

# The Origins of American Country Music

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Instruments:

fiddle (Ireland)

guitar (Spain)

mandolin (Italy)

banjo (West Africa)

(note the absence of drums)

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1922: WSM (Georgia) broadcast first folk songs

1923: WBAP (Ft. Worth) first "barn dance" show

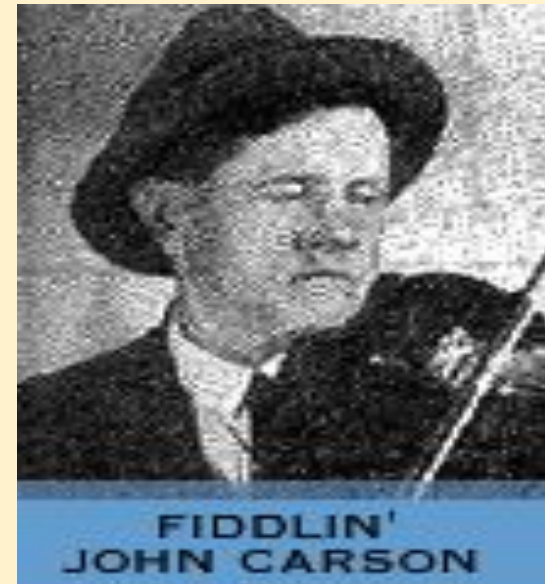
# Southern Record Industry

Race Music (Black)  
Robert Johnson



Hillbilly Music (White)

Fiddler John Carson  
1923: 1st recording



# Ralph Peer's Bristol Sessions (1927)

## The Carter Family



## Jimmie Rodgers (1897-1933) first star of country music



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home, love, loss

## Jimmie Rodgers first star of country music

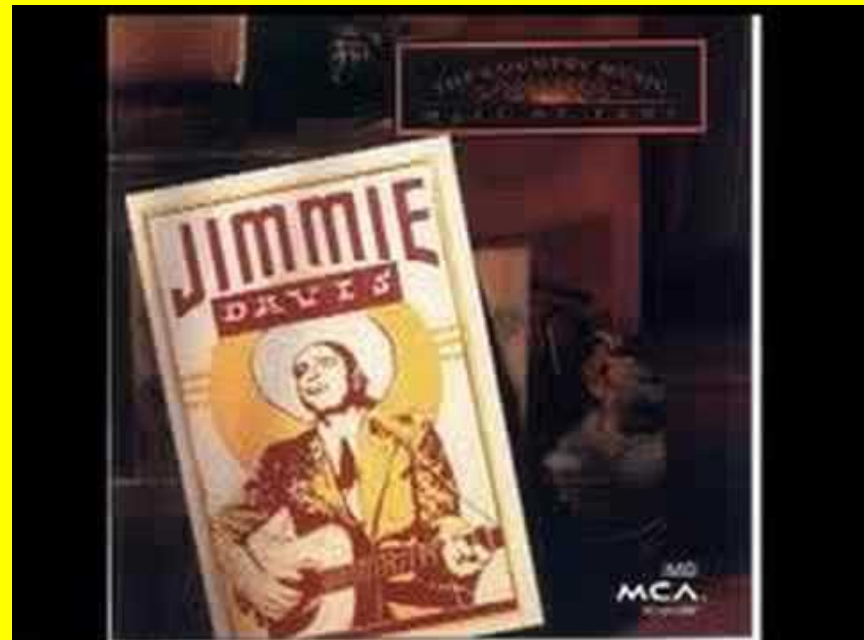


ramblin', train songs,  
tuberculosis, yodels

# The Growth of American Country Music (1925-1953)

# Country Themes

very honest...love, loss, "done her wrong"  
story songs: "Wreck of the Old 97"  
trains (later trucking songs)



# "Wreck of the Old 97"

Well they gave him his orders at Monroe Virginia sayin' Steve you're way behind time

This is not 38 this is old 97 you must put her into Spencer on time

Then he turned around and said to his black greasy fireman shovel on a little more coal

And when we cross that White Oak Mountain watch old 97 roll

But it's a mighty rough road from Lynchburg to Danville with a line on a three mile grade

It was on that grade that he lost his air brakes

see what a jump he made

He was goin' down the grade makin' 90 miles an hour his whistle broke into a scream

He was found in the wreck with his hand on the throttle

A scalded to death by the steam

Then the telegram come to Washington station and this is how it read

Oh that brave engineer that run old 97 he's a layin' in old Danville dead

So now all you ladies you better take a warnin' from this time on and learn

Never speak harsh words to your true lovin' husband

He may leave you and never return



# The Grand Ole Opry

WSM Radio Saturday Night Barn Dance (1925)



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WSM Radio Saturday Night Barn Dance (1925)  
Nashville --> headquarters of country music

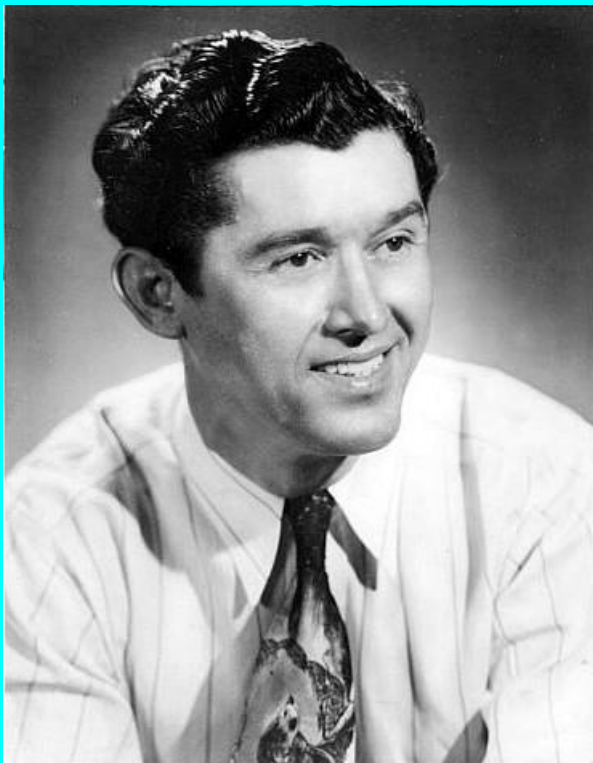


# The Grand Ole Opry

WSM Radio Saturday Night Barn Dance (1925)

Nashville --> headquarters of country music

Roy Acuff (1903-1992) --> the Opry's first star





# Western (Cowboy)

spread country to the Western U.S.

Gene Autry (1907-1998) "The Singing Cowboy"

THE ORIGINAL:  
GENE AUTRY SINGS **RUDOLPH  
THE RED-NOSED  
REINDEER**

& other CHRISTMAS favorites



ROCKY THE RED-NOSED REINDEER  
HERE COMES SANTA CLAUS  
UP ON THE HOUSE TOP  
GLORY BELLS  
THE LITTLE REINDEER  
A LITTLE TINK OF BEHAVIOR  
GLIMMER NIGHT  
JOY TO THE WORLD  
DRESS BELLS  
WHAT TINKLE IS THIS  
GREAT ON A REINDEER  
WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS

By the 1930s...

"hillbilly" was a negative term

western music helped spread "country" to the  
North

"country and western" included all white,  
southern music

# Honky-Tonk

electric guitar (Adolph Rickenbacker ca. 1931)  
electric steel guitar

Ernest Tubb (1914-1984)



# Western Swing

blending of big band jazz and country music  
country strings with jazz horns and drums

Bob Wills  
and the Texas Playboys



# Bluegrass

heavily instrumental (banjo, mandolin, fiddle)  
"high-lonesome" singing

Bill Monroe (1911-1996) and His Bluegrass Boys





# Banjo Music

Earl Scruggs (1924-2012)





# Hank Williams (1923-1953)



most influential country singer/songwriter of all time  
fused honky tonk with  
blues & swing  
major rock-n-roll influence  
many "ghost songs" about him  
lived the life he sang about--lots of alcohol, drugs & heartbreak  
his songs have been recorded by EVERYBODY