



Birthplace of Country Music Museum

101 Country Music Way

Bristol, VA 24201

423-573-1927

info@birthplaceofcountrymusic.org

BirthplaceOfCountryMusic.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

“Congratulations to the Birthplace of Country Music Museum for honoring the women of old-time music with their own exhibit. These women were from the hills and hollers of the rural south, who helped plant musical seeds for all of us. My momma could have been in that exhibit, since she taught us kids old ballads and immigrant songs, gave us a love for music, and access to banjos, fiddles, and a wash-tub bass. It’s great to see the seeds growing, from Mother Maybelle Carter all the way to my fellow-Tennessean Amythyst Kiah.” ~ Dolly Parton

I’ve Endured: Women in Old-Time Music **Opens at the Birthplace of Country Music Museum March 23**

Bristol, Tenn.-Va. (March 9, 2023) – The [Birthplace of Country Music Museum](http://BirthplaceOfCountryMusic.org) in Historic Downtown Bristol honors the hidden heroines, activists, and commercial success stories of women who have impacted the roots and branches of old-time music in a new special exhibit, “I’ve Endured: Women in Old-Time Music,” on display March 23 – December 31, 2023. Created by a women-led content team, this will be the first exhibition curated by the museum that will eventually travel to other institutions.

“I’ve Endured: Women in Old-Time Music” spotlights commercial success stories and iconic musicians like Mother Maybelle and Sara Carter, Ola Belle Reed, Elizabeth Cotten, Lily May Ledford, Hazel Dickens, Etta Baker, and Alice Gerrard. It also includes women who have impacted the genre in other ways, such as Audrey Hash Ham, Florence Reece, Helen White, Anne Romaine, and Bernice Johnson Reagon. By showcasing today’s torchbearers and innovators, the exhibit also illuminates the ways that women are carrying the old-time genre forward and the work still to be done to open it up to other underrepresented communities. Women like Rhiannon Giddens, Martha Spencer, Carla Gover, Suzy Thompson, and Amythyst Kiah are but a few examples of students of old-time who are blazing new trails. The content development team interviewed dozens of contemporary female old-time musicians and industry professionals as part of the exhibit.

“ ‘I’ve Endured: Women in Old-Time Music’ is a look into the past, present, and future of the genre and the integral role women played in the development of country music as we know it today,” said Head Curator Dr. René Rodgers, Birthplace of Country Music Museum. “In many cases women’s stories have been left out of old-time music or overshadowed by the achievements of male artists through the impact of gender roles and bias, unequal access to financial independence, not having access to decision-making roles, and more. We’ve done our



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best to include as many of these fascinating women and their stories as possible in the exhibit, and reserved an area for feedback from the community to tell us who we may have missed.”

Old-time music has been passed down through generations. A commercial career in music may never have occurred to many women tending large families and domestic responsibilities. Women were frequently tied to the home. Others were discouraged or even forbidden by their husbands to keep their music going at home, or to play in public. Some women were influenced by their church leaders to stay away from dancing and the music that surrounded it. In many cases women had fewer opportunities than men to make a viable career from their music. Nonetheless, several found ways to work within these challenges – and move beyond them – in order to pass on old-time music, and the related genres of country and bluegrass, as performing musicians or in other roles in music.

“The first songs I learned on the guitar were those Carter Family songs, taught to me by Helen Carter. Musical matriarchs like her have played such a pivotal role in the development of early country music, and so many of their stories aren't well known or often told. It's thrilling to see their contributions to our shared music history honored in this exhibit, so that we can more clearly see the path they have forged for those of us who have followed after.” ~ Rosanne Cash

At its heart, old-time is mountain folk music with strong ties to Appalachia and the diverse peoples who have called it home. It is one of the melting pots of American culture, connecting to multiple influences, instruments and genres, primarily country and bluegrass. Defined by upbeat, instrumental dance tunes played with acoustic instruments, including the fiddle, banjo and guitar, old time music often incorporates dance traditions like clogging, flatfooting and buck dancing.

“I’ve Endured: The Women in Old-Time Music” serves as a starting point for anyone who wishes to delve deeper into music history and women’s great contributions to the soundtrack of our lives. Extensive related programming, along with an in-depth website, will also be part of the exhibit experience.

This exhibit has been funded in part by grants from Virginia Humanities, the Massengill-DeFriece Foundation, and the IBMA Foundation, along with local women-led business sponsorship from Friends of Southwest Virginia, The Crooked Road: Virginia’s Heritage Music Trail, Artemis Consulting Services, LLC, Bristol Ballet, Suzi Griffin (Studio 6), Kim Sproles (KS Promotions), and Kayla Stevenson (Matte Nail Bar). East Tennessee Foundation Arts Fund provided grant funding for related public programming, and the Virginia Tourism Corporation provided grant funding for the exhibit’s website. Special thanks is also due to the many women



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who shared their experiences and stories with us, and all who contributed to the exhibit through images, objects, research, advice, and more, especially the exhibit content team made up of Adam Alfrey, Scotty Almany, Erika Barker, Hank Collie, Toni Doman, Cathy Fink, Dr. René Rodgers, and Kalia Yeagle.

For more information, visit www.BirthplaceOfCountryMusic.org.

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About the Birthplace of Country Music Museum

The Birthplace of Country Music Museum, an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, explores the history of the 1927 Bristol Sessions and their lasting impact on our music heritage. From the Bristol Sessions and beyond, our region continues to influence music around the world.

The 24,000 square foot museum is located at 101 Country Music Way (corner of Moore & Cumberland Streets) in Historic Downtown Bristol, Virginia. Through multiple theater experiences, film and sound, and interactive, technology-infused displays—along with a variety of educational programs, music performances, and community events—the exciting story of this music and its far-reaching influence comes alive. Rotating exhibitions from guest curators and other institutions, including the Smithsonian, are featured throughout the year in the Special Exhibits Gallery. The museum is also home to a digital archive.

The Birthplace of Country Music Museum is open Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. and Sunday, 1 p.m. - 5 p.m. The museum is closed on Mondays and most major holidays; call ahead for clarification at 423-573-1927. Admission is \$13.65 for adults, \$11.55 for seniors, students, military, children ages 6-17, and groups of 20 or more. Children 5 and under are free. Admission prices include Virginia admission tax.

The Birthplace of Country Music Museum is a participating member of [Museums for All](#), supporting those receiving food assistance (SNAP) benefits for a minimal fee of \$3 per person for up to four people. Museums for All is a signature access program of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), administered by the Association of Children's Museums (ACM), to



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encourage people of all backgrounds to visit museums regularly and build lifelong museum going habits.

For more information visit BirthplaceOfCountryMusic.org.

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