



EDUCATOR NEWSLETTER



Smithsonian
Affiliate

WELCOME TO THE BIRTHPLACE OF COUNTRY MUSIC MUSEUM EDUCATOR NEWSLETTER!

The Birthplace of Country Music Museum has an important educational mission, and we are working hard to support our teachers in their learning and student needs, both virtually and on the ground. In this newsletter, you will find details about museum resources, programs, and virtual tours and lessons, along with some interesting historical and cultural stories. If you would also like to be included on **education-specific eBlasts**, please send your name, email address, and school to Erika Barker.

CONTACT

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WHO WE ARE

The Birthplace of Country Music Museum, an [affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution](#), tells the story of the 1927 Bristol Sessions recordings, explores how evolving sound technology shaped their success, and highlights how this rich musical heritage lives on in today's music. Through text and artifacts, multiple theater experiences, and interactive displays – along with a variety of educational programs, music performances, and community events – the exciting story of these recording sessions and their far-reaching influence comes alive. Rotating exhibits from guest curators and other institutions, including the Smithsonian, are featured throughout the year in the Special Exhibits Gallery. The museum also houses a collection of related objects, photographs, ephemera, and digital items that help tell our story and can be used for research purposes.



WHAT'S COMING UP AT *THE MUSEUM?*

"IT'LL TICKLE YORE INNARDS!": A (HILLBILLY) HISTORY OF MOUNTAIN DEW SPECIAL EXHIBIT | FEBRUARY 26 - AUGUST 7, 2022

The museum will soon be hosting this fun yet scholarly exhibit, exploring Mountain Dew's storied history, which began in the hills of Appalachia. The content also examines the region's moonshining history and its ever-present "hillbilly" stereotype, both of which play an important role in the soft drink's success. Starting with the origins of the phrase "mountain dew" in Europe, *"It'll Tickle Yore Innards!"* opens with the history of distilling, prohibition, moonshining, and its impact on the rise of "soft" versus "hard" drinks. The hillbilly stereotype – later depicted vividly on the drink's marketing and branding – grew out of tales published by local writers after the Civil War, was reshaped amid New South ideology, and found fruition in the mid-1900s with pop culture hits like *The Beverly Hillbillies* and *Hee-Haw*.

The exhibit plays on these themes visually, through text and image, using oversized panels with bright imagery and that reference the drink's history in shape and format. Audio-visual elements and text that play with language influenced by the hillbilly stereotype give visitors the chance to fully immerse themselves in the story and have a truly engaging experience!

The museum will host a **FREE teacher introduction to the exhibit** on Thursday, March 3, 4:30–6:00pm – this event will include a curator-led tour of the exhibit at 5:00pm, a chance to check out related educational resources and student tour opportunities, and time to share some snacks and conversation with fellow educators and museum staff and volunteers. Please RSVP [HERE](#).



SPEAKER SERIES: HISTORIES OF BLACK LIFE AND MUSIC IN APPALACHIA

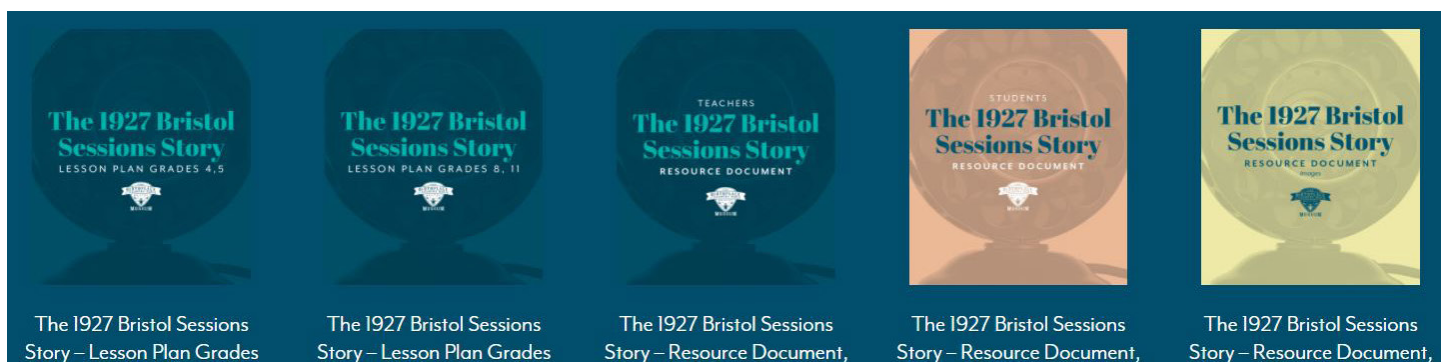
Join us at the museum or via Zoom on Tuesday, February 8, 7:00pm for a FREE Speaker Series program. Dr. William H. Turner will partner with Dr. Ted Olson for discussions on music, including the [Sepia Tones podcast](#), and Turner's book [The Harlan Renaissance: Stories of Black Life In Appalachian Coal Towns](#). Through sharing their unique knowledge and perspectives on the Black experience in Appalachia, Drs. Turner and Olson will take the audience beyond the assumptions and stereotypes about this region for a deeper understanding of its history. You can RSVP for the in-person event or the Zoom link [here](#).

MUSEUM LESSON PLANS AND TEACHER IN-SERVICE WORKSHOPS

Throughout 2021, we were hard at work on a lesson plans project with the goal of creating several museum content-focused K-12 lesson plans and related educational resources. As part of this project, we worked with two focus groups made up of teachers from Bristol Tennessee City Schools and Bristol Virginia Public Schools, along with several teachers from other schools in the region. These teachers helped us to determine topics to cover, how to address the curricular needs of local and regional K-12 teachers, and strategies for creating engaging and in-depth educational assets. [The Museum Lesson Plans & Educational Resources webpage](#) is now live, and the first two topics are uploaded and ready to access – *The 1927 Bristol Sessions Story* and *The Instruments of the 1927 Bristol Sessions* (both with elementary AND middle/high school lessons).

Along with the lesson plans, you can find content documents for teachers and students, images and videos to use with your lessons, and a variety of additional resources. Additional lesson plan topics will be added to the site soon, including *The Artists & Personalities of the 1927 Bristol Sessions*, *The Songs & Music of the 1927 Bristol Sessions*, and *Beyond*, and *The Science of Sound & the Technology of the 1927 Bristol Sessions*. Other lesson plans – from music and math to Appalachian history and culture – are planned for later this year.

Over the summer, we plan to hold **two teacher in-service workshops** about these lesson plans, resources, and other educational opportunities available to teachers through the museum. The dates are not yet confirmed but will probably be in July so watch this space for further information in the April newsletter and on our website!



A CHANCE TO WIN A FREE, SIGNED BOOK!

Have you tuned into our monthly **Radio Bristol Book Club** yet? If not, check out this year's book picks [here](#). This radio show, a partnership between the museum and the Bristol Public Library, features discussions about books related to Appalachian music, history, and culture, along with author interviews – and we always choose a couple of children's or young adult books! We are happy to discuss ways that teachers and students can participate. Our February book is [Katherine Paterson's *Come Sing, Jimmy Jo*](#), a story of a young boy who struggles with his love of music and performing. We'll be discussing the book on Radio Bristol on Thursday, February 24, 12:00pm, followed by an interview with the author.

We also have **two signed copies of *Come Sing, Jimmy Jo* to GIVEAWAY** to the first two teachers who send us the correct answer to the following trivia question; please email ebarker@birthplaceofcountrymusic.org with your answer.

* An article in the *Bristol News Bulletin* told readers about the amount of royalties made by musician Ernest Stoneman. How much did he make (and what is it in today's equivalent)? Hint: You can find the answer in *The 1927 Bristol Sessions Story* teacher resource document!



MUSEUM *EXPERIENCES*

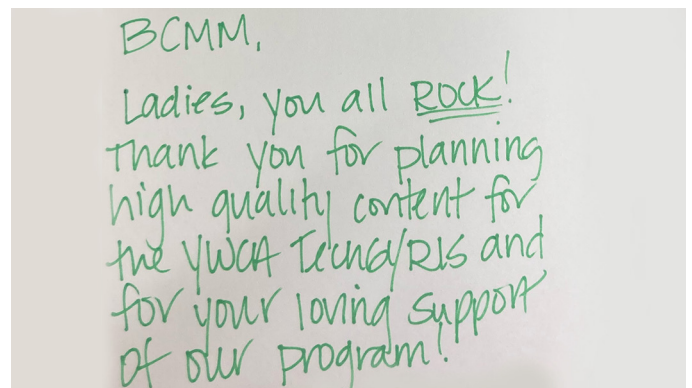
MUSEUM TOURS

The museum offers engaging [educational tours for all ages and grade levels](#) that include a docent-led introduction to the museum and its content, a scavenger hunt, and time to interact with and explore the exhibits. These **museum tours** can have a wide focus, or they can be tailored to a specific topic such as music, local history, or technology – we can also work with teachers to learn about other subjects in relation to the museum’s content. We also offer **special exhibit tours** as part of your museum experience, or you can book a tour of the special exhibit only. Our staff and volunteers can also provide **virtual tours** focused on museum content.



CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

The museum can come to your classroom – in-person or virtually! We offer learning activities such as the “history of listening,” an exploration of different music recording and playback technologies, and Banjo Bingo/Name that Instrument, which gives students a chance to identify and learn about different types of musical instruments. Introductions to artifacts from our collection, lessons on storytelling or ballads, and other options are also available.



MUSEUM RESOURCES

STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEETS

You can access and print out [student activity sheets](#) related to 1927 Bristol Sessions artists, technology, musical instruments, and history from our website.

CLASSROOM RESOURCES

Teachers can borrow several resources for use in their classroom, including a [For All the World to See: Visual Culture and the Struggle for Civil Rights](#) education kit, which offers several activities, objects, and lessons that explore the intersection of civil rights and visual culture. We also have **four educational poster sets**: [A Place for All People](#) about the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture; *Votes for Woman: A Portrait of Persistence* (Smithsonian); *To Make Our Voices Heard: Tennessee Women's Fight for the Vote* (Tennessee State Museum and the Tennessee State Library and Archives); and an introduction to work history in our local community and wider region (Birthplace of Country Music Museum). Information about the two suffrage exhibit poster sets can be found [here](#), along with a variety of related educational resources.

NIPPER



DO YOU KNOW WHO NIPPER IS?

If you look at the logo on Victrola playback machines or Victor 78 records, you'll see a terrier dog sitting in front of an old gramophone. This terrier is based on a real dog named Nipper, who lived in Bristol, England in the late 1800s. Nipper looks a lot like a Jack Russell, but his legs seem too long so he might be a terrier mix.

After his owner passed away, Nipper went to live in London with Francis Barraud, a painter, who created a picture of him listening at the horn of a cylinder player. The picture was bought with the condition that Francis re-painted it with a gramophone instead, and then it was used by the Victor Talking Machine Company for their logo. It was called "His Master's Voice," implying that the dog was listening to a recording of his former owner.

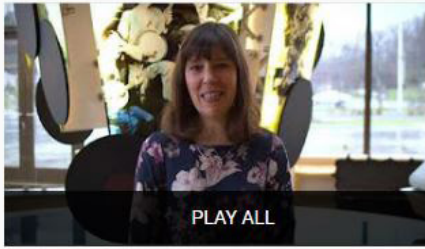


COLOR IN NIPPER!

BIRTHPLACEOFCOUNTRYMUSIC.ORG







Behind the Scenes at the Museum

15 videos • 3,288 views • Last updated on Jan 18, 2021

- 1  **Greetings from the Birthplace of Country Music Museum**
Birthplace of Country Music Bristol 0:31
- 2  **1927 Bristol Sessions Impact on Country Music**
Birthplace of Country Music Bristol 2:17
- 3  **Banjo Kid Activity**
Birthplace of Country Music Bristol 4:32

ONLINE VIDEO RESOURCES

Online video resources include a **virtual tour** of past special exhibit [Real Folk: Passing on Trades & Traditions through the Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program](#). Student activity sheets with fun learning activities related to *Real Folk* are also included. We have several short educational **videos about museum content**, which can be found on our [YouTube channel](#). We also have a [video introducing the 1927 Bristol Sessions and why they are important](#), and one about [the contributions of Black musicians and culture to early country music](#).

MUSEUM TALK

Museum Talk gives listeners the chance to learn more about the Birthplace of Country Music Museum's exhibits and programs, go behind-the-scenes into the museum vault and learn about how museums work, get acquainted with other museums and cultural hotspots across the country (and sometimes the world), and dig deeper into history and culture. We welcome questions from our audience on anything and everything about museums and our work, which will then be featured in our regular "What Are You Wondering?" segment – you can send your questions to museumtalk@birthplaceofcountrymusic.org. This is a great way to engage your students in thinking about what goes on at museums and cultural institutions!



VIRTUAL STORY TIME

Our **Virtual Story Time** offers books and stories about Appalachia or music that are aimed at younger children.

BIRTHPLACE OF COUNTRY MUSIC BLOG

Finally, check out the **Birthplace of Country Music blog**, which offers posts focused on museum work, history, music, Appalachia, and related topics.



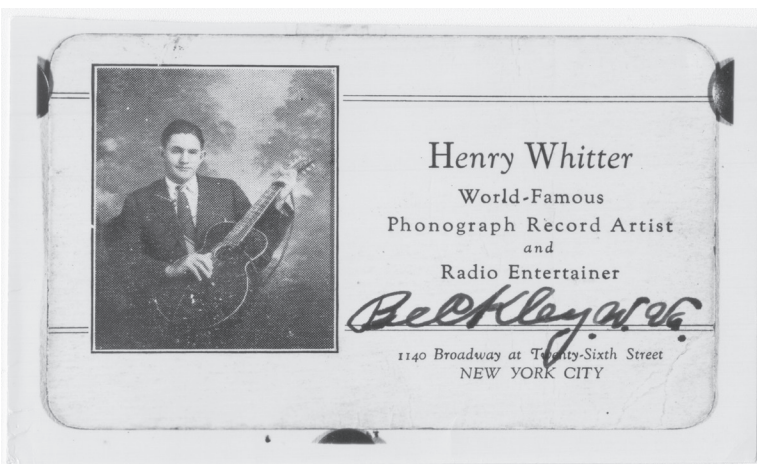
FEATURED *HISTORY*

Most of the musicians who recorded at the 1927 Bristol Sessions had other **occupations that helped them make a living and support their families**. For instance, the railways were major employers in the early 20th century, and several artists from the West Virginia Coon Hunters worked around trains. Clyde Meadows was an engine cleaner for the Norfolk & Western Railway, Vernal Vest worked on the railroad as a fireman, and Fred Pendleton was a railroad repairman on steam trains. Before he shot to fame in 1927, Jimmie Rodgers spent several years working in and around the trains due to his father's occupation on the rails, and he played up this persona in his music career as "the singing brakeman."

Several musicians also worked in factories and manufacturing jobs. Though Henry Whitter leveraged his ambition to become a "professional recording artist," he started out as a textile mill worker. Jesse and Pyrrhus Shelor of The Shelor Family/Dad Blackard's Moonshiners both worked in the North Carolina cotton mills, with Jesse starting this labor when he was just a boy. At least two members of the Alcoa Quartet worked in the aluminum smelting plant near their home in Alcoa, Tennessee.

A. P. Carter was selling fruit trees when he met Sara – at the time, she was selling dish sets, which she charmed him to purchase. A. P. had his hand in a variety of occupations throughout his years of finding and performing music, and after The Carter Family broke up in the early 1940s, he opened a general store in Hiltons, Virginia. Ernest Stoneman was a carpenter by trade when he recorded his first song, but after several years of music-making, he and his family were hit hard by the Great Depression and he traveled far and wide to find work. J. P. Nester and Joe Blackard farmed, with Nester later working as a switchboard operator and Blackard delivering the mail. Other occupations included barber (B. F. Shelton), preacher and work in the armed services (Ernest Phipps, along with coalmining work, and Alfred Karnes, along with patent-medicine making), and shoe cobbler (Uncle Eck Dunford). Not much is known about El Watson, the only African American musician recorded at the 1927 Bristol Sessions, but it is possible he is the same man with a similar name listed as a laborer in the directory for Johnson City. The Johnson Brothers were probably professional musicians, and Blind Alfred Reed – while he only recorded in the late 1920s – did make his living through music as a local performer, providing music lessons, selling paper copies of his original compositions, and through busking.

However, not all occupations were legal – family members remember Wesley "Bane" Boyles as a moonshiner, and he was arrested for making and transporting illegal liquor soon after he recorded in Bristol. Sadly, this transgression ended his career as a West Virginia Coon Hunter though he did continue to make music throughout his life. After he got out of prison, he worked a variety of jobs, including as a barber, an electrical worker, and a mechanic.



Henry Whitter had his own business or calling cards that declared him a "world-famous phonograph record artist and radio entertainer"! Credit: From the John Edwards Memorial Foundation Records, #20001, Southern Folklife Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

FEATURED *RESOURCE*

The **Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI)** has engaging and in-depth educational resources for teachers, including their [Native Knowledge 360° initiative](#). NMAI's website states: "Native Knowledge 360° (NK360°) provides educators and students with new perspectives on Native American history and cultures. Most Americans have only been exposed to part of the story, as told from a single perspective through the lenses of popular media and textbooks. NK360° provides educational materials, virtual student programs, and teacher training that incorporate Native narratives, more comprehensive histories, and accurate information to enlighten and inform teaching and learning about Native America. NK360° challenges common assumptions about Native peoples and offers a view that includes not only the past but also the vibrancy of Native peoples and cultures today."



NATIVE KNOWLEDGE 360° EDUCATION INITIATIVE

Transforming teaching and learning about Native Americans