky-tonk bars of rural West Tennessee. They ate it up.

Perkins is emblematic of the hillbilly/rhythm and blues amalgam associated with Sun, but he was more the rule than an exception. The number of white country artists who streamed into the Memphis studio with the same capacity for blending black and white identified musical forms verified Perkins lifelong assertion that rockabilly was a natural outgrowth of the mid-South's rich, biracial, musical milieu. Though he never claimed personal credit for the development of rockabilly, Perkins was, perhaps, among its earliest and most authentic voices and he is widely regarded as a paragon of the form. A pair of recently rediscovered discs lend credence to that view.

Two lacquers in the archive of amateur audio engineer, Stanton Littlejohn, of Eastview, Tennessee, capture a young Perkins performing R&B standards *Drinkin' Wine Spo-dee-o-dee,* and *Good Rockin' Tonight*, as well as Eddy Arnold's country hit, *There's Been a Change in Me,* and the the old-time instrumental, *Devil's Dream*. The earliest of these sides—the hillbilly and old-time tunes—were recorded by Littlejohn in 1951, more than three years before Perkins's arrival at Sun. Those sides demonstrate the teenaged artists' earliest influences, while the honky-tonk tinged R&B tunes—in all likelihood recorded in later session—reflect the evolving style

that gave the world Perkins's original rockabilly anthem, *Blue Suede Shoes*.

Whether it was Snearly Ranch veterans effortlessly complimenting Jerry Lee Lewis's boogie boogie piano, The Starlite Wranglers reworking blues and bluegrass standards with Elvis Presley, or Carl Perkins effortlessly belting out honk-tony rhythm and blues, the country roots of Sam Phillips's legendary Sun sound were right on the surface. A careful examination of the Sun catalogue reveals an astounding range of white performers—many unknown or underrated—with varying degrees of "rock" and "billy" informing their creative choices. Most of them self-identified as country artists and were promoted as such by Phillips.

Early critics called the music Sam Phillips put in the market "hillbilly bop," and labeled Presley, its first dazzling practitioner, The Hillbilly Cat. "Bop" and "cat" were oblique references to African American culture, but "hillbilly" unambiguously asserted what contemporary commentators believed to be the foundation of this new, hybrid music. New may be an overstatement. Scholars have long acknowledged the debt honky-tonk, western swing, and bluegrass owe to blues and jazz, but there can be no doubt that rockabilly represented, if not an erasure of the musical color line, at least a flagrant assault on its enforcement in the record industry.

Blues Suede Shoes was the first record to simultaneously land on the country, R&B and pop charts, signaling the broad appeal of hillbilly bop, not to mention a period of head-spinning readjustment for the commercial music industry.

The well-worn phrase, "rockabilly moment," is right on the money; the craze was almost over before it got started. The decline of the genre coincided with resurgent interest in American roots music. The folk blues revival of the 1960s placed African American influences at the forefront of the rock 'n' roll origin story, while country claimed Appalachian folk styles as their own, effectively, if temporarily, re-segregating popular music.

At the same time, former rockabillies began a mass exodus from Sun to the greener pastures and larger paychecks of national labels. Elvis Presley quickly became the hottest property in show business, gravitating toward the more lucrative pop market, while Sun discoveries like Johnny Cash, Conway Twitty and Charlie Rich headed for Nashville and country superstardom. Those left carrying the rockabilly banner into the next decade found it increasingly difficult to find work in an age that seemed to prefer the older folk idioms that fueled the development of their music, while the massive, pop culture vortex known as the Beatles (who, incidentally, idolized Sun artists—Perkins especially) sucked in everything in its path.

As the rock 'n' roll mythos developed, it did so all but divorced from its country roots. Even Sam Phillips promoted a narrative that emphasized white rockabillies performing in the style of black artists, seemingly ignoring the fact that he routinely drew on the talents of hillbilly pickers, and recorded and promoted artists who could only be categorized as country. Critics and fans alike discussed and debated rock

'n' roll music in terms of its debt to the blues, as country music evolved on a separate track, driven primarily by the juggernaut which was, and is, Nashville's powerful recording industry.

No one in their right mind would quibble about the profound impact of African American artists on Memphis rock 'n' roll. The city hasn't branded itself "home of the blues" for nothing, and the list of Black gospel, blues and R&B (and now hiphop) artists who originated in, or came through, that city is mind boggling. But it would be a decade after the heyday of hillbilly bop that people began to use "the Memphis sound," to refer to the fusion of Black and white musical traditions.

Though the term has been pressed into service by civic boosters and sloganeers as shorthand for any music capable of ringing local cash registers, it originally signified the brand of Southern soul music popularized by Memphis based Stax Records. Stax actively promoted the Memphis sound as an authentic expression of the shared music traditions of Black and white Southerners with broad, national appeal. By that definition, they may as well have been talking about hillbilly bop.

But Stax went a step further, asserting that the music emanating from Memphis in the late 1960s and early 70s was the result of biracial collaboration and harmony in the studio, something that would have been unthinkable at Sun. Sam Phillips had an uncanny ear, committing to posterity an unrivaled catalogue of Black and white artistry, but he

apparently never seriously considered integrating the studio. Just imagine a supergroup with the likes of B.B. King and Johnny Cash, with a Snearly Ranch Boy rhythm section; or Jerry Lee Lewis sitting in with Ike Turner's Kings of Rhythm; or a Howlin' Wolf and Carl Perkins duet. All definitions of rock 'n' roll, as we understand it, collapse under the weight of such dizzying possibilities, but the "racial attitudes" of the time would never have allowed it.

Stax, with great fanfare, claimed to make a significant corrective under the leadership of the label's African American executive (and eventual co-owner) Al Bell, and former Snearly Ranch Boy, Jim Stewart. The Mar-Keys and later, Booker T. and the M.G.'s, Stax's incredible house bands, composed of both Black and white players, were heralded as a prime example of societal change that might grow out of uninhibited interracial cooperation and creativity in the studio. As such, the Memphis sound came to define, not solely as a stylistic innovation, but also a particular political point of view that offered some measure of redemption for white players, producers and studio executives who admired and adapted African American artistry. Had the Black musicians been offered equal opportunity in the spaces where music was created, marketed and sold, that might have been taken more seriously.

The political definition of the Memphis sound may have had its limitations, but the intersection of Black and white creativity has always defined Memphis, as well as its

surrounding rural communities. African American blues and jug band music of an earlier era were played alongside white identified hillbilly and folk music styles with surprising regularity, without much regard for the narrow concerns and constraint of the commercial recording industry. For decades before Sun or Stax the two traditions, in all their glorious iterations, regularly coalesced and broke apart in ways that were both productive and painful, but they never left the other unchanged. It was this environment that produced the wide range of white artists who helped Sam Phillips create the rockabilly sound.

To put it another way, the implications of organic cross-pollination of Black and white Southern music first became evident to a wider public when hillbilly cats unapologetically performed R&B with rowdy, countrified abandon. Or as Carl Perkins, the great hillbilly poet and prophet of rock 'n' roll, sang:

> All them cats is rockin' the blues
> And it must be going 'round
> All my friends are boppin' the blues
> And it must be going 'round
> I love you baby, I must be rhythm bound
> (Bop, cat, bop!)
> Rock, bop, rhythm and blues
> Rock, bop, rhythm and blues
> Rock, bop, rhythm and blues, bop!
> Rock, bop, rhythm and blues
> Rhythm and blues, it must be going 'round

Whatever else the closing lines of *Boppin' the Blues* may mean, they openly confess Perkins's (and his rockabilly coconspirators) debt to the infectious rhythms of R&B. They also suggest a certain awareness of defying their country backgrounds in pursuit of a new sound, the other Memphis sound: hilly bop.

Lowell Blanchard: From Palmer, Illinois to Knoxville, Tennessee

By Ivan Tribe with additional research and material by Dave Sichak

Richard Lowell Blanchard is best remembered for his long connection with radio station WNOX in Knoxville, Tennessee and as host and director of their country music programs, the **Mid-Day Merry-Go-Round** and the Saturday night **Tennessee Barn Dance**. Despite his close connection with the country music field in East Tennessee, it seems somewhat surprising that Blanchard was actually a native of Illinois and a graduate of the University of Illinois. One suspects that his work at WNOX was influenced by what had already transpired at WLS with its daily programming and the National Barn Dance.

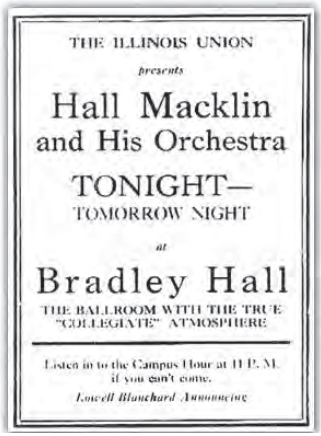
The Early Years In Illinois

Lowell Blanchard was born 1910 in the village of Palmer, Illinois in Christian County. The 1910 U. S. Census shows Palmer had a population of 494 people. His father Jay was a grocer, his mother was Betty. Palmer was about 35 miles south and east of Springfield, the Illinois state capitol.

Blanchard began to get noticed while attending the University of Illinois in Urbana. In October of 1932, the local newspaper reported that Lowell was the president of the senior class at the University of Illinois and was already displaying his talents and skills as an announcer. Blanchard finished college in 1933 and almost immediately made a name for himself as an emcee at events during the Chicago World's Fair.

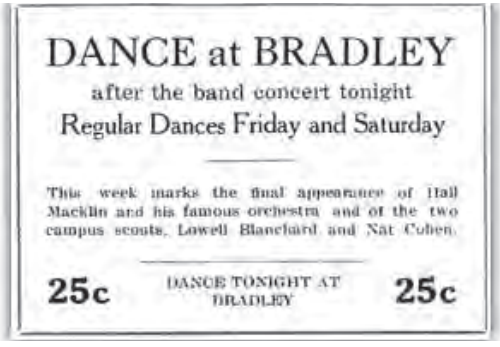
In the years 1932 through 1934, Lowell was an announcer on the University of Illinois radio station, WILL. Around June of 1934, he was invited to audition for radio station KYW, then in Chicago. He "□took the tests, passed and was immediately offered a job as staff announcer." The Daily Illini told readers that when he was on KYW, his voice was over the air waves from 9am to 5pm each day and 10pm to midnight on alternate weeks.

The Daily Illini Urbana,IL
April 10,1932



The Daily Illini Urbana,IL
November 17,1933

The Daily Ilini Urbana,IL
August 29,1933



The Daily Ilini Urbana,IL
May 16,1934

In early 1935, news reports indicate that Lowell had left radio station KYW in Chicago to become an announcer for WIND, then in Gary, Indiana.

The Radio station call letters KYW have an interesting history. It was originally licensed by Westinghouse in Chicago on November 15, 1921. Westinghouse wanted to put stations in major urban areas to promote the sales of its radio receivers. In 1929, the antenna for KYW was moved from the top of the Congress Hotel to west suburban Bloomingdale Township. In November 1928, it was assigned the clear channel frequency of 1020 kHz, one of eight such channels in the five difference national regions. However, the reallocation of frequencies meant that it should be in the mid-Atlantic states. Westinghouse tried some legal maneuvers, trying to keep clear channel 1020 in Chicago. Eventually, the dust settled. KYW broadcast its last program in Chicago on December 2, 1934 and made its debut in Philadelphia the next day. The move meant that KYW was the easternmost U. S. radio station with a call sign prefix of "K."

But by April of 1935, Paul K. Damai of the *Hammond Times* (Indiana) newspaper reported that Lowell had moved to Des Moines, Iowa to take a position with radio station KSO.

He worked in Des Moines less than a year. In November 1935, research finds news accounts of a birthday

and farewell party for the "popular KSO announcer" as he was leaving to work at WXYZ in Detroit, MI.

Radio logs in the *Detroit Free Press* around November and December 1935 do not show any particular program that Lowell may have been hosting or handling the announcing chores. His stay in Detroit proved to be a very short one. The *Knoxville News-Sentinel* told readers when Lowell joined WNOX that Lowell had been the special events announcer at WXYZ.

KSO

1430 KILOCYCLES

—NBC Blue Network—

TUESDAY AFTERNOON.

12:00—Inquiring Microphone, with Dale Morgan.
12:15—Theater of the Air, continued.
12:30—The Little German band (Norge Refrigerators.)—IBS.
12:45—Ruth Etting, songs.
1:00—The Rev. John Richey and Party (Church of the Open Bible).
1:30—Symphonic Gems.
2:00—Boo's and Hisses, with Lowell Blanchard.
2:30—Vocal Varieties.
2:45—Nellie Revell at Large—NBC.
3:00—Drake Salon Musical—IBS.
3:15—Baseball Scores.
3:16—KSO Previews.
3:30—Baseball Scores.
3:31—The Temple of Song, Nobie Cain director—NBC.
4:00—Baseball Scores.
4:01—Doin' the Town.
4:15—Baseball Scores.
4:16—Little Jackie Heller—NBC.
4:30—Smiling Dan (Gately's Clothing Store.)
4:45—Baseball Scores.
4:46—Billy Scott and His orchestra—NBC.
5:00—Baseball Scores.
5:01—Uncle Charlie's Courtesy club, with Lowell Blanchard.
5:15—Doin' the Town, continued.
5:30—The Singing Lady (Kellogg's)—NBC.
5:45—The Merry-Go-Round.
5:59—Weather Report.

The Des Moines
Register Des Moines, IA
April 23,1935

The Knoxville Legend Begins

Lowell's long tenure in Knoxville started in January 1936 when he left WXYZ in Detroit.

According to Ed Hooper in his book *Knoxville's WNOX* (2009), management of the 10,000 watt station wanted to attract audiences throughout East Tennessee, and saw down-home music as a way to broaden their listener base. Blanchard "drove into the hills and hollows . . . on rumors of a band or singer here and there." Thus, was born the **Mid-Day Merry-Go-Round** with its 90 minutes of music from 12:30 to 1:45 (later two hours) on weekday afternoons, later adding the Saturday night **Tennessee Barn Dance.**

WNOX Merry-Go-Round - 1936
Market Hall

WNOX Merry-Go-Round
Market Hall - knoxville
Circa 1939

The Knoxville News
Knoxville, TN
March 6, 1936

The Knoxville News-Sentinel
Knoxville, TN
January 2, 1938

The Knoxville News-Sentinel
Knoxville, TN
August 22, 1939

The Knoxville News-Sentinel
Knoxville, TN
August 28, 1939

The local newspaper featured ads or short snippets of the type of duties Blanchard handled in his early times at WNOX. The station tried a new daily program in May 1936 which would have Lowell as kind of a "man on the street" in which he would pose questions with those he met. Grandpappy was said to be a part of the show, perhaps to heckle Lowell or provide some comedy. He was stationed on Gay Street, near the Farragut Hotel. An alarm clock was a featured aspect of this show. It was set in advanced to ring while the program was on the air. The premise was that the person Lowell was interviewing at the time the alarm went off, would be given a dollar. A few days later, the *News-Sentinel* reported that Lowell, with his questions to any passerby, was getting quite a few witty retorts to his inquiries. It was reported that those who gathered around Lowell with his microphone found it a pleasant quarter-hour if not profitable.

The man on the street effort continued for a bit. A WNOX ad in May 1938 was telling readers that the station was offering money and food! The White Stores in Knoxville were sponsoring Lowell's show and offering a "host of valuable prizes in conjunction with the hilarity coming into your loudspeaker as Lowell Blanchard jibes the pedestrian with unexpected queries. Each person who was questioned on the delightful chinfest from the heart of Knoxville's business section on Gay Street was given a ticket which could be exchanged for merchandise at any White Store. One dollar was awarded the lucky person

being interviewed when the alarm clock went off. The show aired Monday through Saturday; Lowell stationed himself at 524 South Gay Street.

In mid-1936, WNOX underwent renovations providing bigger and better studios, enabling the production of better stage shows. The changes were popular as the new facilities were entertaining capacity crowds for the radio shows. Especially popular was the Saturday big hill-billy features, the Mid-Day Merry-Go-Round and the WNOX Carnival. These were enjoyed by audiences in the new "comfortable auditorium" located at 110 South Gay Street. The station had apparently arranged to have "Pappy, Zeb, Ezra and Elton" to appear along with Lowell and the gang, It was reported that "the prominent network showmen are appearing in their unique costumes and won't cease their droll humor. Admission is still five cents to all." The act being referred to would appear to be the popular Beverly Hill Billies.

In July 1936, Lowell was the master of ceremonies for an amateur show at the auditorium. The half-hour show that night would announce the winners of the previous week's amateur hour. The promotional item stated, "If you can imitate the noise of a Model T, sing, whistle, play a saw, dance or recite come on down and join the show." Lowell Blanchard will see that you have a chance to display the talent that you have been guarding so jealously for all these years. "

The Mid-Day Merry-Go-Round became a fixture on WNOX's schedule. The WNOX Carnival was an attempt to capture the listening audience later in the day. It had an ensemble cast and originated from the WNOX studio auditorium. Mike Hunnicutt led the string band and was the ring leader of the show, which he or the station claimed had "4,000 hillbillies." Some of the acts featured were Lowell Blanchard, Lost John, the Rainey Brothers, Arthur Q. Smith, Grandpappy and others. Guest performers were also be a part of the show each week. It aired during the 9pm to 10 pm Saturday night hour though it was said to start at 8:30 pm.

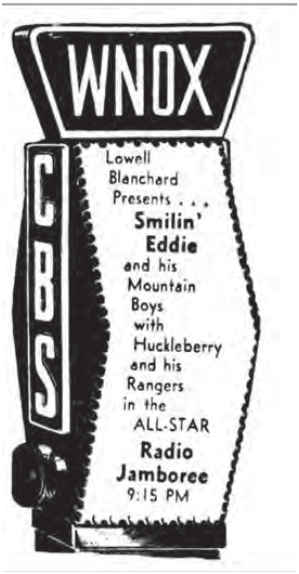
Bert Vincent in one of his columns said Lowell was *"best known and most often heard radio voice in Knoxville. . . . . He is wise-cracking, ballyhooing and just plain talking over WNOX from seven in the morning until 11 at night."* While he may have chosen another profession, he did not want do be anything other than what he was doing. He was the WNOX program manager. He wrote scripts, a continuity writer. Not much went over the air that didn't come off Lowell's typewriter.

Mr. Vincent then tried to give the readers a mental image to go along with the voice that was so familiar across Knoxville, stating. *"He wears dark-colored suits of conservative style. But his socks, his shirts and his ties are pretty wild. They are striped usually, and the colors are like rainbows. He walks fast, in a sort of a swinging, pitching gait, depending upon his feet to catch him before he falls."* He was not yet married and

his interests outside of work were golf and his automobile and driving it as fast as he could. Baseball was one of his favorite past times and he soon became the voice of the local minor league baseball team that played their games at Caswell Park.

Readers learned a bit of Lowell's attempt at doing theater while at the University of Illinois. Lowell once thought he could change the public's perception of some of the tragic characters that Shakespeare had created. For some reason, his teacher did not like the " . . . . way he burlesqued Hamlet and Macbeth. To laugh at Hamlet was a sin. This teacher did pass him though." He once thought he would be a chamber of commerce secretary. But the university radio station manager told Lowell he should audition for an announcer role. His thespian and chamber aspirations were tabled.

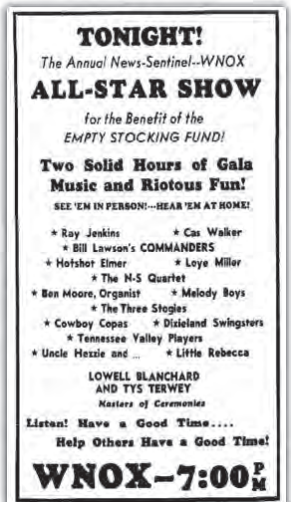
Lowell could not play any musical instrument although he might put on the act of doing so. He enjoyed smoking a pipe rather than cigarettes. He was also said to favor wearing a derby hat on occasions.




LOOK WHO'S COMING!
Lowell Blanchard
AND HIS
BIG ALL-STAR
RADIO JAMBOREE
Broadcasting A Salute to Morristown and Hamblen County over WNOX
— IN PERSON —
•HOT-SHOT ELMER
•THE CARLISLE BROTHERS
Bill, Cliff, Sonny Boy, Shannon
•GRANDPAPPY AND HIS YOUNGINS
Bull-Gap's Grand Ole Man
•LOWELL "BINGO" BLANCHARD
Master of Ceremonies
— AND OTHERS —
JOE BRYANT WAREHOUSE
Saturday Night, June 21
8:00 P. M.
COME AND BRING THE FAMILY!
After the Program Visit
ROBERT & TURNER
"Over 70 Years of Service"

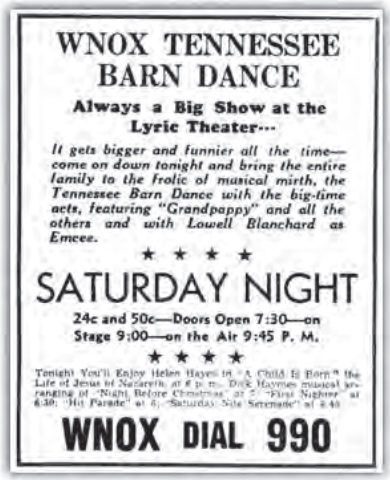
Morristown Gazette Mail
Morristown, TN
June 19, 1941

The Knoxville News-Sentinel
Knoxville, TN
July 9, 1942


TONIGHT!
The Annual News-Sentinel--WNOX
ALL-STAR SHOW
for the Benefit of the
EMPTY STOCKING FUND!
Two Solid Hours of Gala Music and Riotous Fun!
SEE 'EM IN PERSON!--HEAR 'EM AT HOME!
★ Ray Jenkins ★ Cas Walker
★ Bill Lawson's COMMANDERS
★ Hotshot Elmer ★ Loye Miller
★ The N-S Quartet
★ Ben Moore, Organist ★ Melody Boys
★ The Three Stogies
★ Cowboy Copas ★ Dixieland Swingsters
★ Tennessee Valley Players
★ Uncle Hezzie and ... ★ Little Rebecca
LOWELL BLANCHARD
AND TYS TERWEY
Masters of Ceremonies
Listen! Have a Good Time....
Help Others Have a Good Time!
WNOX—7:00 P.M.

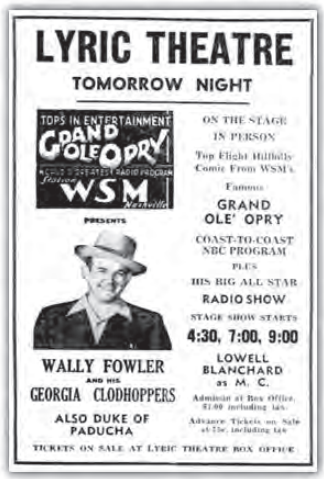
The Knoxville News-Sentinel
Knoxville, TN
December 10, 1942

The Knoxville News-Sentinel
Knoxville, TN
January 26, 1945



The Knoxville News-Sentinel
Knoxville, TN
January 22, 1945

The Knoxville News-Sentinel
Knoxville, TN
July 19, 1945



The Knoxville News-Sentinel
Knoxville, TN
October 24, 1945

SO YOU HATE TO GET UP—
Well, Let WNOX Help You!

Lowell Blanchard on "Good Morning Club"

LOOKS as though he had a hard time, himself—and well he might since he has to start out about 6 a. m. every week day morning in order to bring you that "Good Morning Club" from seven to eight every morning. Thousands of listeners have learned to turn on their radio at the 990 mark, as soon as their alarm sounds, in order to let Lowell and his music and his snappy, witty chatter help them get up in the morning.

WNOX

BUT IF you should miss Lowell on the "Good Morning Club,' you can hear him emceeing that marvelous melange of mirth and melody, the "Midday Merry Go Round," from 12:10 p. m. to 1:46 p. m. Monday through Friday. And in between getting up and going to bed at night, you can always hear the very finest programs at the 990 mark on your dial.

WNOX

TONIGHT you'll want to hear the first of the new series of Public Forums at 8:30, when speakers will discuss the future of Knoxville, its needs and what should be done and is being done to meet them. Speakers will be Mayor Cas Walker; Edward B. Smith, associate editor of The News-Sentinel; V. C. Henrich, plant manager of Rohm & Haas, and Dr. Mabel Young Shields, president of the Business and Professional Woman's Club.

WNOX 990
CBS NETWORK ON YOUR DIAL

The Knoxville News-Sentinel
Knoxville, TN
March 12, 1945

The Knoxville News-Sentinel
Knoxville, TN
February 3, 1953

The Knoxville News-Sentinel
Knoxville, TN
January 13, 1953

The Knoxville News-Sentinel
Knoxville, TN

The Knoxville News-Sentinel
Knoxville, TN
October 20, 1938

Musicians found their way to WNOX, auditioned for Blanchard, and the program became more professionalized. It was held in a 600-seat theater and admission was charged, often to sell-out crowds. The Barn Dance attracted even larger audiences.

Numerous WNOX artists later went on attain larger fame in Nashville and the Grand Ole Opry. These included such figures as Roy Acuff, Archie Campbell, Don Gibson, and Carl Smith. In all fairness, some of these people also appeared at Knoxville's other stations such as WROL and WIVK or programs sponsored by Cas Walker.

For some successful artists, Knoxville radio was the peak of their careers. These included Molly O'Day and Lynn Davis, Carl Story, Red Rector, and Red Kirk.

Bill Carlisle occupies a special place, both in his role as a vocalist and his comic alter-ego "Hot-Shot Elmer." After Carlisle went to Nashville, "Elmer" seemingly vanished but Bill retained some humor as himself and with songs like *"No Help Wanted," "Is Zat You Myrtle,"* and *"Female Hercules."*

Blanchard later reflected, "I train them and Nashville gets them."

Lowell worked with many hillbilly music stars, and seemed to help some of them get a start in the business. Bill Carlisle was at WNOX when he told Lowell, "Well, I have written a song for us." Lowell perked up and told Bill to sing it. Bill then preceded to sing his new tune, *"No*

Help Wanted." The story goes that Lowell kept listening and sat there, not saying a word. Bill told Lowell, "I'll give you half of it." But Lowell told Bill, "Ah, no. I didn't help you write it. I didn't do anything. Besides, I don't care much for it." Bill said, "OK", smiled and told Lowell, "But remember I offered it to you." Bill recorded the song and it hit the charts and ended up netting Bill about $80,000.

He may have turned down credit on *"No Help Wanted"* but our collection shows that Lowell got songwriter's credit on two tunes. One by Bill Carlisle - *"Spoon With Me"* and another written with Carl Story - *"God Had A Son In Service."*

God Had A Son In Service
By Carl Story and Lowell Blanchard

Many years ago, We know the story true,
God had a son in service,
He died for me and you,
He hung a gold star in Heaven,
He wanted us to know,
His Son had paid the debt for us,
Long, Long ago.

Yes, God had a son in service,
He died for you and me,
Yes, God had a son in service,
He died at Calvary.

Many years ago, He died at Calvary.
He bore our sins so bravely
He died for you and me,
Yes, God had a son in service,
In the Battlefield of sin,
He was despised and troubleddd,
Forgotten to the end.

Yes, God's Son's way means victory,
Let's follow the Prince of Peace.
He's calling today, for you,
He's also calling me.
So when you see a star in Heaven,
In the Window of Heaven fair,
Remember God's Son in Service,
Through the cross He's put it there.

While Blanchard never claimed to be much of a singer, he did publish a songbook, Lowell Blanchard's Folio of Mid-day Merry-Go-Round Favorites (Wallace Fowler Publications). It contained songs and jokes used on the program. He also recorded a single for Mercury; one side was an atomic bomb song and the flip covered a Tennessee Ernie Ford number about the problems of parenthood.

The Baseball Announcer — Bingo!

Lowell's stint as a baseball announcer had an impact on others it seemed. Bert Vincent wrote of Mose Wright, a shoe shine person at the Farragut Barber Shop who apparently would sing something like:

"Strike One. Lowe . . . Here comes the pitch. . . . Long fly over center field . . . Back . . . Back . . . Back . . . Bingo. He's out!"

Mose had gotten a bit of a reputation for some of the lines he would toss out. It was said he had also developed the voice of Lowell as well.

Lowell was also associated with the breakfast cereal, Wheaties. Local grocery ads would promote the "Breakfast of Champions" along with mention of Lowell in the ads as well.

His role as baseball announcer played a role in the timing of his marriage to Sally Irene Marshall on September 18, 1938. The date was chosen so that Lowell could finish his broadcasting duties before going to Detroit for the marriage. According to a September 7 article, Lowell indicated that neither he nor his wife-to-be like elaborate affairs. The wedding was to take place at the home of her parents in Detroit. It was to be a simple ceremony with only members of the immediate family present.

The Knoxville News-Sentinel
Knoxville, TN
April 2, 1938

The Knoxville News-Sentinel
Knoxville, TN
July 4, 1940

The Knoxville News-Sentinel
Knoxville, TN
July 4, 1940

Lowell Gets Married

The Knoxville News-Sentinel
Knoxville, TN
September 7 and 20, 1938

The final day of the 1938 baseball season at Caswell Park in Knoxville featured a gala event. It was "Lowell Blanchard Day," which featured a special Ladies Day promotion. The home team came through and beat the Birmingham Barons 12 to 1. Lowell was then the honoree at a bachelor dinner in the Orchid Room of Louis' Steak House in Knoxville. Attendees for the dinner included members of the found show and other WNOX personnel.

The following September found the fans honoring Lowell one more time. The reason for the occasion was to obtain votes on behalf of Lowell as part of contest put on by *The Sporting News* to name the most popular minor league baseball announcer. Fans would have to buy the newspaper and cut-out the ballot and mail it in. The team had arranged for *" . . . . an unusually large number of papers to Knoxville for 'Blanchard Day.' "*

The efforts paid off.

On July 6, 1941, *The Sporting News* presented Lowell with a trophy as the Best Announcer in the Southern League. The Smokies had a doubleheader that day against the Memphis Chicks. Lowell dressed for the occasion, wearing " . . . a becoming ensemble consisting of pants, coat and a blush, the latter occurring when Miss Thelma McGhee, more commonly known as "Miss Knoxville," came gracefully out and handed him the trinket." Tys Terway handled the master of ceremonies chore for the presentation. Tom Anderson wrote, "Tys showed a fine flair for adlibbing, but his principal virtue was that he was brief and did not bore the customers with a lot of superfluous blabber." The trophy was not the only thing that Lowell got that afternoon. He also got a set of silver donated by his oil sponsor, some hay that was contributed by his breakfast food sponsor and bananas that were donated by E. B. Bowles, the wholesale fruit and vegetable dealer known for his donations of food to worthy people and organizations in the Knoxville area.

In the summer of 1948, Lowell acted as the master of ceremonies for the dedication of Knoxville's Babe Ruth Memorial Park. Mayor Jimmy Elmore led the proceedings. Lowell gave the eulogy to the man known as the "Sultan of Swat" who had recently died after a two year illness. The mayor raised the colors and unveiled pictures of the "Bambino." Four action "shots" surrounded a bust picture of the Babe. The flag was lowered to half-mast, then there

was a moment of silent tribute. The crowd was served refreshments contributed by the local Knoxville merchants.

Lowell Blanchard, Tys Terway and Thelma McGhee
Presentation of The Sporting News Trophy
Southern League Announcer of the Year
Circa July 1941

From the Hilbilly-Music.com Collection

Columnist Bert Vincent wrote some of his memories of listening to Lowell announced the Knoxville Smokies games and how Lowell drew the listener in. Mr. Vincent wrote:

I remember well Lowell's broadcasts. He sounded just like he was right on the field seeing every play, even if the game was in Birmingham. I went to watch him one Sunday afternoon. He was sitting on the stage in the WNOX studio, then on Gay Street. There was not another soul in sight. Lowell would read a short wire report on a play. He had a baseball bat, and a pencil. If the hitter hit the ball, Lowell would rap the pencil against the bat. It sounded on the air just like the smack against a ball. The wire report would tell if it was a strike, a foul, or maybe a long fly to the outfield. Lowell, sitting there all by himself, hundreds of miles from the game, could see in his mind's eye just what was happening. And he described it with realism, like the shoeshine boy was singing . . . "Here comes the pitch . . . Long fly over center field . . . Back . . . Back . . . Back . . . Bingo. He's out."

During research one could not help but notice some of what might be termed the human interest aspect that was part of Lowell's tenure in Knoxville. The Mid-Day Merry-Go-Round was a hit from the time Lowell started it. The fans supported it and Lowell understood that. Take for instance, Mrs. Annie L. Rhodes. She was said to be at one time the "number one fan" of the show and sometimes a participant. When she passed away in August of 1953,

Lowell provided readers with his personal observations of Mrs. Rhodes.

"She was the best fan we had. From the time we started it in 1936 until her health failed. She often entertained us in her home on Ailor Avenue and for my birthday and at Christmas she baked me cakes. We gave her a lifetime pass to our show, out of appreciation of her interest and kindness . . . Several years ago, when her sister died, our quartet sang at the funeral." The Mid-day Merry-Go-Round never had so good a friend."

In 1953, the University of Tennessee band was invited to participate in the presidential inaugural parade in Washington, DC on January 20. The local talents put their heads together to arrange a fund raising event for the band. Aubrey Couch donated the use of Knoxville's largest and finest theater. Lowell Blanchard and Archie Campbell offered their stage production expertise and got the local Knoxville entertainment folks to participate in the show. The goal of the efforts was to raise about $3,000 to cover the band's expenses for the trip.

In 1954, Chet Atkins came back to Maryville for the Hillbilly Homecoming. Columnist Vic Weals wrote of his conversations with Chet and a bit of Chet's early history while he took in some of the backstage jam sessions by Chet and Eddy Arnold. Mr. Weals laid to rest the thought that a 'hillbilly' musician was not a 'real' musician and pointed out Chet as his number one exhibit. Chet was born in Luttrell, TN and got his start playing fiddle and guitar for local dances and community events. He began to go

out on his own at the start of World War II when his father took another job. Chet was influenced by a Negro janitor at the school he was attending when the family lived in Columbus, Georgia. He liked that style and adapted it to his own. His first "play for pay" gig was on the WNOX Mid-day Merry-Go-Round show hosted by Lowell. He was working as a fiddler with Bill Carlisle and Archie ("Grandpappy") Campbell. But Lowell heard Chet playing guitar backstage and told the youngster he should become a guitar player.

The time was about 1942 or so and Chet the guitar player never looked back. The town of Maryville started an annual "Hillbilly Homecoming" celebration. It brought many of East Tennessee's talents back home to enjoy a celebration and entertainment. It started in July of 1953. A 16-year old from Oak Ridge, TN was crowned "Queen of the Smokie" (Marline King) at the start of the gala celebration. Homer and Jethro ("the Hootin' Holler song splitters of Grand Ole Opry fame") were there to provide entertainment. A half dozen or so radio disc jockeys were on hand to take part in a contest to see "which one can talk the fastest and mostest." Those DJ's included Cousin Edward from Grand Rapids, MI; Jack Davis of Rockmart, GA; Red Brown of Chattanooga along with Eddie Parker and Grandpappy Campbell of Knoxville. Lowell Blanchard was to take on the role as referee. The festivities ended with a Queen of the Smokies twilight dance led by the George Kinnon Orchestra. Other entertainment that

evening included the Old Harp Singers, Polly Bergen from Hollywood, Homer and Jethro, Chet Atkins and others.

In 1956, about 5,000 people attended a concert at the Maryville High School campus that featured Pat Boone. Some of the other stars that night included Grace Crewsell, Gene Wardell, Mimi Roman, Dave Rich, The Everly Brothers, Jimmy James and Mary Starr. Smiley Burnette also showed up to join the fun.

The Knoxville News-Sentinel
Knoxville, TN
July 2, 1953

The Knoxville News-Sentinel
Knoxville, TN
September 27 1954

Tennessee Barn Dance

When the **Tennessee Barn Dance** show began on WNOX, it seemingly gained a fan with columnist Bert Vincent who also found more to admire about the talents of Lowell Blanchard. He wrote, *"I never hear WNOX's Saturday night Barn Dance program that I don't think to myself, "It is a darn good show. I wonder how Lowell Blanchard, with so many other radio programs to handle, has the time to put together such a long program as the Barn Dance and make it always click."*

WNOX Tennessee Barn Dance - 1958
L-R (Back): Charlle Magaman, Troy Hatcher, Tony Musco, Jerry collins, Lowell Blanchard, Johnny Shelton, Dave Durham, Tater Tate, Larry Mathis
L-R (Front): Red Rector, Fred Smith, Ray Adkins, Lois Adkins, Charile Bailey, Danny Bailey
On The Trall - March / April 1958 From the Hilbilly-Music.com Collection

WNOX Tennessee Barn Dance - 1958
L-R: Lois Adkins, Red Rector, Lowell Blanchard, Don Gibson and Fred Smith
On The Trall - March / April 1958 From the Hilbilly-Music.com Collection

In 1966, Billy Grammer was taping his syndicated television show in Knoxville. Billy said in a 1966 article that he went to Knoxville once a month to tape his shows as the Nashville television station schedules were full. Alex Houston, a ventriloquist was one of the regulars on the show. Billy also had a group called "The Homesteaders" which was made up of Jerry Rivers, Big Jack Boles and Frank Evans. Babara Allen was the female vocalist on the show. The "old man of show business" in Knoxville, Lowell

Blanchard, was doing all the commercials and handling the emcee chores.

The Politician

The Knoxville News-Sentinel
Knoxville, TN
November 3, 1943

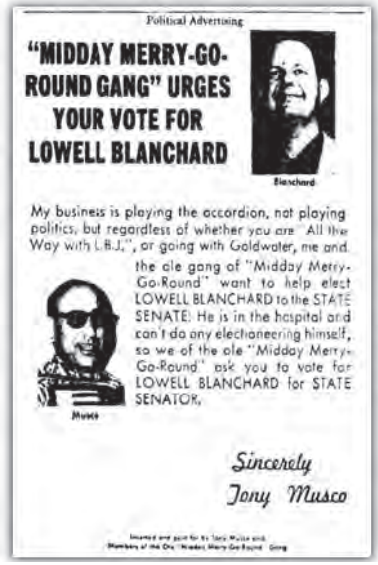
The Knoxville News-Sentinel
Knoxville, TN
November 19, 1947


(Political Advertisement)

Thinking People Will
VOTE FOR
LOWELL
BLANCHARD
For
MAYOR

Inserted and paid for by friends of
Lowell Blanchard—Joe McMillan, Chairman

The Knoxville News-Sentinel
Knoxville, TN
November 2, 1963


Political Advertising

"MIDDAY MERRY-GO-ROUND GANG" URGES YOUR VOTE FOR LOWELL BLANCHARD

Blanchard

My business is playing the accordion, not playing politics, but regardless of whether you are "All the Way with L.B.J.", or going with Goldwater, me and the ole gang of "Midday Merry-Go-Round" want to help elect LOWELL BLANCHARD to the STATE SENATE! He is in the hospital and can't do any electioneering himself, so we of the ole "Midday Merry-Go-Round" ask you to vote for LOWELL BLANCHARD for STATE SENATOR.

Musco

Sincerely
Tony Musco

Inserted and paid for by Tony Musco and
Members of the Ole "Midday Merry-Go-Round" Gang

The Knoxville News-Sentinel
Knoxville, TN
October 28, 1964

For a time Lowell entered the realm of politics, serving as a city councilman in Knoxville. It was during the same time that another Knoxville resident, Cas Walker was also serving. The actual means of getting elected to the council and even becoming the mayor of the city was a bit of a different process that involved a run-off or two. The mayor's position Knoxville at the time was seemingly more ceremonial in nature.

In 1951, Blanchard ran into controversy because he had a new home that appeared to violate the charter of being on the council. Some wanted to remove him because his new home was outside the Knoxville limits. Milton Roberts was another one in a similar predicament. But his term on the council was to be up relatively sooner than Mr. Blanchard's which was for two more years. In late October, one member said he would make a motion to have Mr. Blanchard removed from the council. But on October 24, 1951, the council voted by a 3 to 2 margin to refuse to unseat Mr. Blanchard.

An editorial raised the question of how long the law would be flouted. In the editorial, Cas Walker stated that it would be "political suicide" for him to declare the seat vacant. One of the three voting to let Blanchard remain was Mr. Roberts, who was living outside the city. The editorial pointed out the various discussions about sections of the city not having representation yet when council members move outside the district they were elected to represent nothing happens. The issue dragged on – with no one –

not the Election Commission, not the attorney general nor the council. The editorial felt it would be up to the voters to render the final outcome.

Cas Walker wrote of the situation in one of his paid advertisements. He resented the attempt to oust a fellow council member without even offering the person a chance to be heard on the matter. He questioned others for acting on hearsay evidence. He also felt that the action would be resented by the hundreds of people who voted for Mr. Blanchard and noted that one of those trying to unseat Mr. Blanchard actually lost to him in the previous election.

In the fall of 1963, Lowell threw his hat into the race for Knoxville mayor against incumbent John Duncan and County Finance Commissioner William C. Tallent. Mr. Duncan won the November vote with 25,594 votes; easily beating the combined votes of Mr. Tallent (9,175 votes) and Mr. Blanchard (7,898 votes).

Effective Monday, May 4, 1964, Blanchard took on the role of announcer and advertising salesman for radio station WROL in Knoxville, thus, ending his career at WNOX which had begun in 1936. News articles noted his promotion of the shows Tennessee Barn Dance and the Midday Merry Go Round that featured several performers over the years who went on to bigger and better roles. The station was on both the Columbia and Mutual broadcasting networks.

Mr. Blanchard continued to immerse himself into politics. In 1964, he was seeking election to be a

representative in the Tennessee state legislature. He ran unopposed as a Democratic candidate from the 8th District and got 12,060 votes. He faced State Representative Fred O. Berry, a Republican, who won his primary election with 12,107 votes, a margin of 8,181 votes over his opponent lawyer, R. C. SMith.

On October 19, 1964, Lowell was admitted to the Presbyterian Hospital after suffering what was thought to be a heart attack. He underwent tests and was reported in satisfactory condition.

The Republicans swept the state assembly seats in the November election. Mr. Blanchard finished 4,661 votes behind Mr. Berry who won with 38,922 votes. Mr. Berry got 4,000 more votes than Mr. Blanchard from citizens who lived outside of Knoxville's city limits; he only got 400 more votes from citizens within the city limits.

As live music on radio began to fade from the scene in favor of deejays and changing formats, so it eventually hit WNOX which changed its format to "Top 40" in 1962.

Lowell Blanchard remained with the station. He became a sportscaster for the University of Tennessee games and Knoxville's minor league baseball team.

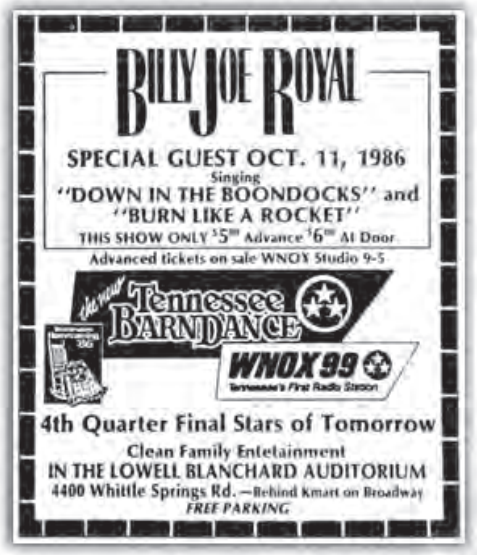
Knoxville Loses A Legend – February 1968

News reports from February 2, 1968 indicate that Lowell was in the Presbyterian Hospital in intensive care

with a heart condition. He had become ill upon returning from a weekend basketball game trip to Mississippi.

He suffered what would be a fatal heart attack following a Volunteer basketball game on February 18, 1968. Nine years later, he was posthumously inducted into the Country Radio Broadcaster's Hall of Fame, often recognized as the "on-air voice of East Tennessee."

Posthumous Honors



The Knoxville News-Sentinel
Knoxville, TN
October 8, 1986

After his death in 1968, the community honored Lowell Blanchard in various ways.

In April 1968, a four hour nostalgic Mid-Day Merry-Go-Round show was held that was attended by over 2,400 people and netted over $7,000 for a Blanchard Trust Fund.

The show was held at the Civic Coliseum in Knoxville. Some of the stars on the show included Grandpa Jones, Roy Acuff, Johnny Wright, Skeeter Davis, Chet Atkins, Don Gibson and others. Lowell's widow, along with his daughter, Sally, and son, Arthur (Smiley) were also at the show.

In 1985 WNOX attempted to revive its old Tennessee Barn Dance program at the WNOX Radio Auditorium. Archie Campbell was to be the emcee that night; Kitty Wells and Johnny Wright returned for the show.

WNOX had refurbished its facilities and dedicated the new auditorium as Lowell Blanchard Auditorium. The auditorium was located at 4400 Whittle Springs Road in North Knoxville. An article promoting the show included several noteworthy quotes about Lowell:

- *"Lowell Blanchard was one of the greatest developers of potentially talented people. He had this super way of bringing out the best in everyone and it did not matter to him if he came out on the short end of the stick. I owe to him almost everything." — Chet Atkins*
- "*There wouldn't even be a Kitty Wells if it weren't for Lowell Blanchard. When Johnny and I first worked with him I was Muriel Deeson. It was Lowell who said, "Johnny, if you*

can get her a good stage name that girl could sell some records." That was enough for us; you just couldn't go wrong with following Lowell's advice. What a great guy he was!" — Kitty Wells

- *"He was the best master of ceremonies I've ever seen. He had a real feeling for people . . . seemed like he could read their minds. There'll never be another like him, but we're sure going to do our best to make the new Barn Dance the kind of show Lowell would want it to be." — Archie Campbell*

The home of the Golden Arches, McDonald's actually had a country-music themed restaurant in Knoxville at one time on Chapman Highway. The "McTwang" restaurant, as the local paper termed it, had a ribbon cutting ceremony on July 18, 1990. The restaurant had displays of East Tennessee country music stars such as Archie (Grandpappy) Campbell, Roy Acuff, Dolly Parton and Lowell Blanchard. The restaurant no longer exists and efforts to find pictures of its dйcor were not fruitful.

In 1991, the University of Tennessee established a scholarship at the University's College of Communications to honor Lowell. Wayne Bledsoe reminded readers that it was Lowell who nudged Chet Atkins to focus his musical efforts on the guitar; it was Lowell who got a female singer named Muriel Deeson to change her name; she became Kitty Wells; it was Lowell that pushed Henry Haynes and Kenneth Burns to become a duo known as Homer and Jethro.

The Knoxville News-Sentinel
Knoxville, TN
September 15, 1985

Tragic Ending

On December 26, 1968, Sally Irene Marshall Blanchard, Lowell's widow, took her own life with an overdose of pills. It was noted she had been depressed since the death of her husband in February. She had met Lowell in Detroit in the early 1930's while he was working at WXYZ. It was said to be a case of 'love at first sight' and the couple was quite close. She was prominent in the local golfing community and was president of the Women's Southern Seniors Golf Association in 1958.

Like Father, Like Son

Arthur (Smiley) Blanchard tried to follow his father into radio as an announcer, but found he did not like it. He tried another career and followed in his father's footsteps - politics. In 1972, he finished first out of 13 candidates for an at-large position on the city council and then finished first in the run-off.

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Country Music in the "Dirty Thirties"

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A common (mis)perception of country music is that it is a largely conservative cultural expression, especially when it comes to explicitly addressing the topic of sex. Yes, the theme of cheating is an old one, but in the vast majority of such songs, sex is implied rather than directly referenced. Another (mis)perception is that the relatively few songs that do address sex and sexuality are a fairly recent phenomenon, perhaps no older than the 1970's, for example, Loretta Lynn's (1932-2022) "The Pill" (MCA, 1975) where the singer gleefully declares her freedom to have sex for pleasure just like her man or Charlie Rich's (1932-1995) "Behind Closed Doors" (Epic, 1973) where the singer croons suggestively about "no one knows what goes on behind closed doors" with his woman. However, a closer look at country music history reveals that sex and sexual behavior was, in some ways, surprisingly explicit and celebrated in the recorded music of the 1930's. This will be explored by analyzing a representative sample of recordings made during that decade employing several main themes: double-entendre lyrics, sex as forbidden fruit, transgression, and race, which also ties in with the theme

of transgression. The conclusion will seek to make sense of what these recordings have to say about country music during the 1930's and possible connections to the realities of American life during the Great Depression.

The major early star Jimmie Rodgers (1897-1933) provides the first two examples for consideration here: "Pistol Packin' Papa" (Victor, 1930) and "Let Me Be your Sidetrack" (Victor, 1931). Rodgers recorded at least 174 sides (many of them alterative versions of the same song) between 1927 and his death from tuberculosis in 1933; no doubt the two under consideration here are not the only recordings he made concerning sex.

"Pistol Packin' Papa" is a waltz-time declaration of the singer's proud identity as a gun-toting good-time rounder. The verses of this genially boasting song only once, but rather directly, refer to the subject of sex: "Girls, I'm just a good guy and I'm going to have my fun. And if you don't want to smell my smoke, don't monkey with my gun." The connotation is fairly obvious and is a good example of the double-entendre nature of many if not most of the sexual references found in country music of this era.

Rodgers, also known as "The Singing Brakeman" in reference to his career as a railroad worker before turning to music as tuberculosis made railroad work impossible, recorded a number of songs relating to trains and railroads. Appropriately, one of the songs under consideration here is his "Let Me Be your Sidetrack." Although not designated so in the title, "Sidetrack" employs the same appealing

basic blues structure and sound as is heard on his famous "Blue Yodel" recordings. More so than "Pistol Packin' Papa," "Sidetrack" employs double-entendre motifs in nearly every verse. Utilizing railroad imagery and sex, Rodgers implores, "Let me be your sidetrack 'til your mainline comes. I will [spoken]. Let me be your sidetrack 'til your mainline comes. 'Cause I can do more switchin' than your mainline's ever done." This metaphor was not original to Rodgers: it appears in the minor-key "Dark Cloudy Blues" recorded by African American blues singer and guitarist "Cryin'" Sam Collins (1887-1949) in 1927 for the Gennett label. Decades later, in 1952, the same verse is employed by rhythm and blues singer Little Esther (Esther Jones, later Esther Phillips, 1935-1984) in the frantically rocking "Mainliner" on Federal. Famed rock n' roll/rhythm and blues songwriters Jerry Leiber (1933-2011) and Mike Stoller (1933-) composed this song. While it is impossible to know how they became aware of this double-entendre lyric, it probably was not this Jimmie Rodgers song since their orientation was heavily toward blues.

The musical legacy, especially of Rodgers's "blue yodel" style of singing and guitar work, was very influential and shows up in the next several examples of double-entendre country recordings of the 1930's surveyed here.

Those familiar with Jimmie Davis (1899-2000) as the artist closely associated with the sentimental favorite, "You Are my Sunshine" (Decca, 1940), or as a prolific gospel recording artist in the 1950s and 1960s, may be surprised to

discover Davis recorded at least a dozen sexually suggestive numbers early in his career, between 1930 and 1935. Many of these were performed in a style similar to the "blue yodels" of Jimmie Rodgers. Rodgers remained very popular throughout the 1930's beyond his 1933 death and a number of country artists got their start as acolytes of Jimmie Rodgers recording bluesy numbers (often complete with yodels) accompanied by guitar or banjo featuring his style and, also, at times remakes of his own original recordings. In addition to Jimmie Davis, such artists include major future stars such as Hank Snow (1914-1995), Gene Autry (1907-1998), and Ernest Tubb (1914-1984). We will look at only two of such examples by Jimmie Davis here.

One of Davis's most vivid examples of sexually explicit recordings is his 1932 Victor recording, "Tom Cat and Pussy Blues." The title alone alerts the listener to the lyrical content. The record is very much in the Rodgers mode in terms of bluesy guitar and melody, and Davis's use of the "blue yodel." Ostensibly the lyrics concern a male and female cat in what strongly suggests will be a sexual encounter. The most explicit lyrics, however, introduce another animal, a rooster purchased by Davis's girlfriend: "My gal bought a rooster. Got him up in Tennessee. Good gal bought a rooster. Gol him up in Tennessee. You oughta seen that cock and pussy roostin' in the China [chinaberry] tree." This is clearly an example of a double-entendre lyric. Whether or not it was his conscious intent, the lyrics also are a great example of shocking the bourgeoisie ("*epater la*

bourgeoisie"). Although Davis had humble origins as the son of a sharecropping family in northern Louisiana, he was, by this point, something of a member of the bourgeoisie, having gone as far as earning a master's degree at Louisiana State University and having briefly worked as a college history instructor.

More interesting, in cultural or sociological terms, is Davis's 1932 Victor recording, "High Behind Blues." This is an example of what Pamela Fox describes as the "appropriation of black masculinity" in early country music. Arising out of minstrel show traditions, some early country artists engaged in the use of black-face performances. The intention, according to Fox, was for the "purpose of concealment or repression" of transgressive values and desires. In other words, the fun, for white performers and audiences, was being able to express culturally taboo sentiments by pretending to be African American thus allowing for the thrill of transgression and, not incidentally, reinforcing racial stereotypes of African Americans as overly sexual or lascivious. In "High Behind Blues" the lyrics primarily concern Davis's desire to wander and travel to the Gulf of Mexico. The sexual and racial transgression appears in the final verse where Davis sings, "When I get to Mexico, gonna get me a big, big brown. No matter how big she is, I'm the man can hold her down." The song's title, "High Behind Blues," may also have a sexual connotation according to Clarence Major's dictionary of African American slang, the term means "buttocks that

jut up and out," however, Major notes the term as being in use during the 1940's and 1950's, whereas Davis's recording dates from 1932. The one time Davis uses the phrase "high behind," it suggests more of being in a state of wanderlust than lust: "May ride a freight train, may ride a Pullman blind/Makes no difference what I ride, I'm gettin' high behind."

Another country artist who started out as something of a Jimmie Rodgers imitator and whose popular image is at odds with his early career "dirty thirties" recordings is Gene (Orvon) Autry (1907-1998). Autry is known best for his movie and television series role as one of the Singing Cowboys, a genre popular from the mid-1930's to the early 1950's. Like Roy Rogers (Leonard Slye, 1911-1998), Autry, in these films, was a wholesome virtuous cowboy who would occasionally break into song in between adventures on the trail or defeating various Western villains. Autry's 1931 Victor recording, "Do Right Daddy Blues," presents a decidedly different sort of persona.

The song concerns transgression and also the theme of forbidden fruit. "Do Right Daddy Blues" addresses the latter in a verse concerning sexual touching. Gershen Kaufman and Lev Raphael argue that in American culture touching is associated with shame. Touching in itself is not inherently sexual but it can "confuse a primary human need with sexuality." However, Autry's recording poses no confusion: "You can feel on my leg, you can feel on my thigh/If you feel my legs, you've got to ride me high/I'm

a do right daddy but I can't be treated this way." In other words, Autry is warning a young woman (whom he later ends up taking to the Dallas fair) that if she continues to touch him on his legs, especially his thighs, that he is expecting to have intercourse.

Melodically, "Do Right Daddy Blues" is closer to jazz or pop than to Jimmie Rodgers's blue yodels, but very much like Rodgers, the lyrics declare the singer to be a wandering rounder. In fact, he utilizes a variation of a verse heard in Rodgers's very bluesy 1930 Victor recording "Blue Yodel No. 9" (also known as "Standin' on the Corner"). Rodgers, accompanied by jazz greats Louis Armstrong (1901-1971) on trumpet and Armstrong's wife, Lil Hardin Armstrong (1898-1901), on piano, sings, "Along come a police and grabbed me by my arm . . . I said, 'You'll find my name on the tail of my shirt/ I'm a Tennessee hustler and I don't have to work." Autry sings, "I went up to Boston come back down Maine/I met a policeman, he says, 'What's yo' name?'/ I said, 'My name is on the tail of my shirt/ I'm a do right daddy, don't have to work" Interestingly enough, Harmonica Frank (Floyd, 1908-1984), made a similarly defiant declaration a generation later in his rough bluesy 1954 Sun recording, "Rockin' Chair Daddy." Instead of addressing a police officer, Harmonica Frank informs a woman who asks him his name, "Told her my name is on the tail of my shirt/ Rockin' Chair Daddy don't have to work."

A variation on Autry's verse warning the woman who is feeling his thigh that he will take this as a sexual invitation also appears much later when folk and blues singer Maria Muldaur (1942-) recorded the bluesy "Don't You Make Me High (Don't You Feel my Leg)" for Reprise records in 1973. Muldaur's recording is an appealing remake of African American jazz and blues singer Blue Lu Barker's (1913-1998) 1938 Delta recording, "Don't Make Me High." It is unclear if this verse originated with Gene Autry but he certainly was one of the first if not the first person to have recorded it.

Cliff Carlisle (1903-1983) was a very effective blues-oriented country singer and outstanding slide guitarist who enjoyed a lengthy recording career on his own but also together with his more famous brother, "Jumpin'" Bill Carlisle (1908-2003), as the Carlisle Brothers, and was briefly part of the hillbilly boogie group established by Bill Carlisle in the early 1950s, the Carlisles. Cliff found his own sound but he definitely started out as a Jimmie Rodgers imitator: his first recording was an excellent remake of Rodgers's "T for Texas" (Gennett, 1930); he subsequently recorded several other remakes of Rodgers's songs. While only a relatively small corpus within his much larger discography, Carlisle did record some rather spicy sexual-themed songs.

Perhaps Carlisle's most notorious double-entendre song is his 1933 Vocalion recording, "Mouse's Ear." This (very) thinly veiled song concerns defloration of a virgin.

One verse declares, "My little mama, she's got a mouse's ear/but she gonna lose it when I shift my gear." If that is not explicit enough, the final verse declares, "Gonna take my mouse's ear for a midnight ride/ Sho am [spoken aside] / Gonna use my old straight-eight 'cause it's long and wide." This is an early use of automobile metaphors for sex. A day later, on July 26, 1933, Cliff and Bill, as the Carlisle Brothers, recorded another song concerning defloration, "Sal Got a Meatskin," also for Vocalion. Melodically, this is a completely different type of song featuring a rather wistful, almost sweet melody, mellow vocal harmonizing similar to the Delmore Brothers, and gently strummed guitars plus a few instrumental interludes with Bill on the harmonica. Most of the verses express fairly innocuous romantic sentiments, but the first and final verse do alert the listener to the ultimate goal: "Sal got a meatskin hid away/ Gonna get a meatskin someday."

In Carlisle's "That Nasty Swing" one hears him developing his own more original sound. The Jimmie Rodgers influence is most obvious in Carlisle's yodels but in terms of style and melody, this has a more original sound not directly derivative of Rodgers. As always, Carlisle's performance on slide guitar is outstanding. There are several suggestive verses, but the most inventive use of double-entendre is the one concerning the phonograph: "Wind my motor, honey/ I've got a double spring/ Place the needle in that hole and do that nasty swing." Other verses contain the phrase "nasty swing" and in one he calls

himself “a nasty man” which at least suggests to the listener an unconstrained attitude toward sex. The phonograph metaphor was employed several months later (November 23) by blues artist extraordinaire Robert Johnson (1911-1938) in “Phonograph Blues” recorded for the ARC label but not released until the 1960’s. Carlisle’s “Nasty Swing” was recorded on June 16, but the metaphor may not have been original to either artist. However, unlike Carlisle’s jolly invitation, Johnson’s lyrics concern sexual impotence: “Beatrice. I love my phonograph/ you have broke my windin’ chain/..But, boy, my needles have got rusty and it will not play at all.” Another blues record of the era provides a similarly frank metaphor for impotence: Johnny Temple’s (1906-1968) “Lead Pencil Blues (It Just Won’t Write)” (Vocalion, 1935): “I woke up this mornin’, my baby says she’s mighty mad ‘cause the lead in my pencil, it’s done gone bad.”

Roy Acuff (1903-1992) appears to have recorded only a couple of “dirty thirties” type songs, but this example is quite suggestive with its use of double-entendre: “When Lulu’s Gone” (Vocalion, 1936). This is a lively ”old time” style tune featuring lots of Acuff’s fine fiddle playing as well as singing. The chorus is a good example of double-entendre: “Bang away, my Lulu. Bang away good and strong/ What are you gonna do for bangin’ when Lulu’s gone?” The sexual metaphor is not hard decipher. Even more explicit are the several verses sung between the chorus and brief instrumental breaks. The most vivid strongly

suggests foreplay: “I wish I was a milk cow down on my Lulu’s farm/ I’d never kick when Lulu come to polish up my horn.” This fun recording might be interpreted as a deliberate attempt to shock the bourgeoisie (like Jimmie Davis’s “Tom Cat and Pussy Blues,” above) or a humorous expression of defiance of the “hillbilly” or country hick/ rube against the more staid, urban, and middle class society. Acuff came from a fairly prosperous middle class Tennessee background; his Baptist minister father, Rev. Simon Neil Acuff (1877-1943), may well have raised his eyebrows if he heard this recording.

The traditional old-time mountain music sound is not surprising since “When Lulu’s Gone” is simply Acuff’s version of a traditional folksong with roots in the British Isles. As Ed Cray describes in his *The Erotic Muse: American Bawdy Songs*, “Like so many other songs from the Southern Appalachians, ‘Lulu’ has hundreds of floating verses.” Several other artists have recorded different versions of the song with slightly differing titles. Intriguingly, several West Indian artists have recorded versions including The Merrymen (Merry Disc, 1967), a calypso band from Barbados; Lloydie and the Lowbites (Lowbite, 1970), a Jamaican ska and reggae band led by Lloyd Charmers (1938-2012); and the famous Trinidadian calypsonian, the Mighty Sparrow (Slinger Francisco, 1935-), on Ra (1970), to name only several. Apparently, Acuff was the first to have recorded the song. None of these other versions nor those quoted in Cray’s study utilize the “milk cow” verse found

in Acuff's 1936 recording. The phrase "bang bang Lulu" may also have inspired the title of an otherwise completely unrelated rhythm and blues recording by the duo, Gene and Eunice (Forest Gene Wilson, 1931-2003 and Eunice Levy, 1931-2002): "Bom Bom Lulu" (Aladdin, 1956).

By the mid-1930's Western Swing had emerged as a major country music genre, largely due to the great success of Bob (James Robert) Wills (1905-1975), first with the Light Crust Doughboys, and with his Texas Playboys; and Milton Brown (1903-1936) and his Musical Brownies. This lively hybrid of country, cowboy/Western, blues, jazz, polka, and Mexican influences was perfectly suited to depicting sex as something fun and funny.

Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys recorded the lively and amusing "Oozlin' Daddy Blues" for Vocalion in 1937. The record starts off with Wills and a bandmember guffawing and declaring he wants to look up a new word, "oozling," in the dictionary. What follows is a humorous series of verses sung by the main Texas Playboy vocalist of the time, Tommy Duncan (1911-1967), with the word "oozling" or "oozler" serving as a stand in for sex or sexual organs. Following each verse is a catchy refrain sung by several voices: "Lawd, Lawd, I got them oozlin' daddy blues." Adding to the fun, Wills provides his usual brief vocal interjections and provides opportunities for some of the Playboys, such as pianist Al Stricklin (1908-1986), to take a solo. This recording suggests at least two themes: race and forbidden fruit, aside from the expected double-

entendre humor and, perhaps also an element of shocking the bourgeoisie.

Like Jimmie Davis's "High Behind Blues," the protagonist goes to Mexico for sexual adventure. However, there is a difference. In Davis's recording, he essentially takes on a temporary identity as an African American male or, more daringly, suggests the theme of interracial sex, when he declares, "Gonna get me a big, big brown/ No matter how big she is/ I'm the man can hold her down." The protagonist of "Oozlin' Daddy Blues" declares, "I've got a gal from Mexico, she can oozle easy, fast and slow." Here, he, obviously, is not taking on the role of an African American or even a Mexican male, but the element of racial transgression is obvious to the listener. The stereotype of the Latin lover is suggested – "she can oozle easy, fast and slow." Also, considering the commonly held prejudice of white Americans, there is some element of disrepute in having a "gal from Mexico." (This also could be another form of shocking the more bourgeois listener).

The double-entendre gets fairly obvious with the next verse, "If she don't let my oozler be/ they're gonna have to lay a levee on me." There is also an element of the absurd when Wills encourages Leon McAuliffe (1917-1988), the band's outstanding steel guitarist, to take a solo, when he says, "Aw, play it oozler, I mean, Leon."

It should be noted that "Oozlin' Daddy Blues" was first recorded on ARC in 1936 by the Dixie Songbirds who were Bill Cox (1897-1968) and Cliff Hobbs (1916-1961)

both of whom were West Virginian musicians. Both men strum their guitars with Cox playing harmonica at times. A couple of verses are different from those heard on the Wills version. With typical Appalachian duo voice singing plus yodeling, the original version of "Oozlin' Daddy Blues" has a somewhat more restrained atmosphere than the free-wheeling, rollicking good-time sound of the Bob Wills remake.

The familiar melody was used earlier, in 1933, when the Alabama duo, the Delmore Brothers (Alton, 1908-1964 and Rabon, 1916-1952) recorded "Brown's Ferry Blues" for Bluebird. The Appalachian duo voice style of singing and guitar work are similar to the Dixie Songbirds, although the Delmore brothers' guitar playing has more of a ringing quality to it. The Dixie Songbirds appear to have adapted a verse from the Delmores' "Brown's Ferry Blues" concerning lesbianism. Where the Dixie Songbirds sing, "Two old maids in a folding bed/ one turned over and the other one said,/'I got them oozlin' daddy blues,'" the Delmores sing, "Two old maids playing in the sand/ each one wish the other was a man" using the same melody. Neither variation of this verse appears in Bob Wills's version of "Oozlin' Daddy Blues." The theme of homosexuality will be discussed shortly.

One of the most exciting and fun Western Swing recordings to address sex is "Red's Tight Like That" by Red Brown and the Tune Wranglers (Bluebird, 1936). The musicianship is stellar, the vocals witty, and the occasional

repartee or vocal encouragement (such as “Play it, mister”) serve to make this a real party record. The “hokum” craze of the late 1920’s and early 1930’s first appeared in blues records by African Americans, namely “It’s Tight Like That” by pianist Georgia Tom (Thomas A. Dorsey, 1899-1993) and Tampa Red (Hudson Whitaker, 1904-1981). This mildly risquй but lively blues was recorded for Vocalion in 1928 and proved to be instantly and wildly popular. Georgia Tom and Tampa Red quickly recorded “It’s Tight Like That” Number 2 and Number 3 with other African American artists quickly recording their own versions or, more inventively, recording their own original “hokum” records. As described by *The Guinness Encyclopedia of Popular Music*, “Hokum groups favoured [*sic*] danceable rhythms and skillful musicianship, but the ‘hokum’ part of the billing seems chiefly to refer to the verbal content, heavily reliant on *double entendres*□” Ironically, Georgia Tom would, by 1932, achieve far greater fame as “the father of gospel music” under his real name, Thomas A. Dorsey.

“Red’s Tight Like That” is one of several country remakes, however, the Tune Wranglers’ version is practically another song. The basic melody is the same but this Western Swing interpretation is far livelier and, more importantly, the lyrics are different and more daring. Where Georgia Tom and Tampa Red declared, “There was a little black rooster met a little brown hen/ Made a date at the barn about a half-past ten,” The Tune Wranglers’ version had verses such as “Now I had a girl and her name

was Kate/ she can shake it so well she shook it like jelly on plate." Thomas A. Dorsey must have raised his eyebrows if he happened to hear the Tune Wranglers singing the last verse, "Now I don't know but I been told that the ladies in Heaven like sweet jelly roll." The musicianship on "Red's Tight Like That" is outstanding and features solos by the pianist Eddie Whitley, Tom Dickey (1899-1954) on hot fiddle, and Red Brown (Joe Barnes) on vocals and banjo. Red Brown's two hot banjo solos are, essentially, rock 'n' roll, two decades early.

"Red's Tight Like That" is an enjoyable collection of double-entendre verses with a certain joyous element of transgression. While its origins lie in African American hokum blues, this is not an example of a white artist attempting to take on the role of an African American or even an attempt to imitate African American music. The far more exuberant musicianship and the quite different verses make "Red's Tight Like That" anything but a white imitation of the blues.

Double-entendre is central to many if not most songs dealing with sex as a theme but recorded songs concerning homosexuality during this era are far and few between which makes the appearance of "I Love my Fruit" by the Sweet Violet Boys on Vocalion in 1939 a rather daring statement.

A casual listener to this rollicking cheerful example of Western Swing might not, at first, read too much into the frequent references to eating fruit and loving it although

the slightly affected lead vocal might begin to suggest something other than the innocent consumption of fruits and nuts is actually what is going on. A closer examination, however, indicates "I Love my Fruit" is a jolly affirmation of gay sex. The title alone is suggestive; the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the word "fruit" variously including, "Chiefly derogatory or offensive. A man who is sexually or romantically attracted exclusively to people of the male sex or gender; a gay man." Some of the sexual references are not explicitly gay as such, for example, "Most of all I love to guzzle cherries/ and I eat them every night in bed." This could be taken as a euphemism for heterosexual defloration. The verse concerning the consumption of various nuts sounds like a perhaps vain reference to the singer's gonads: "And I like also pecans and cashews/ Yes, indeedy, I sure love my nuts." Neither of these verses is particularly suggestive of a gay sexual theme.

However, the verse concerning bananas confirms the gay orientation of the song: "I am always hungry for bananas - hot daddy [vocal interjection]! – so that it almost seems to be a sin. They're so good that when I'm almost finished eating, I still like to nibble on the skin." It does not take much imagination to see this verse as a celebration of oral sex. Indeed, the *Oxford English Dictionary*'s definition of "fruit" also states, "spec. one who performs fellatio." The constant references to eating various fruits and nuts and the repeated refrain, "I like to eat. I like to eat" makes the oral sex theme rather obvious.

In addition to being a celebration of gay sex, "I Love my Fruit" is an excellent display of musical dexterity with a wonderful extended fiddle solo by Alan Crockett and a very enjoyable tootling clarinet solo near the end by Bill (sometimes listed as Willie) Thall.

The Sweet Violet Boys, a name also, perhaps, suggestive of homosexuality in the context of the derogatory term "pansy," were actually better known as the Prairie Ramblers. Despite the Prairie Ramblers name and their Western Swing style, their origins actually lie in Kentucky, and they largely made their career broadcasting out of WLS in Chicago. The Prairie Ramblers recorded several other suggestive novelty records under the name the Sweet Violet Boys.

Not surprisingly, there are very few country recordings of this era to be found with such an unambiguous reference to homosexuality. From a slightly later era, one can hear Cowboy Jack Derrick's "Truck Driving Man" (King, 1947) where he celebrates the arrival of his truck driving man: "When my truck drivin' man comes back to town/ I'll dress up in my silken gown/ We'll step each night at eight/ Seems just like I can't wait /'til my truck drivin' man comes back to town."

It should be noted that more overt, perhaps more honest, allusions to homosexuality and sexuality in general are easier to find in African American blues recordings of the era. A good example is "Sissy Man Blues" (Decca, 1935) by (James) Kokomo Arnold (c. 1896-1968). This

typically intense mid-tempo blues accompanied by Arnold's distinctive slashing slide guitar riffs actually concerns a heterosexual or perhaps bisexual man in desperate search for his wayward woman. In one verse he decries an unscrupulous church deacon whom he suspects has seduced her. In frustration, Arnold declares, "I woke up this morning with my pork grinding business in my hand/ Lord, if you can't send me no woman, please send me some sissy man." This rather vivid image is a far cry from the jolly celebration of gay sex presented by the Sweet Violet Boys. It is more a matter of situational homosexuality such as one might find in prison.

Lucille Bogan (1897-1948) made numerous recordings between 1923 and 1935 under both her real name and the pseudonym Bessie Jackson. Many concerned sex, primarily heterosexual, but "B.D. Woman's Blues" (ARC, 1935) definitely concerns lesbianism. "B.D." stands for bull dyke, a reference to a lesbian whose appearance and behavior are masculine. The record, a lively mid-tempo blues featuring Jackson (Bogan) on vocals backed up by her frequent collaborator, the pianist Walter Roland (1902-1972) and rising blues artist, Josh White (1914-1969), on guitar, is a defiant celebration of the "bull dyke" woman: "Comin' a time B.D. women they ain't going to need no men." More explicitly, a later verse describes the B.D. woman thus: "They got a head like a sweet angel, and they walk just like a natural man." Bogan also recorded the notorious "Shave 'Em Dry": the relatively clean version was issued on Banner

in 1935 while the uproariously obscene version remained unissued for several decades; Dixon. Godrich, and Rye suggest there may have been a "restricted-circulation party 78" of it issued at the time. (Gertrude) Ma Rainey (1886-1939) recorded the original "Shave 'Em Dry Blues" in 1924 for the Paramount label but, lyrically, it is not very similar to either of Bogan's two versions from 1935.

By now, the alert reader may have noticed the absence of women country artists in the examples provided here of "dirty thirties" recordings. Possibly the only female country artist of the 1930's to have recorded sexually explicit lyrics is the mysterious Betty Lou. An accordionist and singer, Betty Lou appeared on close to two dozen Bluebird recordings in 1936 with Hartman's Heart Breakers, of which ten sides were not issued. The persona presented on these records sounds like a naughty young girl who, frankly, likes to have her fun.

"Let Me Play with It," a mid-tempo fox trot featuring string band accompaniment with Betty Lou on lead vocals and brief repartee from one or more band members, utilizes the familiar yo-yo metaphor for genitalia (offers to display and to play with one another's yo-yo) which is suggestive enough. However, Betty Lou becomes even more explicit with "now, you've got the wiener and I've got the bun/ Let's put them together gonna have some fun." Another verse pertains to the also familiar theme of "two old maids" but this time employing the yo-yo metaphor: "Two old maids lyin' [?] one day/ one turned over and the

other one said/'You let me play with your little yo-yo/ I'll let you play with mine." There is a brief start of a giggle, perhaps, expressing Betty Lou's sense of transgression with this direct reference to lesbianism. Betty Lou, however, did not let any sense of transgression prevent her from raucously celebrating some of the more vigorous forms of heterosexual behavior on "Feels Good" (Bluebird, 1936). Melodically, this fox trot has a bluesy sound to it while she declaims, "Some like 'em fat, some like 'em lean/ But I like a daddy who uses Vaseline." Following a hot banjo solo, the next verse declares, "Some like it slick/ some like it rough/ But I like a daddy who'll give me enough." It turns out Betty Lou was actually a 38-year old mother of three from North Carolina named Carrie Clontz Goodman (1898- ?). Intriguingly, these naughty numbers were not imposed on Betty Lou by a male songwriter. She states, "I wrote most of the songs I recorded□Kind of bluesy, aren't they?"

The sheer dearth of sexually explicit or even sexually suggestive songs by female artists in country music of the 1930's is lamentable but can best be explained by the usual double standard that made it permissible for male artists to cover such themes but not so for female artists. This ties in with the old stereotype of women as the purer sex and with middle-class standards of decorum. As Chandler, Chalfant, and Chalfant note, "Women singers could not until recently employ even the mildly risqий material that a male artist, like Jimmie Rodgers, could get away

with as far back as 1927." However, just as it is easier to identify African American blues recordings that relate to homosexuality, it is easier to identify sexually explicit recordings by African American female artists than by white female country artists.

In addition to Lucille Bogan/Bessie Jackson mentioned above, one can identify a number of rather explicit and sometimes amusing "dirty thirties" blues recordings by female African American artists including "Need a Little Sugar in my Bowl" (Columbia, 1931) by Bessie Smith (c. 1896-1937) that employs the "hot dog and bun" metaphor appearing in Betty's Lou's "Let Me Play with It," Memphis Minnie (Lizzie Douglas, 1896-1973) with "Bumble Bee" (Vocalion, 1930) featuring lyrics such as "Bumble bee, bumble bee, please come back to me. He got the best old stinger any bumble bee that I ever seen," or Lil Johnson (1900-?) who recorded several very suggestive blues numbers including "Press my Button (Ring my Bell)" (Vocalion and ARC, 1936). The mysterious "Black Bob," a wonderfully expressive pianist who appeared on a number of blues records of the mid to late 1930's, provides a funky, bluesy piano groove over which Johnson declaims such lyrics as, "Come on, baby, let's have some fun/ Just put your hot dog in my bun and I'll have that thing/ That ding-a-ling/ Just press my button, give my bell a ring." According to the Vocalion record label, Lil Johnson was the composer of this semi-salacious ditty. One has to wonder, in regret, what double-entendre gems might have been recorded by

female country artists in addition to the handful of spicy numbers recorded by Betty Lou.

Finally, the hokum blues craze of the late 1920's and early 1930's, introduced by the very successful "It's Tight Like That" by Georgia Tom and Tampa Red in 1928, continued to help animate country double-entendre recordings well into the 1930's as exemplified by Red Brown and the Tune Wranglers' 1936 "Red's Tight Like That." An additional illustrative example is Milton Brown and his Brownies' 1936 Decca recording, "Somebody's Been Using that Thing." It was first recorded by Al Miller and his Market Street Boys on Brunswick in 1929 right at the start of the hokum trend. Hokum originator Tampa Red recorded a more successful version in 1934 on Bluebird.

The Brown version is exuberant with wonderful accompaniment and occasional hot solos featuring major Western Swing musicians such as fiddle played by (Clifton) Cliff Bruner (1915-2000), banjo by Ocie Stockard (1909-1988), piano by Fred Calhoun (1904-1987) and electric steel guitar by Bob Dunn (1908-1971). The familiar "two old maids" theme is revisited with the verse, "Two old maids in a folding bed/one turned over and the other said/'Oh, yeah? Somebody's been usin' that thing." The rising voice inflection of "Oh, yeah?" is quite provocative and strongly suggests a sexual connotation. Neither the Al Miller original nor Tampa Red versions feature this particular verse. Although the song has African American origins this is not an example of the "appropriation of black

masculinity" as Pamela Fox describes it such as is found in Jimmie Davis's "High Behind Blues" with Davis taking on the persona of a Black male as a form of sexual and cultural transgression. However, it is plausible to consider Milton Brown's excellent version of "Somebody's Been Using that Thing" as exhibiting at least some aspects of the Black minstrel tradition with its rapid-fire and witty and, yes, somewhat transgressive double-entendre lyrics. Brown, along with Bob Wills, did have some early musical experience performing in and attending minstrel shows. Pamela Fox notes, that minstrelsy was a "surprisingly resilient mode of performance central to country music's rise as a commercial medium." Both men saw their first big musical success as members of the Light Crust Doughboys in 1932. Brown, a major figure in the rise of the Western Swing genre, died in 1936 in an automobile accident.

This sampling of country recordings made in the 1930's confirms that sex was sometimes quite openly celebrated as either the subject of a song or as a passing – and often quite witty – reference in the lyrics of a song. The use of double-entendre can sometimes be indirect, for example, Jimmie Rodgers's railroad-related boast "I can do more switchin' than your mainline's ever done," ("Let Me Be your Sidetrack," Victor, 1931) or it can be rather obvious, for example, Roy Acuff's "I wish I was a milk cow down on my Lulu's farm/ I'd never kick when Lulu come to polish up my horn" ("When Lulu's Gone," Vocalion, 1936). Perhaps Nick Tosches is only slightly exaggerating when

he declares that vintage country music had an "extremely raunchy sense of humor." What is important to note is that all of the sexual double-entendres and references in the recordings discussed here address sex as something enjoyable or amusing. Sex can, of course, be the source of romantic despair, violence, or even suicide, especially in regard to the perennial topic of infidelity. However, it is striking to the researcher or enthusiast of vintage country music how many of the songs that concern sex or make even an incidental reference to sex, recorded in the 1930's, are full of good humor and fun.

Tosches' characterization of country music songs presenting an "extremely raunchy sense of humor" is borne out by lyrics such as "You oughta seen that cock and pussy roostin' in the China [chinaberry] tree" heard in Jimmie Davis's "Tom Cat and Pussy Blues" (Victor, 1932) and Betty Lou's "Some like 'em fat/ some like 'em lean/ But I like a daddy who uses Vaseline" from Hartman's Heart Breakers' "Feels Good" (Bluebird, 1936). One wonders what conservative commentators who decried rock 'n' roll in the 1950's as obscene or Tipper Gore who campaigned for "parental advisory" labels to be placed on certain popular music recordings in the 1980's would have made of these 1930's country record lyrics.

Virtually all of these recordings exhibit some element of transgression. Standards of middle-class morality and proper behavior are definitely being flouted. Red Brown (Joe Barnes) and the Tune Wranglers' "Red's Tight like

That" (Bluebird, 1936) would certainly have disconcerted *les bourgeois* with verses like, "She wouldn't and she couldn't and she couldn't come at all/ She pulled up her stockin' and she leaned against the wall." Probably even more disconcerting, especially to the pious, is the verse, "Now I don't know but I've been/told that the ladies in Heaven like sweet jellyroll."

For a white 1930's audience perhaps the greatest element of transgression in some of these songs pertains to race. Jimmie Davis's "High Behind Blues" (Victor, 1932) is fairly explicit in the verse where he declares, "When I get to Mexico, gonna get me a big, big brown/ No matter how big she is, I'm the man can hold her down." The transgression lies in the strong implication that Davis is taking on the persona of an African American man. Even more transgressive, of course, is the implication that he, as a white man, is going to Mexico to have sex with a "big, big brown." What is taboo or forbidden fruit is a major component of such transgressive songs.

Even more transgressive during this era would have been the topic of homosexuality. The title of "I Love My Fruit" (Vocalion, 1939) already provides a clue as does, perhaps, the name Sweet Violet Boys (who made the vast number of their recordings under the name Prairie Ramblers). The lyrics concern the eating (actually, at times, overeating) of fruits and nuts. In addition to the strongly suggestive double entendre of eating bananas and nibbling on the skin, the wildly joyful and rather raucous style of singing

also suggests the Sweet Violet Boys are having a wonderful time daring the listener to understand exactly what is meant when they declaim, "I love my fruit" between each verse. The "two old maids" lesbian theme shows up in several of these recordings even if it is sometimes more of an aside rather than the main theme of a song.

The lack of women as recording artists as opposed to subjects in most of these songs is regrettable but almost certainly a consequence of the sexual double standard that allowed men to be rascals while women were supposedly more chaste and restrained. The handful of quite explicit recordings made by Betty Lou (Carrie Clontz Goodman) with Hartman's Heart Breakers are delightfully sexual and hint at what else might have been possible had gender norms and stereotypes not been so rigid. As discussed above, African American blues artists had far more freedom when it came to female artists recording sexually suggestive or explicit songs and also for male or female artists to record the occasional song concerning homosexuality. This, of course, ties in with racial stereotyping of African Americans as more sexually promiscuous than whites and also marketing concerns of the record companies. The more "proper" bourgeois: standards expected, generally, for marketing hillbilly music to the white audience were less pronounced or were absent when it came to marketing "race" music to the African American audience of this era.

Every generation thinks it is the first to discover sex. Generally, the recordings made by country/hillbilly artists

during the 1930's are fairly bluesy (for example, Jimmie Rodgers, Jimmie Davis, and Cliff Carlisle). The Western Swing examples discussed here are all unfailingly cheerful, even riotous in sound. It is a little unclear as to why there was somewhat of an efflorescence of these sexual-themed and/or referenced recordings in the decade of the 1930's considering the generally grim economic times. Perhaps some of this, especially the rollicking, joyful Western Swing recordings, were a form of escapism from the economic and social bad times. Chandler, Chalfant, and Chalfant provide an intriguing suggestion: "it was southern country music which, among white people at least, first began to reflect the realities of modern urban life." Indeed, the 1920 Census revealed that for the first time, more Americans lived in urban areas than rural. Certainly, by the 1930's some of the "realities of modern urban life" such as the increasing use of automobiles (think of Cliff Carlisle's automotive analogy in "Mouse's Ear," Vocalion, 1933: "Gonna use my old straight-eight 'cause it's long and wide") reflects some of this growing urbanization. Similarly Carlisle's unsubtle reference to sex as playing a phonograph record in "That Nasty Swing" (Bluebird, 1936) reflects such ongoing social and technological change. Near the end of Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys' "Oozlin' Daddy Blues" (Vocalion, 1937), the good-time protagonist cheerfully announces, "Gonna quit drinkin' and change my life. Gonna marry me a flapper for a wife." The flapper, who first emerged in the 1920's as a short-skirted young woman with bobbed

hair and who, typically, was a fan of jazz music, certainly was a now (if slightly dated) reference to the growing urbanization of American popular culture as well.

Although not referenced in the recordings under discussion here, perhaps another factor contributing to the appearance of so many good-time sexually suggestive country recordings during this era was the repeal of Prohibition in 1933. Taverns, bars, and saloons were now once again legal businesses and jukeboxes entered a golden age during the 1930's: there were approximately 25,000 jukeboxes in operation in 1933; by 1939 the number had mushroomed to more than 300,000. Most, if not all of such records as these, were probably too controversial to broadcast on radio during this era, however, they may well have found favor in alcoholic establishments with patrons ready to eat, drink, and be merry (and sometimes, dance).

A good place to end might be with a quote from Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys' version of "Oozlin' Daddy Blues" (Vocalion, 1937). The spirit of transgression, fun, and, and a fairly broad hint as to the protagonist's sexual state of mind is clearly expressed: "I went to get my fortune told/ I gave the girl my hand to hold/ Lawd, Lawd, I got them oozlin' daddy blues/ It was in a gypsy place she read my mind and she slapped my face/ Lawd, Lawd, I got them oozlin' daddy blues."

Endnotes

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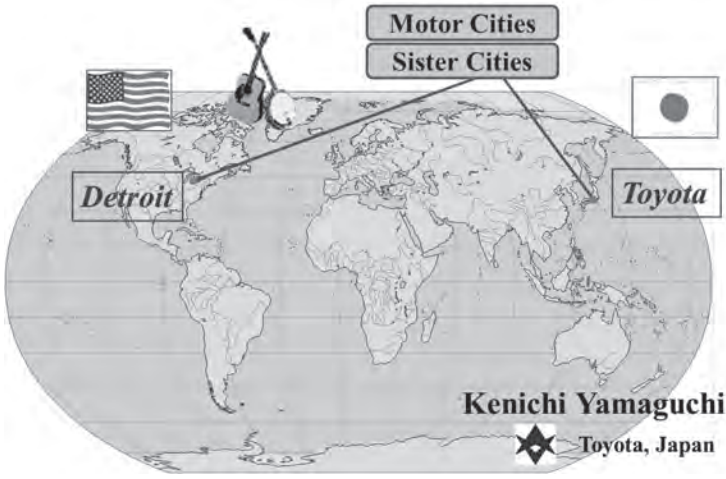
The Progress of Bluegrass Music in the Detroit Area



Abstract

The first automotive factory was built in Detroit in the 1890s, attracting many people to the relatively high-wage jobs. Many of those people were from the southern US. These southerners, struggling to establish roots in the foreign city of Detroit, longed for their hometowns, families and sweethearts. Bluegrass music, a southern

mountain tradition, helped heal their nostalgia for home. Even though about 65 years have passed since the first professional musician, Jimmy Martin, came to Detroit, bluegrass music is still vital. The progress of bluegrass music in the Detroit area was categorized into five generations, chronologically.

Introduction

Detroit, Michigan, also known as the "Motor City", is a sister city with Toyota[1)], Japan, where I live and wherein the head office of Toyota Motor. This affiliation formed by these two motor-cities in 1960. The "Motor City" in the States had been attracting many residents from the southern US through the mid of the last century. For many years, people came up north, found jobs and settled around here. Bluegrass music also has been healing them and has been popular here in Michigan. I categorized the bluegrass history of the Detroit area into five generations, which help explain the progress of bluegrass music in the area.

1. History of "Motor City" Detroit[1)]

Detroit City, the largest city in the state of Michigan, was settled by French colonists from the New Orleans (the La Louisiane) colony and the first fortress was built to protect fur trade in 1701. The American government battled and defeated Native Americans in 1796, gaining control of the area. Then the first steamship on the Great Lakes

stopped at Detroit in 1818, marking the start of maritime era. Detroit began to expand during the 19th century with British and American settlement around the Great Lakes.

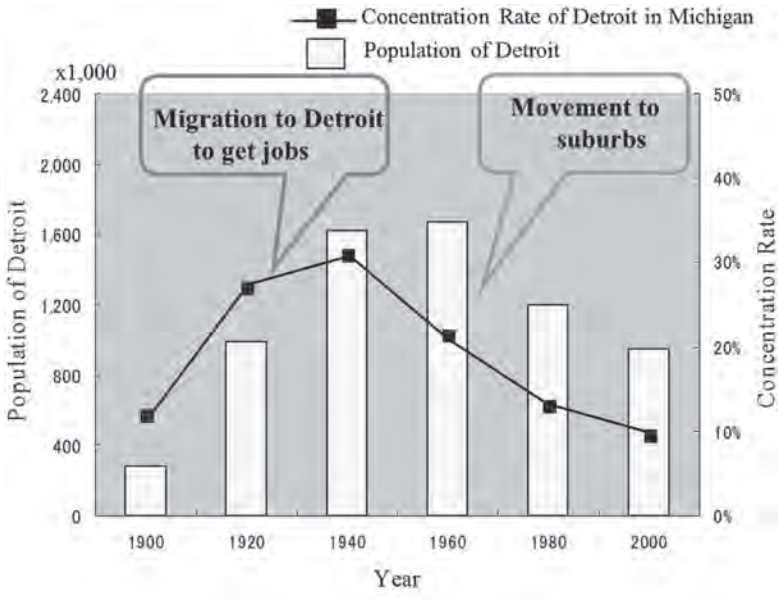
In the 1890s, the first automobile assembly plant was built, followed closely by the first paved road of the US, which was constructed in Detroit in 1900. This was the beginning of motorization. Then the famous mass production of Model "T" Ford started in 1908. By 1920, based on the booming automotive industry and immigration, Detroit became a world-class industrial powerhouse and the fourth-largest city in the United States, which had a population of 1 million.

Rouge Plant of Ford Motor Company [2])

shows Rouge Plant of Ford Motor Company, the first innovative automotive manufacturing complex and the world's largest industrial unit. The transfer of the assembly line from nearby Highland Park to Dearborn in 1927 fulfilled Ford's vision of an industrial complex2). In the foreground are shown the circular rotunda and the administration building. At its peak in the mid-1930s, 100,000 workers were employed. It held that standing through the mid-20th century and the population peaked at 1.8 million between 1950 and 1960.

On the other hand, in terms of music culture, the "Motown Sound" boom exploded in the early 1960s. And country song "Detroit City" was a great hit by Bobby Bare in 1963.

Eventually, the golden era of prosperity gradually faded. The Detroit Riot happened suddenly in the early morning hours of Sunday July 23, 1967. It was the bloodiest incident in the long hot summer, composed mainly of confrontations between black residents and the Detroit Police Department. As a result, this riot accelerated movement of residents to suburbs of Detroit.



Population of Detroit and Its Concentration Rate in Michigan

indicates the population of Detroit and its concentration rate in Michigan State[3]. Long after that, Detroit suffered financial difficulties and filed bankruptcy in 2013. Today the city is recovering little by little with support from various resources and initiatives.

2. Why did automobile production concentrate in Michigan?

So, why did automotive industry concentrate around Detroit and in southeast Michigan? Generally three reasons are given to explain, and they are as follows. The first

was that Great Lakes made water transportation possible. Remember, the first steamship on the lakes stopped at Detroit in 1818, and the Erie Canal was built to create a navigable water route from New York City and the Atlantic Ocean to the Great Lakes in 1825.

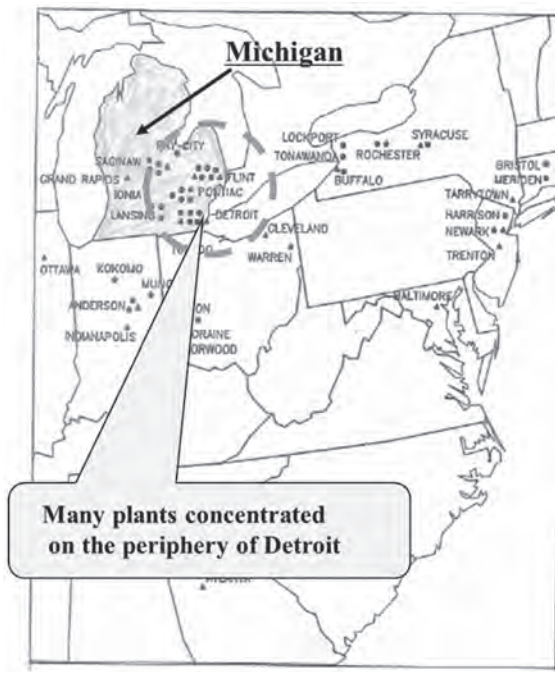
The second was that the surrounding area of Michigan and Minnesota, were rich in the natural resources of coal and ironstone. Cleveland Iron Mining Company, founded in 1847 and now Cliffs Natural Resources, had lots of iron ore mines in the highlands of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. And it also had famous Mesabi Iron Range, discovered in 1866, known as the Iron Range of Minnesota. Also, there are two big coalfields around Michigan, which are Appalachian Coal Basin, which covers Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia, and Illinois Coal Basin, extends over Illinois, Indiana and Kentucky.

And finally, the last reason automotive manufacturing concentrated in Michigan was because the industrial zone of iron manufacturing, a combination of iron stone and coal, developed. From the mid-19th century, there were many iron and steel factories in the district of the Great Lakes, such as Pittsburg, Bethlehem, Lackawanna County and Philadelphia in Pennsylvania and Youngstown and Cleveland in Ohio, and in areas of Chicago like Gary and East Chicago in Indiana.

The aforementioned three reason were, of course, important to show “Why did automobile production concentrate in Michigan?” However they were not

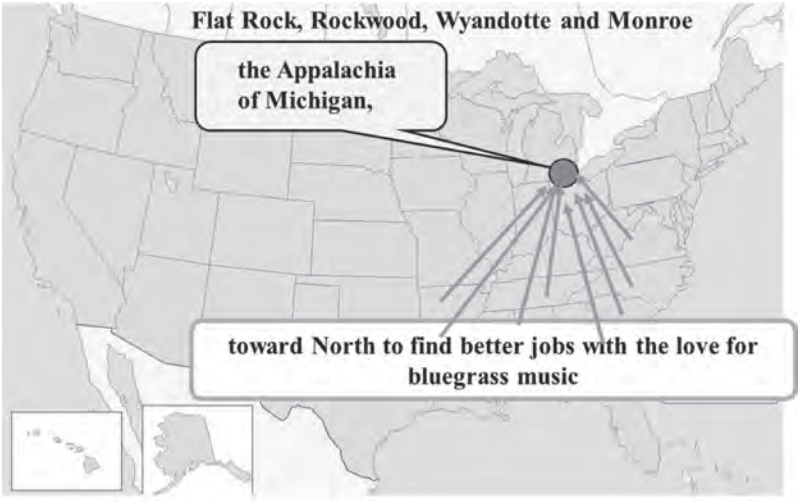
sufficient to explain the causes, because Chicago and Cleveland also met those criteria. J. M. Rubenstein[4) 5)] added two more reasons. "Genius" Henry Ford was born in Dearborn, a city adjacent to Detroit. And Michigan had great forest land. In the latter half of the 19th century, with such abundant forest resources, Flint became a center of the Michigan lumber industry. Revenue from lumber sales enabled the establishment of a local carriage-making industry. Manufacturing horse-drawn carriages easily translated to manufacturing automobiles.

In this way, automotive industries concentrated in the Detroit area like



Concentration of Automobile Plants in Michigan [6)]
- General Motors Components Plants, 1939 -

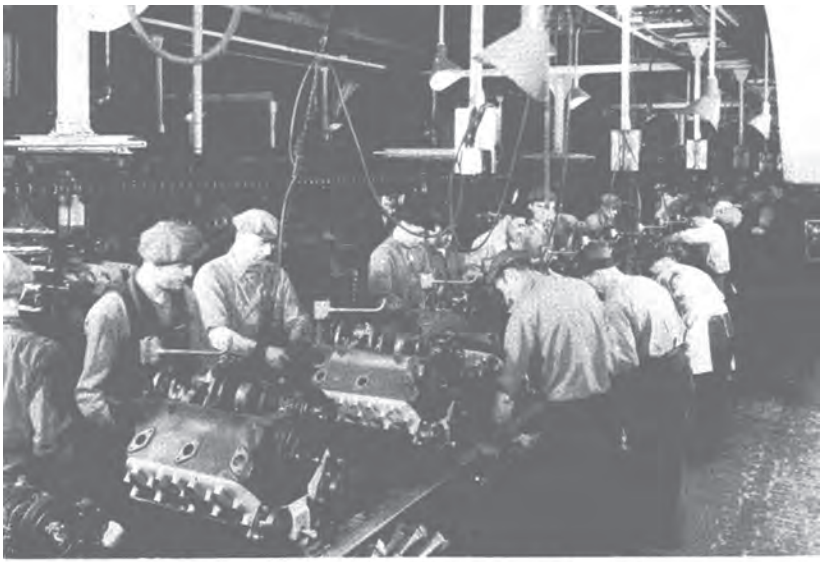
which shows the component plants of General Motor in 1939[6]. These industries attracted many people from all around the world. Among them, many of those who migrated from the southern US[7] [8], especially from the Appalachian Mountains



Heading for Detroit from Appalachian Mountains and the South

In particular, the downriver area from Detroit, such cities like Flat Rock, Rockwood, Wyandotte and Monroe could be considered as the "**Appalachia of Michigan**"[9].

They were attracted by relatively high-wage jobs. However most of jobs were simple and hard as an example of



Engine Assembly — Crankshafts and bearings being assembled.

Engine Assembly Operation [10])

which is one of the typical engine assembly operations[10]. Such tough work must have made them long for their hometowns, families and sweethearts. Bluegrass, a southern music tradition, might have helped heal their nostalgia for home. Bud McKirgan, a national news magazine reporter, wrote an opera that fit such situation, titled “Original Bluegrass Opera of Detroit” and the cast members released a record .

Original Bluegrass Opera of Detroit

The story was about how Detroit was a magnetic city where people came from the South in search of work and fortune. It evolved from a complex play-like presentation shown in Detroit and Chicago to the simple format of Sunday evening's performance and played for a few years in the late 1970s[12].

3. Progress of Bluegrass Music in the Detroit Area

For many years, numerous people from the south had been coming up north, finding jobs and settling in and around Detroit. Although their lives gradually stabilized, their longing for home sometimes appeared. Listening to and performing bluegrass music was one of the ways of healing their nostalgia, and it began gaining popularity in Michigan.

3.1 Category Identification of the Progress

Neil Rosenberg wrote that the southern Michigan was one of the centers of interest in bluegrass music, in his famous book[7]. The people settled there and at the same time bluegrass earned citizenship and developed there too. The growth of the bluegrass music in this area was categorized into five generations to explain the history and the scenes of bluegrass in the Detroit area as in

Table 1 Category Identification of the progress

Generation	Characterized by	Bluegrass Players	Era
1st Generation	Entertainers who left their hometown for Detroit / enjoyed music	Monroe Brothers Wade Mainer and all	1920 1930 1940 1950
2nd Generation	Players who stayed in Detroit awhile and entertained people from the south	The Lonesome Pine Fiddlers Jimmy Martin & Osborne Brothers Earl Taylor & the Stoney Mountain Boys Frank Wakefield and all	1960
3rd Generation	People who migrated to Detroit to get job and enjoyed music / entertained people from the south	Fay & Roy McGinnis Curly Dan & Wilma Ann Wendy Smith & Blue Velvet Roy Cobb & Coachmen Jimmy Williams & Red Ellis Pete Goble RFD Boys Ford Nix North Country Grass and all	1980
4th Generation	People who were born and/or raised in Mich., entertained local people in Mich.	Dennis Cyporyn Dana Cupp Jr. Gary Adams Mike Adams, (Morning Harvest, Mike Adams Band) Nitro Hill Band and many other local bands	2000
5th Generation	Grandchildren of the immigrants to Detroit or the next generation of the 4th	Jimmy Campbell Raisin' Pickers Bill Bynum & Co Brad Campbell David Ressell Andy Ball and all	

3.2 Progress of Bluegrass Music

3.2.1 The 1st Generation

The 1st generation was entertainers who left their hometown for Detroit to get jobs and enjoyed music there, from the 1920s to the mid of 1950s.

1) The Monroe Brothers

The Monroe Brothers, Birch and Charlie Monroe, left their farm of western Kentucky for Detroit to get jobs in the late 1920s[13) 14) 15)]. They worked for some time at the Briggs Motor Company, which manufactured parts for Ford Motor Company. While in Detroit, they often played

their fiddles and guitars for local social gatherings like parties and dances.

2) Wade Mainer

Wade Mainer, who played in J. E. Mainer's Mountaineers between 1933 to 1935 and his own band "Sons of the Mountaineers", also settled in Flint, MI, where he found work at a GM factory in 195316) 17). He continued to sing at gospel meetings with his wife Julia. He began to record religious-theme banjo albums in 1961. He retired from General Motors in 1973 and then re-entered the musical world. He went on to record many albums staying in Michigan as below, shown in chronological order of release. Wade passed away on Sep. 12, 2011 at age 104.

1961: Soulful Sacred Songs / King 769
1971: Rock of My Soul / Irma ILP-105
1971: Sacred Songs of Mother and Home / Old Homestead Records OHS-90016
1972: Wade Mainer and The Mainer's Mountaineers / Old Homestead OHS-90002
1973: Old Homestead OHS-90016 Sacred Songs Mountain Style
1976: From the Maple to the Hill / Old Homestead Records OHTRS 4000
1982: Family Album / Old Homestead Records OHS 90123
1987: In the Land of Melody / June Appal Recordings JA0065D

1989: How Sweet to Walk / Old Homestead OHS-70082
1990: String Band Music / Old Homestead OHS-90197
1993: Old Time Gospel Favorites / Old
Homestead OHS-70091
1993: Carolina Mule / Old Homestead OHS-90207

3.2.2 The 2nd Generation

The 2nd generation was bluegrass bands that played for Appalachian factory workers and their families on the radio stations or in bars and restaurants in Detroit, while staying in Michigan for some time in the 1950s. This category included Jimmy Martin, The Lonesome Pine Fiddlers, and others. They entertained people from the south and brought fond memories from home.

1) Jimmy Martin[18) 19) 20) 21) 22)]

a) Jimmy Martin & the Osborne Brothers

Jimmy Martin and the Osborne Brothers moved to Detroit on Aug. 5 in 1954, as a part of the Lazy Ranch Barn Dance, the great steel guitar player, Buddy Emmons, came from this band. They broadcasted over WJR, "the 50,000 Watt Voice of Detroit" and played in a TV show from Windsor, Ont. Canada. They recorded several great masterpieces for RCA Victor while in Detroit, as indicated below.

"Save It, Save It", "20/20 Vision", "Chalk up
Another One",
"That's How I Can Count on You" and all

However this band of the great combination did not last long. Bobby and Sonny soon left for Wheeling, WV on Aug. 6, 1955.

b) Jimmy Martin & the Sunny Mountain Boys

After the Osbornes left, Jimmy recruited Sam Hutchins (Bj) and Earl Taylor (Md), and did the first recording for Decca on May 9, 1956 and released his first single, "Hit Parade of Love" / "You'll Be a Lost Ball". "You'll Be a Lost Ball" was a collaboration with Pete Goble who will be introduced in "the 3rd Generation". Then the members were replaced by J. D. Crow and Paul Williams in Nov. 1957 and they recorded the 2nd and the 3rd session for Decca. Jimmy left Detroit to join the Louisiana Hayride in March of 1958.

2) The Lonesome Pine Fiddlers[14) 21) 23) 24)]

The Lonesome Pine Fiddlers, consisted of the Cline brothers, Charlie, Curly Ray & Ezra Cline, and Paul Williams, were the first bluegrass band that recorded for RCA after Bill Monroe. They moved up from Bluefield, West Virginia, in 1953 and spent 18 months in Detroit. They became affiliated with the instrumental group of WJR Radio Station and Big Barn Frolic. While they were

in Detroit and entertained people there, they recorded six songs at the RCA Studio in Chicago in 1953.
"Dirty Dishes Blues", "Lonesome Pine Breakdown",
"I'll Never Change My Mind" and all

3) Earl Taylor and the Stoney Mountain Boys[25)]

Earl stayed in Detroit as a member of the Sunny Mountain Boys in 1956. After he left the Sunny Mountain Boys, he formed the Stoney Mountain Boys in 1958 and joined Alan Lomax's folk song recording, "Folk Song Festival at Carnegie Hall" with Jimmy Driftwood and all and his own "Folk Songs from the Blue Grass" in 1959. Then he stayed again at Detroit in the early 1960's with W. Hensley, V. McIntire, B. Baker and L. Morris.

4) Frank Wakefield

In the Late 1950's, Frank traveled on circuit from Dayton to Detroit with different bands such as Jimmy Martin's[27)]. He recorded a few 45s included "New Camptown Races" with Marvin Cobb and the Chain Mountain Boys, a local band in Detroit, for Wayside Records which twin brothers, Wiley and Wade Birchfield, established in 1957[27) 28)].

According to a cousin of Marvin, Roy Cobb[29)], Marvin left his hometown of Kentucky and came to Detroit looking for a job in the late '40s. And then he went to the West Coast, California, tried his luck in a rock and roll band for a few years. After all, he came back to Detroit, he

worked for an automotive company in Detroit for many years, enjoying bluegrass.

Frank Wakefield also recorded “You’re the One” and “Leave Well Enough Alone” as Wayside 150 with a banjo player Buster Turner.

3.2.3 The 3rd Generation

The group of the 3rd generation migrated to Detroit from the south to get jobs. They loved bluegrass music and played here, while working. Like the generations before them, they also entertained and soothed homesick southerners.

1) Roy & Fay McGinnis and the Sunnysiders

The first of this generation is Roy & Fay McGinnis[9]. Roy was born in 1926, moved up in 1932 from WV when he was 16 years old, and worked for a chemical company for 38 years. Roy started the band “the Sunnysiders” with Sonny Nelson, who played banjo, in 1965. The band released a couple of their albums.

Fortune FS3010 / Motor City Bluegrass (1970)
Jessup MB127 / The Beautiful Hills of Kentucky
Jessup MB153 / The Instrumental Side of the Sinnysiders

And they backed up some famous bluegrass musicians such as Lowell Varney, Hylo Brown, Jim Eanes, Jimmie Williams, Clyde Moody and all. shows the Sunnysiders at Stroh’s Bluegrass Festival in 1985.

a) Roy McGinnis and the Sunnysiders in 1985 [9]

b) Fay McGinnis [32]

Roy McGinnis and Fay McGinnis

His wife Fay was born in 1927, and moved to Flat Rock in 1939 from Kentucky. They married in 1946. She promoted and supported bluegrass music in Michigan as a DJ and an MC. She had been the president of the fun club of the Stanley Brothers and Ralf Stanley for many long years[30) 31)]. She also created, organized, and promoted the early bluegrass festivals here in Michigan where she booked many nationally famous bands such as Ralph Stanley.

Roy & Fay made great efforts to merge the "northerners" with the "southerners" musically and sociologically in the Detroit area[32)]. They created Ilene's Restaurant where people, northerners and southerners, enjoyed performing and listening to bluegrass. This restaurant was very useful to understand each other in those days.

2) Wendy Smith and Blue Velvet [33) 34)]

Wendy Smith was born in 1933 and came to Michigan from Ranger, West Virginia in 1955 when he was 12 years old. First band that he joined was Curly Dan & the Danville Mountain Boys as a mandolin player. And he had a number of bands; the Bluegrass Four, Happy Times, the Windy Mountain Boys and the Hunters. He established his own bluegrass band, Blue Velvet, in 1977. The band included lots of musicians like Freddie Harris, Tim Ellis, Jimmy Campbell, Brad Campbell, Dana Cupp, Jr., Mitch Manns, Gary and Mike Adams, Denis Cyporyn, and Jimmy Olander. Freddie Harris and Tim Ellis are seen in

Wendy Smith and Blue Velvet

Several players of the next generation, 4th and 5th, grew up in this band. He co-wrote “Hills of Home (A Tribute to Carter Stanley)” with Ralph Stanley. He hosted Whispering Winds Bluegrass Festival. They released several records.
OHS-90070 / First Edition (1977)
OHS-90078 / That Mighty Horse of Steel (1978)
OHS-70035 / That Great Bluegrass Show (1981) etc

3) Pete Goble [35) 36) 37) 38)]

Pete Goble was born in Prestonsburg, KY in 1932 and moved to Detroit in 1948 to get a job at Great Lakes Steel and retired from there after 31 Years. He began to write songs and perform in various groups from his mid-’50s. Many songs were collaborated with Leroy Drumm, passed away in 2010. These are his/their great songs; “You’ll Be a Lost Ball”, “This Heart of Mine Can Never Say Goodbye”, “Big Spike Hammer”, “Please Search Your Heart”, “I’ll Be All right Tomorrow”, “Windy City”, “Julianne”, “God Sent an Angel”, “Back to Hancock County” and all. Among them, “Colleen Malone” and “Tennessee 1949” were selected for the “Song of the Year” of the IBMA. Then he was awarded the IBMA’s “Distinguished Achievement Award” together with Janette Carter in 2002.

Pete Goble with Janette Carter

"Fiddler's Green" sung by Tim O'Brien got Grammy Award in 2006 too[39]. He sung lots of his songs in some records and CDs below.

w/ Bill Emerson: Webco 0123 / Tennessee 1949 (1987)
w/ Bill Emerson: Webco 0128 / Dixie In My Eye (1989)
w/ Bill Emerson: WEB-CD-6001, Webco Classics Vol. 1 (1995)
Fireheart 7349 / Knee Deep in Bluegrass (2005)
Moon Ridge / Back to Jubilee Road (2012)

Unfortunately Pete ended his 86-year-old life on August 25 in 2018, being watched over by his family40).

4) Roy Cobb and the Coachmen[41]

Roy was born in 1927 and came to Michigan from around Barbourville, Kentucky in the late 1940s. Marvin Cobb who played with Frank Wakefield is his cousin. He worked for Ford R&D Center at Dearborn for 31 years. He has been playing bluegrass music for almost 70 years and still plays actively, even though he is over 90 years old, at a local club "Eagles" in Flat Rock where he assumed the role of vice-president[42]. His band, the Coachmen, released these albums.

Roy Cobb and the Coachmen, L-R Don White, Mike Kegley, Unknown and Roy Cobb at Eagles in 2003

OHS-90057 / Traditional Sounds of Bluegrass w/ the Sunnysiders (1975)
OHS-80056 / Old Favorites (1983)
OHS-80063 / The Blue Side of Bluegrass (1985)
OHS-80068 / Country Special (1987)
Niptune-NPB039 / Lonesome Ruben (2001) etc.

5) Jimmy Williams and Red Ellis

Red Ellis came from Arkansas and worked for Ford[43]. Jimmy Williams worked for Cadillac after playing with

Mack Wiseman and the Stanley Brothers[44]. They teamed up the band from 1958 to 1961. They were the first group band to record for a Nashville record company, Starday, which consisted of southern migrants to Michigan.
"Holy Cry from the Hills" (Starday) (1961)
"God Brings Bluegrass Back Together" (Jessup) (1971)
"Little David's Harp" (Jessup) (1975)

6) Curly Dan & Wilma Ann and Danville Mountain Boys[45]

Curly Dan and Wilma Ann were steeped in the traditions and religion of West Virginia's Coal Fields. They moved to Michigan in 1952 and took a job for Chrysler. They started the band "Danville Mountain Trio" with Bill Napier and Jim Maynard in 1956 and soon released the first single from Fortune Label. The band included Wendy Smith and Frank Wakefield too. They retired from performing in the early 1980.
SOUTH on the 23 / OHS-90018 LP (1973)
A PLACE ON THE MOUNTAIN / OHS-90027 (1973)
NEW BLUEGRASS SONGS / OHS-90053 (1975)
And lots of singles from Happy Heart Records too

7) North Country Grass

Joe McKinney, a native of Printer, Kentucky, was an inspector of Ford Motor assembly plant in Wayne. Wendy Smith and he played as the Mountain Ramblers around in

1966[33]. He organized the North Country Grass in the mid of 1970s and released a couple of LPs from Old Homestead Records. They performed primarily in Ann Arbor or Ypsilanti area.

OHS 90062 / Kentucky's Calin' (1976)

OHS 90077 / Blood on the Coal (1977)

Some members of this band performed a play "The Bluegrass Opera of Detroit" written by Bud McKirgan12) and released an LP. They helped homesick southern immigrants remember the good days of their youth.

Original Bluegrass Opera: The Bluegrass Opera of Detroit (1977)

8) Ford Nix[46]

Ford Nix was born in Blairsville, Georgia, in 1932. After working as a banjo player with Ramblin' Tommy Scott's medicine shows, at age 17, he moved to Detroit, where he was hired into a Chrysler factory. In Michigan, he made the rounds of barn dances and nightclubs, including Casey Clark's shows. Nix entered the air force in 1953, spending most of his four-year deployment in Japan. He played music with air force buddies, including Harold Jenkins, later known as Conway Twitty. Four years later, Nix picked up where he left off in Detroit, returning to Chrysler and jamming with Ray Taylor and others. He recorded with Wendy Smith at Fortune Records. He also made his own albums, including the one with Frank

Buchanan, one of Bill Monroe's Blue Grass Boys, along with Roy McGinnis and the Sunnysiders and some others.

Ford Nix, Frank Buchanan: Sing and Play Folk Songs and Bluegrass; Fortune Records, FS-3008 (1968)

Cranford Nix with Special Guest Curly Seckler: Real Bluegrass, Walking Tree Productions – WT-101 (1983)

Ford Nix: Ford Nix, Walker Records – W-1002

9) The RFD Boys[47) 48)]

The RFD Boys is something different from the previous bands in the 3rd generation. They began to play the music during their student years at the University of Michigan in 1969

The original RFD Boys 49)
L to R (Standing) Paul Shapiro, Charles Roehrig,
(Sitting) Willard Spencer and Dick Dieterle

They have been playing music at Lums Restaurants, Pretzel Bell, and now the Ark in Ann Arbor over 50 years[49) 50)]. Their trademark is an old fashioned mailbox where audience members place their requests. The original member, fiddler Dick Dieterle, passed away in 2012.

When I visited the US in 2014, they invited me to their live concert at the Ark in Ann Arbor.

Jessup MB126 / RFD Boys No.1 (1972)
Pretzel Bell 737 / RFD 2 (1974)
Pretzel Bell 738 / RFD 3 (1976)
Schoolkids 1534 / live and Unrehearsed at the Ark (1995)
Rural Free Delivery / Still Alive and Unrehearsed, The RFD Boys at 40 (2009)
Rural Free Delivery / The RFD Boys at 50, Still Delivering (2019)

3.2.4 The 4th Generation

The people in the 4th generation, which I categorized into, were brought to the Detroit area when they were children or born after their parents settled in Michigan. Most of their families were from the south. This category also includes some players whose parents were northerner, who did not come from the south. Most of them learned bluegrass music from the 3rd generation in here.

1) Dennis Cyporyn[51) 52)]

The first is Denis Cyporyn. He was born in 1942 and raised in Detroit. But his parents were not from the south. He compiled the first bluegrass song book “The Bluegrass Songbook” in 1972.

The original RFD Boys [49)]

He played the banjo in the Sunnysiders of Roy McGinnis and in Acme Bluegrass Co. He started his own band "Dennis Cyporyn Band" in 1990 and performed a new acoustic music of the fusion of jazz, swing, and bluegrass until 1997. And then he formed Lonesome and Blue with mandolinist Pooh Stevenson in 1998.

Acme Bluegrass Co.: OHS9071 / 99 44/100% Pure Instrumental (1976)

Dennis Cyporyn: Adventures in Music AIM-63 / I Must Be Dreaming (1992)

2) Dana Cupp Jr.

Dana was born on July 11, 1959 in Detroit. Dana first drew attention playing banjo and resonator guitar with Wendy Smith's Blue Velvet in the late 1970s[33]. As a multi-instrumentalist, he also joined lots of recordings of Old Homestead Records such as Emma Smith, Charlie Moore, Paul Griffin and the Detroit Bluegrass Band in the early 1980s. And he started his own band, "Dana Cupp & the Urban Grass", and released a couple of albums.

Old Homestead OHS-90149 / The Best Thing (1986)

Rutabaga RR-3006 / Pick Along (1987)

Then he had played as the last banjoist for the final four years of the Bluegrass Boys of Bill Monroe from 1991 to 1994. Then he joined the Osborne Brothers as the substitute for Sonny Osborne.

Dana with the Osbornes at the Back Stage
of Grand Ole Opry, Mar. 2004

He now supports and raises local bluegrass music activities as the president of Huron Valley Eagles Club in Flat Rock, Michigan.

3) Gary and Mike Adams[53)]

Gary and Mike Adams grew up in Detroit in the sixties. They first joined in Wendy Smith's Blue Velvet Band. And then Gary Adams started his own band, Gary Adams & Bluegrass Gentlemen, in which Mike Adams joined. The band recorded a few albums below. Then Gary

played the mandolin for Jimmy Martin and the bass for the Bluegrass Cardinals.
OHS8055 / New Freedom Bell (1983)
OHS90190 / Going Back to Georgia (1989)
OHS70084 / Heaven on My Mind (1990)

Mike Adams formed his own band Southern Bound and Morning Harvest. Then he teamed up the Mike Adams Band with his friends and released an LP.

a) Mike Adams

b) The Mike Adams Band

The Mike Adams Band[53])

Soundridge / His Solo Debut (2003)

Sadly, Mike Adams passed away suddenly on April 28, 2014.

5) The Nitro Hill Bluegrass Band[54])

The Nitro Hill Bluegrass Band was formed in 1977 and had been performing steadily in the Detroit area. This

band consisted of Don White (Bj), Jim Lanrad (G), Mike Kegley (M), and Bo Kazy (Bass).

The Nitro Hill Bluegrass Band[54])
L to R Mike Kegley, Bo Kazy, Jim Lanrad and Don White

Only Don is the original member. They released a few LPs.
Ranger / Scratchin' (1978)
Shouse / The Nitro Hill Band (1996)

In addition to the bands in this generation, there are or were so many local groups or players, which I have to add in this genre.

3.2.5 The 5th Generation

The final is the 5th generation, who are grandchildren of the immigrants from the south or are the next generation

of the 4th. Some are or were active in here locally and the others played in the famous full-time band.

1) Jimmy Campbell[55)]

Jimmy Campbell was born on Apr. 8 in 1963 in Detroit and died on Oct. 24 in 2003. His grandfather was from Tennessee and his father was from Kentucky. He played the fiddle with Pete Goble, Dana Cupp, Roy McGinnes & the Sunnysiders in his young age. At 24 years old, he had a call from Jim & Jesse, and had played with Jim & Jesse for 3 years beginning in 1987. Then he joined the Bluegrass Boys when "Tater" Tate switched from fiddle to bass. He appeared on "Cryin' Holy unto the Lord", Monroe's last studio album. He left the band in early 1993 to rejoin Jim and Jesse's Virginia Boys. He played in the Nashville-based Sidemen with Terry Eldridge, Larry Perkins, Mike Bub Ronnie McCoury and Dobro Gene Wooten. He released two solo albums.

Jimmy Campbell: Piece of Time, Red Clay RC113 (1997)
Jimmy Campbell: Young Opry Fiddler, Pinecastle PRC-1025 (2002)

2) The Raisin' Pickers[56)]

The ancestor of Mark Palm came to Detroit in the middle of the 19th century. Mark was born and raised in Michigan, playing and writing original old-time and

bluegrass music and entertaining people here as the band "Raisin Pickers".

Raisin Pickers[56])
(Mark Palm: rightmost)

He started a folk and bluegrass festival, Riverfolk Festival, in Manchester in 2000.

3) Brad Campbell[57])

His parents were from the South when he was a child. He played the banjo with lots of bands, below. He jumped

out of Michigan and played the banjo in Doyle Lawson and Quicksilver between 1993 and 1994.

1984-85 Kenny and Carmen Flatt (They were cousins of Lester Flatt)

1986 Motor City Grass

1986-89 Gary Adams and the Bluegrass Gentlemen

1989-1992 Wendy Smith and Blue Velvet

1993-1994 Doyle Lawson and Quicksilver

Recorded Gospel "Hallelujah in My Heart" and all

The picture of him with his family and the author was taken at Milan Bluegrass Festival in 2010.

Brad's family and me at Milan Bluegrass Festival in 2010.

4) Bill Bynum & Co.[58)]

Bill is a Detroit native, whose parents migrated from Arkansas in 1940s. He grew up listening to J. Cash and B. Owens on Detroit's country radio station, "The Big D." and veered toward bluegrass and country music in 1999. He often collaborated with Pete Goble. His band "Bill Bynum & Co" is active around Detroit City.

Bill Bynum & Co: Daddy's Word (2007)

Bill Bynum & Co[58)]

(Bill Bynum: leftmost)

5) David Russell[59)]

His grandparents once came to Detroit from Knoxville during the Great Depression, but they returned. He got back to Detroit with his parents in the 1970s. He learned how to play the banjo at 14 years old (1974). David also played with some local bands in the Detroit area. His

first band was Roy McGinnis and the Sunnysiders, and played with Wendy Smith and Blue Velvet, Pete Goble and Timberline. Then he started Bluegrass Hardline.

Bluegrass Hardline at Eagles in 2010
(David Russell: leftmost)

He also published Tri-State Bluegrass Journal. But he eventually suspended that activity too. Later he co-wrote the book "Earl Scruggs: Banjo Icon" with Gordon Castelnero in 2017.

6) Andy Ball[60)]

Andy's grandfather, a great fan of bluegrass music, moved to Michigan in 1955, and enjoyed bluegrass with Pete Goble, Wendy Smith and all. His father, who played in some local bands, carried on their love and appreciation of the music. Andy played the mandolin, guitar, banjo and bass. He joined in Mark Newton Band (2005-6) and the Lonesome River Band between 2006 and 2011.

Andy Ball with the Lonesome River Band
at Nagoya, Japan, in 2009
(L to R Maro Kawabata, Andy Ball, Sammy Shelor and unknown)

He released two CDs. But he also suspended the activity.
Andy Ball: Andy Ball (2008)

Collaborated with Pete Goble: “Back to Jubilee Road” (2012)

3.3 Supporting Activities for Bluegrass Music

Besides bands and players, some record companies, live music clubs and bluegrass festivals have supported the bluegrass music in the Detroit area.

3.3.1 Record Companies

1) Old Homestead Records[61)]

John Morris and the author
at Milan in 2010

John Morris, a music collector, disc jockey, and Appalachian migrant, founded Old Homestead Records at Brighton in 1971. John started the label initially as a means to issue both previously and newly recorded material by Wade Mainer. He also began to record bluegrass musicians from other regions and soon recorded several albums by Larry Sparks and his Lonesome Ramblers. Another major figure in bluegrass music often recorded by Old Homestead was the late Charlie Moore who died in 1979, but left a rich legacy of traditional music. Then the Oklahoma-based duo of Delia Bell & Bill Grant, Mack Martin and Dixie Men were added. He released many records by local Michigan bluegrass bands like Roy Cobb, Blue Velvet, Motor City Glass, Detroit Bluegrass Band and all. In all, Old Homestead has produced hundreds of LPs and CDs with the highest quality old-timey, country and bluegrass music.

A sublabel of Old Homestead was Rutabaga Records which released some records of Emma Smith, original bluegrass songwriter-vocalist.

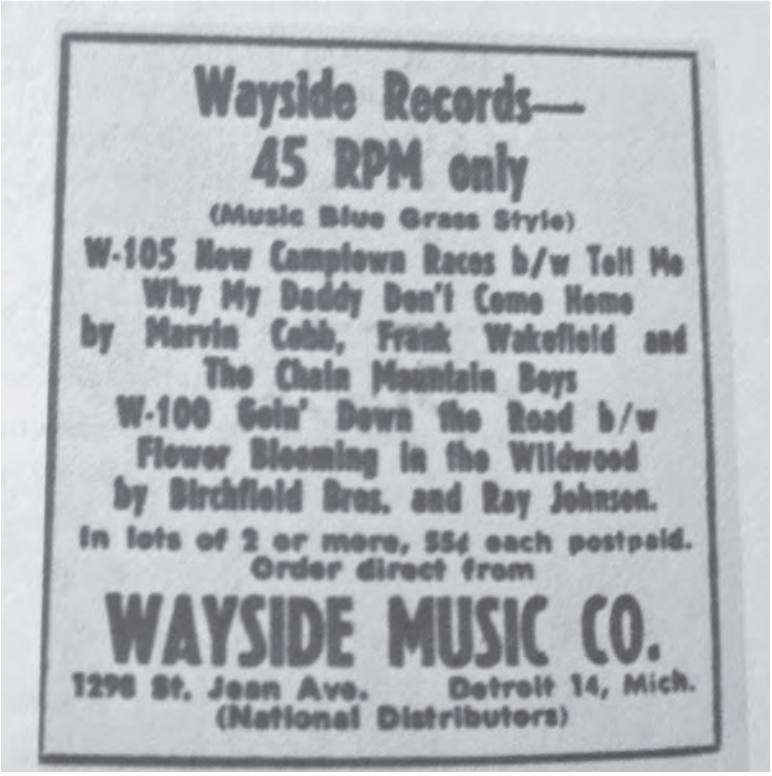
2) Jessup / Michigan Bluegrass

In Jackson, 100km west of Detroit, Jessup Record released a couple of valuable records. In 1971 Tommy Crank, artist and repertoire representative of Jessup, was instrumental in reuniting Red Ellis and Jimmy Williams to record two LPs. The first was “God Brings Bluegrass Back Together”, MB107 and the next was titled “Little

David's Harp", MB154. Jessup released also "Sing Michigan Bluegrass", MB 108 by Ralph Stanley and the Clinch Mountain Boys in 1971[31]. This album was recorded on August 30 in 1971 at Jessup Recording Studios after Ralph had played that weekend at Otis Woody's first annual Grassroots Music Festival near Port Huron, MI. Ralph might have stopped over at Faye McGinnis' place in Wyandotte MI, which lies between Port Huron and Jackson. At the time Faye was the president of the Ralph Stanley International Fan Club and also acted as the point of contact for the Grassroots festival. This company spurred the bluegrass music of the United States, as well as Michigan, in the 1970s.

3) Wayside Records[28) 29)]

There was even a bluegrass record company headquartered in Detroit established by brothers Wade and Wiley Birchfield's Wayside Records. The Birchfields were songwriters and players themselves and active on the Detroit bluegrass scene. Incidentally, Wade Birchfield co-wrote a famous song, "Hit Parade of Love", with Jimmy Martin. Neil Rosenberg suggested that the ad of this tiny Detroit-based record company on May 20, 1957 Billboard magazine was the first to describe records in print as "**Music Blue Grass Style**".



The first commercial of "Blue Grass Music" by Wayside Record

Fortune, specialized in R&B, blues, soul and doo-wop music, and some other small record companies, like **Happy Heart** and **Clix**, in the Detroit area cut and released country and bluegrass music records performed by local musicians.

3.3.2 Live Music Clubs

When the automobile industry flourished, people could enjoy bluegrass at some nightclubs or restaurants in downtown Detroit. However, after the Detroit riots of July 1967, the downtown was devastated and people moved to the suburbs as security deteriorated. Some clubs in the suburbs supported the local bands and provided entertainments to not only many southerners but also some northerners.

1) Huron Valley Eagles in Flat Rock

The Huron Valley Eagles in Flat Rock had its beginning in the early 1980s as an outlet for local Detroit bluegrass bands, yet it has also been a stomping ground for national acts as well. Since 1981, the Eagles Club has hosted famous bands such as Bill Monroe, the Osborne Brothers, Jim and Jesse, Ralph Stanley, the Country Gentlemen, Doyle Lawson, J. D. Crowe and the New South, Del McCoury, the Reno Brothers, IIIrd Tyme Out, Rhonda Vincent, the Lonesome River Band, Richard Green, and many others.

Some of the local acts that have graced the stage here, continue to play the venue, either as the main act or support-band status. These local legends and bands are Wendy Smith and Blue Velvet, Marion Blue, Roy Cobb and the Coachmen, the Sunnysiders, Motor City Grass, Mike Adams Band, Timberline, and Dana Cupp Sr. The Eagles Club has also been a Saturday night hangout for a number of musicians who left Detroit for bigger and better

things in Nashville. These would include Dana Cupp Jr., Richard Bennett (played guitar for J. D. Crowe), Jimmy Campbell, Brad Campbell and Gary Adams (played the mandolin for Jimmy Martin and the bass for the Bluegrass Cardinals).

Some great legends of the 3rd generation gathered in here. Local people enjoy clogging in front of the stage.

Three legends, L to R Fred Harris, Pete Goble and Wendy Smith at the Eagles

Clogging at the Eagles

2) Kentuckians of Michigan in Romulus[62)]

The Kentuckians of Michigan located in Romulus, in SE Michigan, has been providing performances of local and traveling bands every Friday and Saturday night since 1960s. People can enjoy good old music while eating buffet dinner of some good southern country cooking with many homemade desserts. Lots of famous bands came here to entertain many Michigan's Kentuckians, like the Eagles.

Kentuckians of Michigan in Romulus

3) The Ark in Ann Arbor[49)]

The Ark is different from previous two music live houses. It is a Michigan's nonprofit home for folk and roots music that is not specialized in country or bluegrass music. In 1965, four churches in Ann Arbor which is home to the University of Michigan, envisioned a gathering place for students of "a coffee house" like many that were springing up on campuses all around the country. It has provided a

safe and welcoming atmosphere for all people to listen to, learn about, perform, and share folk and roots music.

The Ark in Ann Arbor

Folk music artists who have performed at the Ark include Tom Paxton, Judy Collins, Mary Chapin Carpenter and Arlo Guthrie. The RFD Boys, which I put in the 3rd generation, has been playing monthly for over 40 years. Bill Monroe and Ralph Stanly both played numerous times. Del McCoury's band also has been a regular as is Ricky Skaggs. The Newgrass Revival, consisted by Bela Fleck, Pat Flynn, Sam Bush, and John Cowan, excited a

large audience. Mountain Heart released a live album at the Ark, “The Road That Never Ends”, in 2007.

3.3.3 Bluegrass Festivals

Bluegrass festivals have been annually held at a few camp grounds or parks in Michigan from May to October for many years. Some of the biggest names in bluegrass music have come and performed since the early 1970s. A few local bands also have played with them.

The Charlotte Bluegrass Festival, in Charlotte, Michigan, celebrates 48 years of bluegrass tradition in 2021. This festival is held at the 4-H fairgrounds and is the oldest continuously running bluegrass festival in Michigan.

The Milan Bluegrass Festival premiered in 1980 at KC Campground in Milan and continues to be the finest bluegrass festival in the state of Michigan.

Milan Bluegrass Festival

Festival promoter and campground owner, Mark Gaynier, has an unparalleled passion for bluegrass music.

Wendy Smith organized **Whispering Winds Music Festival** at the Whispering Winds Campground in Nirvana. It started in early 1980s and lasted for around 30 years.

And **Blissfield** is a small village located in southeast Michigan that provides its city park each year for the bluegrass festival. The 10th anniversary of it was postponed by the high risk of COVID-19 virus and rescheduled for August 14, 2021.

4. Conclusion

Detroit developed with the progress of automotive industries. Many people gathered here to get a better life. In Detroit, bluegrass music has been popular since the early 1950s. That is because;

1. Many people came here from the Appalachian Mountains.
2. They brought their love for bluegrass music with them.
3. Some bluegrass entertainers who settled here, especially those like Jimmy Martin, helped heal southerners' nostalgia for home. (2nd Generation)
4. People who got jobs and settled here enjoyed bluegrass and entertained people.(3rd, 4th and 5th Generation)
5. Bluegrass here was/has been supported by record companies, live clubs, festivals, radio stations, song writers and all.

Even though over 65 years passed since Jimmy Martin first came to Detroit and bluegrass music was forced to compete with the Motown sound, bluegrass music was an active and vital music in the Detroit area until around 2010.

Unfortunately many southern people who moved here, the 3rd generation, have either moved away or died. There is still some bluegrass but not as much as there once was. Some people of the 5th generation are suspending their

musical activities. I hope the bluegrass music around the Detroit area will be more popular and active again.

Acknowledgments and Apology

I would like to dedicate this paper to the late Mr. Pete Goble and his family, who has welcomed me, given me lots of information and introduced me to many bluegrass friends since we first met on the concert of the IIIrd Tyme Out at Oakland Community College in 1998. Since then we have had a family relationship with each other, but unfortunately, Pete passed away in 2018. His granddaughter-in-law, Ms. Angela Biniecki Goble, helped me to refine my poor English in this paper.

I have to thank many of my Michigan friends who I knew through Pete Goble: Wendy Smith, Roy Cobb, the RFD Boys, Dennis Cyporyn, David Russell, the late Mr. Mike Adams, Brad Campbell, Mark Palms, Andy Ball, Bill Bynum, Don White, John Morris, the late Mr. Nick Mladjan, Allen Evonich and all.

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With the support of many Michigan friends who started with the late Mr. Pete Goble, I wrote this paper. However, this seems to be lacking because I am not an American nor native-Michigan resident. For example H. Edenborn and T. M. McQueen wrote about the Miller Brothers and Nolan Faulkner[63], who should be included into the 3rd generation. I hope someone will flesh out this paper further like them.

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