



MUSEUM

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?*

JIMMIE RODGERS GUITAR ON DISPLAY!

On June 21, BCM announced a new display at the museum – **Jimmie Rodgers' "Blue Yodel" Martin 000-45 guitar**, one of the most important guitars in the history of music! This guitar was custom-ordered by Jimmie Rodgers and played throughout his career. His name is written in pearl inlay on the neck, and "Thanks" is written upside down on the back – Rodgers would flip the guitar over while performing to reveal his appreciation to the audience. Inside the sound hole there is a note from the founder of Martin Guitars stating: "To Jimmie Rodgers, America's Blue Yodeler, with all good wishes—C. Frederick Martin III July 27, 1928." After Rodgers' death in 1933, his widow loaned the guitar to another legendary country musician, Ernest Tubb, who played it for around 40 years.

The "Blue Yodel" guitar has been residing at the Jimmie Rodgers Museum in Meridian, Mississippi, and it came to the Birthplace of Country Music Museum for the 95th anniversary of the 1927 Bristol Sessions due to the generosity of the family of Jimmie Rodgers. It will be on display at the museum through March 2023.



TEACHER IN-SERVICE WORKSHOPS

This summer the Birthplace of Country Music Museum is offering a free **K-12 Teacher In-Service Program** in partnership with the Tennessee State Museum. The workshops are scheduled for Monday, July 18 (elementary) and Tuesday, July 19 (middle and high school) and will include:

- 9:00–11:30am – The Tennessee State Museum's resources, activities, and lessons for teaching students about the Reconstruction Era (while this is a Tennessee-focused museum, the materials TSM shares will also be helpful and appropriate to Virginia educators)
- 11:30am–12:00pm – Lunch
- 12:00–2:30pm – The Birthplace of Country Music Museum's lesson plans tied into Tennessee and Virginia state standards, educational resources, classroom and outreach activities, and field trip opportunities

Participating educators will receive a door prize, and licensure credit for 5 hours will be available. [Sign up HERE](#) for a music- and history-filled, distinctively fun professional development opportunity to learn more about museum education and resources. We look forward to seeing you!

1968: A FOLSOM REDEMPTION – UPCOMING SPECIAL EXHIBIT

Created in 2018 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of a landmark event, [*1968: A Folsom Redemption*](#) is a collection of the photographs and memories of Gene Beley and Dan Poush, two journalists lucky enough to be among a handful of eyewitnesses to the historic Johnny Cash concerts at Folsom Prison. The exhibit highlights Cash's golden era from the January 1968 Folsom Prison album recording to a March 1, 1969 concert in Anaheim, California, when he was getting ready to launch his network television show. The collection includes a wide range of intimate photos with friends and family to a backstage meeting with country music legend Merle Haggard with the Man in Black. This candid and personal photography exhibition covers a critical juncture in Johnny Cash's musical journey, taking the viewer right into the heart of this pivotal moment in the life and career of one of the 20th century's most important and cherished musical personalities.

This exhibit is a program of [ExhibitsUSA](#), a national division of [Mid-America Arts Alliance](#) and [The National Endowment for the Arts](#). It will be at the museum September 1–October 20, 2022.



VMFA ON THE ROAD ARTMOBILE

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts' Artmobile is coming back to the museum and will be **open for FREE school group visits** on September 7 and 8! This year's VMFA on the Road exhibition is titled *Revealing and Obscuring Identity: Portraits from the Permanent Collection*, and it examines the complex role of portraiture across cultures and time periods. Beginning with the Japanese artist Kitagawa Utamaro and concluding with American artist Gordon Stettinius, the exhibit explores how artists have used portraiture as a means to both reveal and obscure their sitter's identity. Traditionally, portraiture has been used to highlight the sitter's wealth, power, beauty, virtue, and intelligence and has been reserved for the elite of society. Several of the works in this exhibition maintain this tradition while others employ it as means to explore truths about the nature of art, the way we perceive beauty, and the way culture influences and reflects personal identity.

Visits include activities led by VMFA educators, and you can also book a FREE visit to the Birthplace of Country Music Museum's special exhibit [*1968: A Folsom Redemption*](#). If you are interested in bringing your students to the Artmobile, check out [this link](#) for further information and to see the available time slots. You can also reach out to Head Curator René Rodgers at rrogers@birthplaceofcountrymusic.org with any questions.

NEW LESSON PLAN AVAILABLE ONLINE!

Check out the newest lesson plan from the museum: [**The Artists & Personalities of the 1927 Bristol Sessions!**](#) This lesson – aimed at grades 6–12 – introduces students to the people involved in the 1927 Bristol Sessions and provides an opportunity for research and writing (narrative and non-fiction composition) to develop understanding. Students will develop biographical studies, answering the questions:

- Who?
- What?
- Where (hometown, how did he/she/they get to the Bristol Sessions)?
- When (1927 recording, further recording(s))?
- Why (did they come to the Bristol Sessions)?
- How (did the recordings affect their lives)?

MUSEUM

RESOURCES & EXPERIENCES

There are a variety of ways to experience the museum or tap into our resources. These include:

- 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. Check out [this video](#) to get a glimpse into a typical museum tour.
- The museum can come to your classroom – in-person or virtually! We offer **learning activities** like the “history of listening,” an exploration of different music recording and playback technologies. Our Banjo Bingo/Name that Instrument game gives students a chance to listen to and identify different types of musical instruments and learn about them. Introductions to artifacts from our collection, lessons on storytelling or ballads, and other options are also available.
- 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](#).
- You can access and print out [student activity sheets](#) related to 1927 Bristol Sessions artists, technology, musical instruments, and history from our website.



RADIO JINGLE



DO YOU KNOW WHAT A JINGLE IS?

Jingles are songs used to sell products, and they have been used on radio from its early days as a way to get listeners to buy different things. At first companies actually produced full-length songs about their products, but later these became short, catchy tunes that would stick in your head and make you want to try out whatever the song was selling – from cereal and drinks to toys and furniture, and so much more!

With a lot of the early radio programs, the musicians on the show would sing the jingle in between their performances. Later, jingles were often delivered as recordings. For example, Mother Maybelle & The Carter Sisters recorded a Dr. Pepper radio jingle, as did several other country artists – you can listen to the Carter version on YouTube by searching “Mother Maybelle Dr. Pepper jingle” or by clicking on [this link](#)! For Radio Bristol’s monthly *Farm and Fun Time* show, house band Bill and the Belles writes and performs original jingles for local businesses and for the show’s regular recipe segment.

WHY DON'T YOU WRITE A JINGLE TOO?

1. Pick something you want to sell. It can be anything – from dog toys and food to clothing and sports equipment, whatever you like! Here is an example: gummy bears.
2. Make up a name for the company that is going to sell it and put it together with your product. This is where you get to be creative – the sillier the company name, the more fun it is! Here is an example: Notorious Nick's Gummy Bears.
3. Think up some good adjectives to describe your product and to help you sell it. Again, the sillier, the better! For instance, here are some words to go along with question #2's example: hairy and scary, making it Notorious Nick's Hairy Scary Gummy Bears.
4. Finally, create a short song, sung to any tune you want, using the product, the company name, and your describing and selling words. Here are a few lines from a song for Notorious Nick's Hairy Scary Gummy Bears:

Notorious Nick's Gummy Bears,
They're hairy, scary gummy bears.
They bounce off chairs,
They roll off stairs,
Notorious Nick's Gummy Bears!



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FEATURED *HISTORY*

Radio emerged as a powerful medium during the 1920s, transforming the ways in which audiences – both rural and urban alike – accessed and consumed art, music, entertainment, and politics. Depending on signal strength, terrain, and other factors, radio stations could broadcast for hundreds of miles to reach new audiences. From news and commentary and President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s famous “fireside chats” to music, comedies, and dramas, the early days of radio paved a progressive path for future media technologies.

Stations in urban areas set the precedent for radio’s music programming, including influencing the taste for country and traditional music. WLS in Chicago brought the *National Barn Dance* to listeners in 1924, and [Nashville’s WSM introduced the Grand Ole Opry in 1925](#) – a tradition that continues today. Broadcasting live, country and traditional music acts performed for audiences, with regular performers gaining in popularity. Acts often used these on-air segments to promote their latest tours, records, and songbooks.

The 1930s saw barn dance-type radio shows growing in popularity and expanding into Appalachia. Focused on bringing old-time music to listeners and instilling pride in their local communities, barn dances largely followed the format made famous by the *Grand Ole Opry* and continued by later variety shows such as *A Prairie Home Companion*. These shows featured performers, many of whom were show regulars, playing two or three songs for 15 minutes each, along with storytelling and comedy segments.

WNOX, located in Knoxville, Tennessee, aired the *Midday Merry-Go-Round* and *Tennessee Barn Dance*. Country Music Hall of Famers Chet Atkins and the duo of Homer and Jethro began their careers there. WROL, also in Knoxville, was the first broadcast home for the “King of Country Music,” Roy Acuff. In our area, WCYB Radio’s *Farm and Fun Time* was the region’s greatest success. It went on the air in December 1946, and its live, noon-day show featured several pioneers of bluegrass including Ralph and Carter Stanley, Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs, Jimmy Martin, and Jim and Jesse McReynolds. It continued into the 1950s before being displaced by a newer technology: television.

Today the Birthplace of Country Music Museum is the site of [WBCM Radio Bristol](#). The station uses vintage equipment from the original WCYB Radio, digitally remastered to broadcast live from the museum’s permanent exhibits. When visiting the museum, you can listen to historic radio shows outside the radio booth; you can also listen via 100.1FM and online to over 30 unique shows from Radio Bristol – including ones focused on music, storytelling, folklore, and foodways, along with Radio Bristol Book Club and Museum Talk. The station has also revived [Farm and Fun Time](#), which is broadcast live the second Tuesday of each month and later aired on regional PBS stations.

Images: An advertisement for WSM’s radio schedule from a Bristol newspaper; Radio Bristol’s DJ booth in the museum; and the Farm and Fun Time audience is prompted for “Applause” during a humorous segment.



FEATURED *RESOURCE*

The [National Air and Space Museum](#) has numerous online [learning guides for teachers and students](#). Exploring a wide variety of topics – from the Apollo space program and pioneering aviator Bessie Coleman to science fiction and the Hubble Space Telescope – the learning guides provide STEM-based texts, videos, activities, writing exercises, and more for use in the classroom. Many of the learning guides provide a week-long schedule for focused learning.

Image from the National Museum of African American History and Culture, Smithsonian Institution. "Smithsonian Learning Lab Resource: Pinback button featuring a portrait of Bessie Coleman." Smithsonian Learning Lab, Smithsonian Office of Educational Technology, 15 Apr. 2016, <https://learninglab.si.edu/q/r/941103>

