

of the Society for American Music

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children, take care of their community, practice their traditional ways, and speak the Twulshootseed language—just as their ancestors did.

Tacoma has been the site of many noteworthy events, musical and otherwise, for better and for worse. In 1873, Tacoma became the western terminus of the transcontinental Northern Pacific Railway. In 1885, the city received nationwide attention for the white residents' violent expulsion ("[The Tacoma Method](#)") of its Chinese population. In 1903, Bing Crosby was born in his family's Tacoma home. In 1940, the Tacoma Narrows Bridge ("Galloping Gertie") [collapsed](#) dramatically into the Puget Sound. And in March 1988 at Tacoma's Community World Theatre, Nirvana performed for the first time.

Present-day Tacoma offers a wealth of attractions for visitors. Three excellent museums are within a mile of the Hotel Murano: [Tacoma Art Museum](#), [Museum of Glass](#), and [Washington State History Museum](#). The area around the hotel offers numerous restaurants and shops within strolling distance, with public transit readily available. Walkers and runners can admire [spectacular views](#) from the nearby 2-mile paved waterfront trail. Along that trail you can pause to visit the beautiful and sobering [Tacoma Chinese Reconciliation Park](#). At the city's northern tip you'll find Point Defiance Park, at 702 acres the largest city park west of the Mississippi, where you can enjoy extensive trees, an excellent [zoo and aquarium](#), and [Dune Peninsula](#) (honoring Tacoma native Frank Herbert). Friday afternoon excursion options will include a tour of the Nirvana photography exhibit at Tacoma Art Museum, a tour of Seattle's Museum of Popular Culture ([MOPOP](#)), and a walking tour of downtown Tacoma's musical history. On Saturday night of the conference, Symphony Tacoma offers a concert of American music by Astor Piazzolla, Teresa Carreño, Samuel Barber, and William Grant Still. And sure, the Emerald City is an easy [express bus ride](#) away.

The 2025 Vivian Perlis Concert will feature works composed by this year's new honorary members, William Bolcom and Donald Reid Womack. The program will also include living U.S. composers Richard Thompson, Marilyn Shrude, Rosephanye Powell, and James Morris. The concert will take place in Kilworth Memorial Chapel at the University of Puget Sound. Performers will include Puget Sound faculty members Dawn Padula, Maria Sampen, Kim Davenport, and Gwynne Brown, and guest soprano Ellaina Lewis.

The Local Arrangements Committee is excited to welcome you to Tacoma. This year's committee includes Gwynne Brown (chair), Kim Davenport, Anne Searcy, Kerry O'Brien, Ben Oyler, Mark Rodgers, and McKenna Milici.

See you in March!

From the President

[Douglas Bomberger, Elizabethtown College](#)



In this season of transitions, few have garnered as much attention as the passing of former President Jimmy Carter at the age of 100 on December 29, 2024. The longest-living president in US history, Carter ended his term in the White House at the age of fifty-six following four years of national turmoil and sinking approval ratings. His successful negotiation of peace between Israel and Egypt in the Camp David Accords was overshadowed for many Americans by gas shortages, inflation, and the Iran hostage crisis. Rather than enter a well-deserved retirement, however, Carter redoubled his efforts for the next forty years in promoting the causes for which he cared most deeply. With his wife and kindred spirit Rosalynn, he traveled the country building houses for the homeless; he monitored elections in democracies around the world; he authored more bestselling books than any other president; and he won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2002. The *New York Times* editorial board eulogized him in an article entitled "America needs more Jimmy Carters," for "using the residual star power of his office to help his successors and his country as a peacemaker, backstage diplomat, human rights champion, monitor of free elections and advocate for the homeless while finding time to write poetry and, by his own example, providing the best possible case for traditional religious values."

As chronicled in the 2020 documentary film *Jimmy Carter: Rock & Roll President*, Carter was also an advocate for American music. Directed by Mary Wharton and written by Bill Flanagan, the film explores Carter's extensive connections to living American musicians both before and during his presidency. A longtime fan of Bob Dylan and Johnny Cash, the Georgia governor turned presidential candidate had the political courage to accept the endorsement of Southern rockers The Allman Brothers, whose efforts on his behalf helped broaden his base of national support. After his election, he invited numerous rock, jazz, and country musicians to visit and perform at the White House. The film contains touching reminiscences from Roseanne Cash, Willie Nelson, Garth Brooks, Trisha Yearwood, Bono, and a host of other musical luminaries who admired his decency, his honesty, and his advocacy for social justice. Jimmy Carter demonstrated the value that music and musicians can bring to politics when the country is beset by intractable challenges.

The next several months will be exciting ones for those of us who are privileged to serve in leadership roles in the Society for American Music. The Fellowship and Award committees, under the direction of Marianne Betz, are completing their recommendations for honoring the best scholarship of our members. The Long-Range Planning Committee, led by Vice-President Beth Levy, is compiling feedback to our survey to formulate a Strategic Plan. Both *JSAM* and the *SAM Bulletin* will be onboarding new editors to take over the reins within the next year (Marian Wilson Kimber and Samuel Parler, respectively). The Executive Committee is working on a revision of the SAM Handbook to improve our administrative policies and procedures. The two Megans (Executive Director MacDonald and Associate Conference Manager Murph) are working with Program Chair Stephanie Vander Wel and Local Arrangements Chair Gwynne Kuhner Brown to plan a dynamic conference in Tacoma, WA, on March 19–23, 2025. Please join us!

If you would like to be part of the work of SAM in any capacity, I invite you to let us know of your interests so that we can incorporate your talents. As a volunteer organization, we rely on the members to keep our operations running smoothly. Together, we can work toward our common goal of increasing the knowledge and appreciation of all aspects of music in the Americas, both present and past.

Dr. William J. Wetmore, *Millet v. Snowden*, and the Earliest Known Court Case of Music Copyright Infringement in the United States, 1844

Allan W. Atlas

For SBJ

Though Dr. William Jarvis Wetmore, M.D. (Winchester, CT; 30 June 1809—New York, 26 November 1880)¹—composer, arranger, poet/lyricist, translator, publisher, journal editor, and, I would say, “musicologist”—is largely forgotten today, one of his early ballads holds a prominent place in the history of music copyright infringement in the United States.² One brief note before the story unfolds: printed “sheet music” became copyrightable with the passage of the Copyright Act of 1831 (prior to which, only music included in a book was protected).³

In 1841, William E. Millet, proprietor of Millet's Music Saloon at 329 Broadway (New York), published Wetmore's *The Cot Beneath the Hill, a Ballad* (lyrics by James F. Otis).⁴ As was the custom, Millet announced his copyright of the piece at the

¹ Credit for the discovery of Wetmore's date of death belongs to Richard Jackson, *Democratic Souvenirs: An Historical Anthology of 19th-Century American Music* (New York: C.F. Peters, 1988), 332.

² On Wetmore, see James Carnahan Wetmore, *The Wetmore Family of America and Its Collateral Branches: with Genealogical, Biographical, and Historical Notices* (Albany: Munsell & Howland, 1861), 92–93, and the autobiographical sketch in *The Jarvis Family: or, the Descendants of the First Settlers of the Name in Massachusetts and Long Island, and Those Who Have More Recently Settled in Other Parts of the United States and British America*, collected and compiled by George A. Jarvis, George Murray Jarvis, and William Jarvis Wetmore (Hartford: Case, Lockwood & Brainard, 1879), 108–12 (Jarvis was the family name of Wetmore's mother). For references to Wetmore in the musicological literature, see my “Introducing Dr. William J. Wetmore, M.D.: A Nineteenth-Century American Composer” in which I will include the relevant musicological literature.

³ Oren Bracha, “Commentary on the U.S. Copyright Act of 1831,” in *Primary Sources on Copyright, (1450–1900)*, ed. Lionel Bently and Martin Kretschmer, at www.copyrighthistory.org.

⁴ “Cot” is a now-antiquated term for the kind of humble, thatched-roof cottage depicted on the title page (Fig. 1). On Millet, see Harry Dichter and Elliott Shapiro, *Handbook of Early American Sheet Music, 1768–1889* (New York: Dover, 1977), 215–16. Otis (1808–1867) was best known as music and drama critic for the *New-York Evening Express*; see Dwight Thomas, “James F. Otis and ‘Autography’: A New Poe Correspondent,” *Poe Studies* 8, no. 1 (June 1975): 12–15, and Scott Norsworthy, “James F. Otis, aka Gemotice,” *Melvilliana* (22 June 2018), <https://melvilliana.blogspot.com/2018/06/james-f-otis-aka-gemotice.html>. (The obituary for Otis in the *Boston Journal* and its reprint in *The New*

foot of the title page: “Entered according to act of Congress in the year 1841 by W.E. Millet in the clerks [sic] office of the district Court of the Southern District of New York” (Fig. 1).

Two years later, Wetmore’s song appeared—with attributions to Wetmore and Otis but without reference to Millet’s publication—in the *Boston Musical Visitor* (hereafter *Boston*) for 17 April 1843.⁵ There are some differences between this version and Millet’s, the most glaring of which is that whereas Millet provides music for stanzas 1 and 2 (the latter with minor alterations) and places stanzas 3 and 4 at the end, *Boston* offers music for stanza 1 only, with all three of the remaining stanzas coming at the close. Apparently, Millet was unaware of the piracy, for he seems to have taken no action in its wake.

The pace of piracy now quickened, and another unauthorized edition of *The Cot* appeared just two months later, this time in the June 1843 issue of *The Ladies’ Companion* (Fig. 2—hereafter *Ladies’*), which, despite some alterations, had clearly lifted the piece from *Boston*.⁶

This time Millet noticed the theft, and he hauled the *Ladies’* publisher, William W. Snowden, into court.

What follows is the record of the court case as it appears at *Public.Resource.Org*.⁷ I have (1) omitted two editorial insertions near the beginning of the document (replacing them with ellipses), (2) retained two others (they appear in square brackets), (3) silently corrected the spelling of Millet’s name (given as “Millett”) and Snowden’s middle initial (given as “E,” perhaps confused with Millet’s), and (4) inserted some editorial additions for precision (in italics).

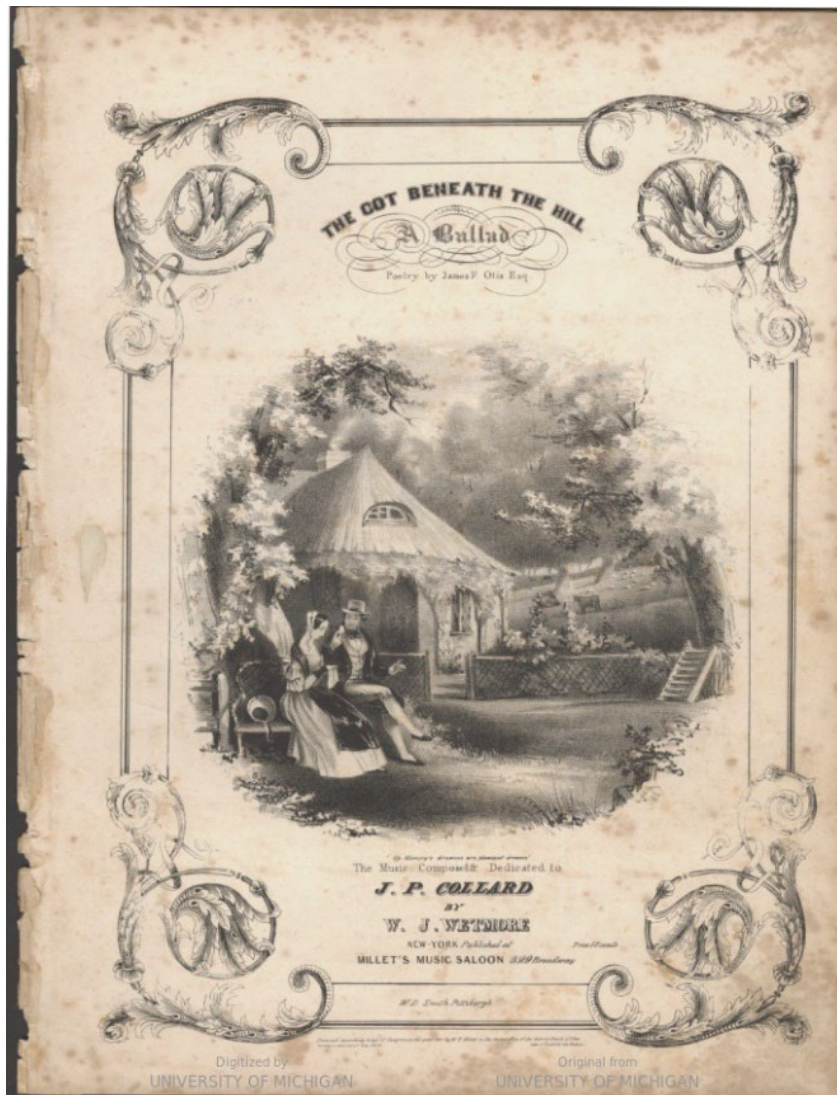


Figure 1: Title page to William J. Wetmore, *The Cot Beneath the Hill* (New York: Millet’s Music Saloon, 1841).

York Times, 2 February, and 10 February 1867, respectively, wrongly associate him with the *New-York Express*, an entirely different newspaper that ran for only three months in 1836.)

⁵ Vol. 3, no. 8, 121–22, https://archive.org/details/sim_american-journal-of-music-and-musical-visitor_1843-04-17_3_8/page/120/mode/2up; also at RIPM.

⁶ Vol. 19, no. 6, 100–1, https://archive.org/details/sim_ladies-companion-and-literary-expositor_1843-06_19/page/100/mode/2up. The full title of the magazine, which appeared monthly from 1834 to 1844, is *The Ladies’ Companion, and Literary Expositor; a Monthly Magazine Embracing Every Department of Literature. Embellished with Original Engravings, and Music Arranged for the Piano Forte, Harp and Guitar*; there is a complete run at *Internet Archive*. For a list of women composers represented in *Ladies’*, see Bonny H. Miller, “Ladies’ Companion, Ladies’ Canon? Women Composers in American Magazines from *Godey’s* to the *Ladies’ Home Journal*,” in *Cecilia Reclaimed: Feminist Perspectives on Gender and Music*, ed. Susan C. Cook and Judy S. Tsou (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 168. (This magazine differs from *The Ladies’ Companion* published in London during the third quarter of the century.)

⁷ <https://law.resource.org/pub/us/case/reporter/F.Cas/0017.f.cas/0017.f.cas.0374.pdf>.

MILLET v. SNOWDEN

...

Second Circuit Court, Southern District of New York

COPYRIGHT—MUSIC—STATUTORY PENALTY FOR
INFRINGEMENT—INTENTION

...

The plaintiff [William E. Millet] obtained a copyright for a piece of music called “The Cot Beneath the Hill, a Ballad. – Poetry by James F. Otis, Esq.,” and now seeks to recover the penalty, as provided by statute of one dollar per sheet for violation thereof. He charges that [William W.] Snowden in the June 1843 number of the *Ladies’ Companion*, published such piece of music, &c. The defendant proved that the music had been copied from a Boston paper by the young man having charge of that department in the *Ladies’ Companion*, and that neither said young man nor Mr. Snowden knew of its being copyrighted, and that the music was changed in a trifling degree from the original. He also offered to prove that the words to which the music was set never belonged to the plaintiff, and that he (defendant) had no intention of infringing the copyright.

Before *Samuel Rossiter BETTS*, District Judge.

THE COURT, in its charge, stated that intention could not be taken into view. If a copyright has been invaded, whether the party knew it was copyrighted or not, he is liable to penalty. As to its being different from the original, in music, as in writing, the omission of a word or line or paragraph could not change it so as to avoid the statute. The poetry, in this instance, could not affect the result, as the copyright was for the music. A defendant is at liberty to show that the work copyrighted was not original with plaintiff, or that it was an abbreviation or alteration, and the jury could determine whether it was calculated to infringe the copyright or not. In cases of patents, the jury is at liberty to assess damages, but not in violation of copyright. The penalty in the latter is fixed by law. The jury, if they consider that the defendant has republished without leave obtained in writing from plaintiff, must proceed to ascertain the number of sheets proved to have been sold, or offered for sale (not the number printed), and return a verdict of one dollar for each sheet so sold or offered to be sold.

Verdict for plaintiff, \$625.

Commentary:

(1) As noted in the record, *Ladies’* had a music department. Snowden explained its set-up and goals in an article that he wrote for the Stroudsburg (PA) newspaper *The Jeffersonian Republican*, 7 March 1840 (p. 3):⁸

The Musical Department of the *Ladies’ Companion* has ever commanded a large share of attention, and has been looked upon with no little interest by its readers, and more especially the Ladies, whom the publisher is anxious to please. It will continue to be a subject of more than usual care to him, and to the Professor under whose supervision it is placed, to make that portion of the magazine deserving of the countenance of every lover of music.

And though Snowden seemingly tried to implicate the “Professor,” neither judge nor jury was swayed.

⁸ <https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn86053954/1840-03-07/ed-1/?sp=3&r=-0.653,-0.075,2.306,1.556,0>.

(2) As the record states, *Ladies'* introduced a "trifling" alteration: it omits the cadenza-like flourish in the voice with which Wetmore ended each stanza (*Boston* had retained it).

(3) As Snowden noted in the *Jeffersonian Republican*, the *Ladies'* "Musical Department . . . commanded a large share of attention." Indeed, it was the rare issue of the magazine that did not include a short (two-page) piece of music, at times without naming composer, arranger, or lyricist (Wetmore and Otis are named), or acknowledging prior publication.

(4) The fine of \$625 (the mandatory one dollar for each *sheet* "sold, or offered to be sold"—about \$26,000 in 2024 terms)⁹ sheds light on *Ladies'* circulation.¹⁰ The magazine was issued in quarto format.¹¹ Thus, each large sheet of paper, after being folded and cut, consisted of four leaves/eight pages and would therefore have held four copies of Wetmore's two-page-long piece. Snowden, then, was judged to have "sold, or offered to be sold" some 2,500 copies (625 x 4), a far cry from the 8,500 copies that he claims to have sold in connection with volume 10 of 1839.¹²

(5) Why all the fuss about this one act of musical "piracy"? It was, after all, a popular pastime. Yet, as our title confidently states, what is special about *Millet v. Snowden* is that it seems to be the first *known* instance in the United States of a court case concerned with the infringement of copyright in connection with a piece of music. As Charles Cronin puts it at George Washington University's *Music Copyright Infringement Resource*: "*Millet v. Snowden* is the earliest U.S. music copyright infringement case we have identified,"¹³ while for Alexandra Tasev: "The first documented intellectual property music copyright court case arose in *Millett* [sic] *v. Snowden* (1844), over the uncompensated reprinting and selling of sheet music."¹⁴

(6) Finally, one voice was seemingly silent throughout the proceedings: Wetmore's! In fact, neither *The Wetmore Family* nor *The Jarvis Family* mentions the incident. Did Wetmore know about the court case? If so, did he care about it? Perhaps the answer is no both times. Wetmore, after all, no longer had a financial stake in the song—*The Cot* was no longer his.



Figure 2: William J. Wetmore, *The Cot Beneath the Hill*, in *The Ladies' Companion*, 19, no. 6 (June 1843): 100.

⁹ <https://www.officialdata.org/us/inflation/1844>.

¹⁰ My thanks to Leanne Langley for what follows (communication of 22 May 2024).

¹¹ The issue for April 1844 at *Internet Archive* has an image of a ruler across one of its pages; one can calculate that the magazine measured ten inches high by about seven inches across.

¹² He makes that claim in the *Jefferson Republican*, 3. Circulation numbers for American magazines of this period are scarce; see Heather A. Haveman, *Magazines and the Making of America: Modernization, Community, and Print Culture, 1741–1860* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 30. Of the 301 journals for which Haveman could calculate the circulation, only one-third (101) reached 10,000 or more, while a miniscule 4.7% (14) surpassed 100,000. As Haveman notes, publishers and editors sometimes "offered optimistic, if not downright boastful numbers" (p. 30).

¹³ Charles Cronin, <https://blogs.law.gwu.edu/mcjr/case/millett-v-snowden/>, which includes a copy of the song as it appears in *Ladies'* and an amateur recording of stanza 1.

¹⁴ Alexandra Tasev, "Intellectual Property in the Digital Streaming Age: How Music Becomes a Lawsuit," Honors College Thesis, Lubin School of Business, Pace University (2020), 8, https://digitalcommons.pace.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1326&context=honorscollege_theses; see also, Ben Sisario, "Ripped-Off Rips? Better Not to Risk It," *The New York Times*, 1 April 2019, B1.

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Jessica Stearns

Spotlight on Pedagogy: Musicking American Cultures, Histories, and Identities Through Music History Materials

Kristy Swift, College-Conservatory of Music, University of Cincinnati

A 2025 ChatGPT query, "write the history of American music," returned a list of chronological historical style periods and genres:

- Indigenous and Early Colonial Music (Pre-1700s–Early 1700s)
- 19th Century: The Rise of American Musical Identity (folk and minstrelsy; spirituals and early African American music; brass bands and patriotic music)
- Early 20th Century: Blues, Jazz, and Country (1900–1940s)
- Mid-20th Century: Rock, R&B, and the Folk Revival (1950s–1970s)
- Late 20th Century: Hip-Hop, Punk, and Pop Dominance (1980s–1990s)
- 21st Century: Digital Age and Genre Blending (2000s–Present)

Is this timeline of American music genres and styles primarily representative from the United States valuable? What does it teach readers about American music history, American music culture, and intersections of American artists' identities, musics, and sounds? Is ChatGPT's chronology useful for ordering music events and sounds? Does it threaten to ossify arbitrary style periods and genres as a singular linear trajectory, one of the same criticisms applied to the discipline of musicology, music history textbooks specifically, and other teaching approaches, materials, and methods generally?

Examining music through interdisciplinary critical and cultural lenses has enriched and widened the scope of musicology writ large and enlarged considerations of American Music Studies since at least the mid-1980s. Joseph Kerman and many others subsequently contemplated music and challenged the discipline itself by questioning its purpose and the values of those it serves.¹⁵ ChatGPT offers no such critique. Instead, it orders events, styles, and genres—a taxonomy of sorts to which it assigns a small handful of people framed as representing a single genre, style, or time period of American music and its history.

- John Philip Sousa (brass bands and patriotic music)
- Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington (blues and jazz)
- The Carter Family and Jimmie Rodgers (country and Appalachian music)
- Elvis Presley and Chuck Berry; Stevie Wonder and Aretha Franklin (Rock ‘n’ Roll and R&B)
- Bob Dylan and Joan Baez (Folk Revival)
- Grandmaster Flash and Public Enemy; Tupac and Jay-Z (Hip-Hop and Rap)
- The Ramones and Nirvana (Punk and Alternative Rock); Michael Jackson and Madonna (Pop Superstars)
- Beyoncé and Kendrick Lamar (Digital Age and Genre Blending)

ChatGPT mines digital sources for data and orders it for understanding, but can it musick history?¹⁶ One way that humans musick is to think deeply about intersections of music and history, people making choices that represent their experiences and interpreting information according to their values. Is thinking deeply about music and history valuable today?

In North America, primarily the United States, since at least the 1960s beginning with Donald J. Grout’s *A History of Western Music* (HWM, W. W. Norton), later editions by Claude V. Palisca and J. Peter Burkholder, and an 11th edition forthcoming by Sara Haefeli, textbooks such as HWM and subsequent books, anthologies, and various teaching materials have constructed, deconstructed, and democratized music history content, methods, and most notoriously canons. Other than brief mentions of American composers, American music was not expressly narrated in HWM until 1996 in Palisca’s fifth edition of HWM, which included a survey of jazz beginning with blues and progressing chronologically through fusion. Yet these books and subsequent ones have defined and reflected the field of musicology initially to essentially become the music history curriculum in post-secondary education—a survey of musics, musicians, and musickings that has both reified and challenged the values of white, cisgender, European men through projects of inclusion. In the same way that musicking is a sociocultural practice, in the musicology class, teaching is performative, a musicking of history that requires making choices that represent people’s experiences and values.¹⁷

[Music History Materials](#) is a new digital teaching and research tool that aims to foreground people—their experiences, values, and choices—musicking history. Rather than focusing on music chronologies, genres, ontologies, practices, or styles, Music History Materials aligns with leading open access musicology pedagogy repositories including [AMS Musicology Now](#), [Open Access Musicology](#) and [Teaching Music History Blog: The Jigsaw](#) in providing resources. The developing database is designed to be inclusive and acknowledge canons, which are inevitable. Contributors and I aim to put canonic musicians, musics, and musickings in dialogue with those previously marginalized to erase artificial designations of “classical,” “global,” and “popular.”¹⁸

With a goal of building and curating a community of historical and modern artists around collective research and teaching materials, in the project, I strive to provide space for multiple diverse voices including American music broadly. One distinguishing feature of the site is that it emphasizes people, and focuses specifically on them making choices about

Many scholars’ recent work has deeply informed my thinking on research and teaching. Because of the nature of this short form piece, only a few are included in the footnotes below.

¹⁵ Joseph Kerman, *Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985).

¹⁶ Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1998).

¹⁷ J. Peter Burkholder, “Questions of Value: Toward a Unified Field Theory for Musical Scholarship,” Invited colloquium, University of California at Los Angeles, Los Angeles, California, 2 October 2001.

¹⁸ Katherine Butler Schofield, “Music and Empire: South & Southeast Asia, c. 1750–1950,” *Journal of Music History Pedagogy* 14, no. 1 (2024): 119–61; Ayana O. Smith, *Inclusive Music Histories: Leading Change Through Research and Pedagogy* (New York: Routledge, 2023); *Music in Asian America: An Overview*, <https://asianamericanmusic.org/encyclopedia/>, last accessed 19 December 2024; Jacqueline Warwick, *Music, Gender, and Sexuality Studies: A Teacher’s Guide* (New York: Routledge, 2022); Horace J. Maxile and Kristen M Turner, *Race and Gender in the Western Music History Survey: A Teacher’s Guide* (New York: Routledge, 2021).

creating, performing, and thinking about intersections of culture, history, and music. At its core, questions largely inform the project: Who are the people involved in any given music experience? What are their contributions and roles as musicians in society: audiences, choreographers, composers, dancers, impresarios, painters, performers, poets, students, teachers, and writers?

Supported in part by the University of Cincinnati Office of Research's 2020 virtual scavenger hunt award for new faculty, [Music History Materials](#) began as an attempt to learn from comparisons of narrative language about musics, musicians, and musicking: how have the people of music history been characterized in the stories that are told about them? Most recently, the focus has been on building out a hub for American musics.

Applying metahistorical methods especially to textbook and anthology narrations reveals language modes and tropes paralleling literature.¹⁹ In other words, while music histories may not be considered wholesale fiction, their content, methods, objectives, and language reflect their authors' choices and values. Music history is constructed and mediated by its storytellers. With this in mind, since the project's inception, my focus has widened significantly to provide a space for any resources about people and their musics—primary, secondary, physical, sound, digital, any type—that can be used to tell stories in teaching and research. The website was designed and created by Chris Borgmeyer, formerly of Crooked River Design, and it has become a DIY building, editing, and curating endeavor. Assignments, bibliographies and resource lists, blog posts, readings and recordings, syllabi, and ideas writ large about people musicking history are welcome but particularly those emphasizing American music. The next stage of the project will be the development of a searchable database currently housing over five hundred artists, musicians, and writers narrated in sources as intersections of music and history ranging from Boethius to Beyoncé, the Caccinis to Chappell Roan, and those that ChatGPT returned as representative American musicians. Through the site, American artists can be put in dialogue with any others.

At this juncture, I offer a sample assignment. You may have tried this exercise or a similar one in your teaching, and if so, I heartily welcome the opportunity to learn about your students and your experience with the assignment.

Musicking American History Sample Assignment

Learning Objectives: By the end of this assignment, students will be able to

- search, locate, and critique a source on the intersections of American culture, history, identity, and music.
- recognize their [the students'] own agency in working with sources as informed by their own identities, experiences, and values.
- understand musicking history and the idea that written histories require human choice of content, methods, and narration that reflect people's values.

I. Prepare: Ask students to search for, identify, and locate an American music history resource to examine. This can be any source with any content or form in any medium. The most important criterion is that the source and its content is of interest to them. Have students bring their physical or digital resource to class for critique.

II. Critique, write, and share: As an in-class activity, invite students to respond to the questions below and upload their critique and a citation for their resource to *musichistorymaterials.com*. Students will lend their voices to the collective and will be credited for their work on the site.

- Who are the people the author or creator foregrounds?
- What are their values and what are those of the resource's creator?
- How does narrative language or framing portray the artists?
- Who is the intended audience for this source?
- What additions, omissions, or revisions would you make to the source?

¹⁹ Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973); Hans Kellner, *Language and Historical Representation: Getting the Story Crooked* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).

- How does the resource invite others to think deeply about intersections of music and history, or how does the source musick history?

When queried on the assignment above, ChatGPT generated two responses: “It seems like you’re asking for a detailed analysis of a music history resource, but I don’t have access to specific external sources or databases to pull from directly” (response 1) and “To address the questions, I will choose a well-known music history resource, such as *The Cambridge History of American Music* (edited by David Nicholls 1998) or *What’s Going On: The Life and Music of Marvin Gaye* by David Ritz (1985).²⁰ Since I cannot pull from external sources, I will draw from these examples to demonstrate how you might approach this kind of analysis” (response 2).

On the one hand, ChatGPT admitted its limitations, explaining that it cannot respond directly to the request. Its algorithm randomly identified Ritz’s book on Marvin Gaye as an American music history source on which it proceeded to generate general information about Gaye’s life and works. A well-crafted ChatGPT inquiry may return a more nuanced reply, and this single query does not reveal the myriad possible results for generative AI to respond to the assignment; however, it does highlight one of the greatest distinctions between ChatGPT and people: it cannot hold values, critique sources, or think deeply about music history in the wonderfully complex ways that humans do from the positions of their unique identities and experiences, at least not yet (Bowen and Watson 2024; Epstein 2024).²¹ I invite you to upload and share your favorite teaching and research resources through *musichistorymaterials.com* or to simply connect with others through the site to think deeply together about people musicking American cultures, histories, and identities.

Book Review

[*Country and Midwestern: Chicago in the History of Country Music and the Folk Revival*](#). Mark Guarino. University of Chicago Press, 2023. 524 pp. ISBN: 978-0-226-11094-3. Hardcover.

Hannah Porter Denecke, Andover, New York

A variety of publications over the last few decades have identified folk, bluegrass, country, and Americana musical genres as decidedly rural and, in most cases, Southern. Journalist Mark Guarino thoroughly demonstrates the role Chicago has played in the proliferation of these genres in *Country and Midwestern: Chicago in the History of Country Music and the Folk Revival*. By expanding the regional and cultural associations of country and folk genres in this book, Guarino also successfully broadens the roster of musicians who might be included in these discussions and highlights venues in Chicago that have advanced these musical styles over the last century.

Guarino organizes *Country and Midwestern* into nine chapters, effectively making the case that Chicago has served as a significant contributor to folk and country music since the early 1920s through numerous examples of musicians, executives, organizations, and venues. The author argues in his introduction that “the wider public has little idea that Chicago played such an important role in the early development of country and folk music” (7). Guarino further contends that cultural institutions dedicated to the study of country and folk genres have neglected to include in their histories “the early twentieth-century fiddlers’ contests, broadcasts, recording sessions, and rural listenership that spread across the Midwest” through the technologies of “the radio and the automobile” (8).

In the first chapter, Guarino focuses entirely on the evolution of the popular early-twentieth-century radio program, *The National Barn Dance*. John Lair, a powerful and demanding executive of *Barn Dance*, exerted enormous influence on the image of country musicians. Guarino asserts that Lair dreamed of “packaging the music and humor from his upbringing in Appalachia into a stage show that would serve as a nostalgic restaging of his childhood experience” (28). Bill Monroe, the “father of bluegrass,” had roots in Kentucky, Tennessee, and the Carolinas, but Guarino fills in the history of Monroe and his brothers by writing about their time on *Barn Dance* and working as musicians in Illinois, Indiana, and Iowa in the 1930s (35). In chapter two, Guarino examines niche country bars of the 1950s and 60s in uptown Chicago. At this point in time,

²⁰ David Nicholls, ed., *The Cambridge History of American Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); David Ritz, *Divided Soul: The Life of Marvin Gaye* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985).

²¹ José Antonio Bowen and C. Edward Watson, *Teaching with AI: A Practical Guide to a New Era of Human Learning* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2024); Louis K. Epstein, Review of *Teaching with AI: A Practical Guide to a New Era of Human Learning* by José Antonio Bowen and C. Edward Watson, *Journal of Music History Pedagogy* 14, no. 2 (2024): 102–12.

the area was viewed as impoverished and declining. Among a variety of minorities in the neighborhood, poor rural Southerners found community. A group called the Young Patriots “formed with the intent to serve ‘hillbilly nationalists,’” later forming an alliance with the Illinois Black Panther Party and the Young Lords in a partnership called the Rainbow Coalition (100). Where Guarino’s discussion of *Barn Dance* in chapter one highlights the way Lair made country music acceptable to the masses, chapter two reveals that it was also a tool of liberation for disenfranchised groups in 1960s Chicago.

In chapter three, Guarino demonstrates the way folk music was commodified for mass consumption in the late 1950s and through the 1960s at the Gate of Horn, a venue that “represented a new face for folk music in Chicago” and that, as “neither a coffeehouse nor a campus auditorium,” was able to “appeal to the same well-heeled crowd of professionals who were packing the downtown supper clubs and jazz lounges that had sprung up in the 1950s” (136). As *Barn Dance* created a polished version of country music for popular appeal on the radio, the Gate of Horn styled folk music in a way that the general public could appreciate. Win Stracke’s Old Town School of Folk Music established Chicago as a center for the genre in a completely different way than the Gate of Horn. Guarino provides an in-depth discussion in chapter four of “the first folk music school in the United States,” which is “now the oldest still in operation” (177). Not only did the purpose of this institution contrast with that of large venues like the Gate of Horn, but it also served as a site of various political identities and affiliations in keeping with the left-leaning politics often associated with the 1960s folk music revival.



Chapter five especially focuses on Hyde Park and the establishment of the University of Chicago Folk Festival, which would open in February 1961. Guarino writes that during “[Bob] Dylan’s weeks in Hyde Park, eyewitnesses remember encountering him where anyone interested in folk music during that period would be found: in the Fret Shop and in dorm lounges” (254). Dylan would only spend a brief amount of time in Chicago before arriving in Greenwich Village, yet his visit left an impression on many in the folk scene of Hyde Park. Guarino’s chapter six discussion of the 1970s in Old Town and Lincoln Park highlights the appearance of many musicians from a variety of musical genres at Richard Harding’s venue, Mother Blues, including Miles Davis, Bob Marley, Patti Smith, and Bruce Springsteen. The author describes how Jimmy Buffett’s month of opening for bands in Chicago by the invitation of Harding “grounded [his] act and taught him how to structure a show” (282). Additionally, Guarino depicts a performance of folk musician John Prine in May 1971 at the Earl of Old Town, which helped establish his career. According to singer-songwriter Kris Kristofferson, “the original songs Prine performed that night were so unexpectedly good that when he finished, [the small crowd] asked him to perform the entire set a second time” (311).

In chapter seven, Guarino describes the way country and bluegrass genres became more closely associated with each other in 1970s Chicago. Guarino highlights the continued importance of the radio in the advancement of these genres, with Chicago stations WMAQ, WJJD, and WUSN all playing mainly country music throughout the decade (331). The last two chapters of *Country and Midwestern* expand further beyond the traditional boundaries of folk and country music genres in Guarino’s exploration of the 1980s and 90s in Chicago. Guarino especially focuses on a club called Lounge Ax in chapter eight, and a venue called the Hideout in chapter nine. Both venues hosted a variety of musical genres that Guarino classifies as “alternative,” “insurgent,” and “weird” forms of country and folk. These final chapters of the book challenge the genre classifications that executives like Lair worked to create and standardize in the early twentieth century, laying the groundwork for continued study of the many overlapping musical expressions that continue in Chicago today.

Guarino’s willingness to expand his discussion of genre beyond strict classifications lends itself to a fascinating and extensive study of Chicago as a musical center in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The book is well-organized and

generally follows a chronological structure, but Guarino does not allow chronology to restrict him from interweaving connecting threads from chapter to chapter. Many of the sites of musical development which Guarino discusses overlapped in certain ways, and he introduces these connections in his narrative organically. Because Guarino is expansive in his discussion of these genres, he features many musicians who would not typically be included in a study of country and folk music. Overall, *Country and Midwestern* is a thorough and intriguing contribution to the existing literature, and would serve as an excellent reference for any scholar or teacher interested in the contours of the many genres Guarino examines.

***Bulletin* Board & Member News**

From [Susan Key](#) and [Carolyn Bryant](#): The Committee on Career Diversity and Advocacy (CCDA) encourages you to check out our Career Connections initiatives, which matches you with mentors from a variety of backgrounds and careers who can assist you with short-term information about a skill, possible career path, research area, or other query you may have. <https://www.american-music.org/page/RscCareerConnections>

Announcing New *Bulletin* Editorial Board and Call for *Bulletin* Contributions

The *Bulletin* editorial board invites members to contribute feature articles, reviews, and news, as well as ideas for future *Bulletin* segments or series.

- The *Bulletin* of the Society for American Music is excited to announce our new editorial board! Samuel Parler will be serving as our General Editor, with Katie Callam to serve as Design, Layout, and Media Editor, and Chase Castle to serve as Book Reviews Editor. Thank you to Sam, Katie, and Chase for their willingness to serve! Their terms will commence in Spring 2025, with the editorial team's first *Bulletin* issue to be released in Fall 2025.
- We welcome essays and opinion pieces on current issues in American music (broadly conceived) and music scholarship; reports on concerts and conferences of interest to our membership; transcriptions of interviews with prominent persons in American musical life; reviews of recent books pertaining to American music; and updates on our members' scholarly, creative, and professional activities.
- Our Pedagogy Series is continuing with our next issue (LI No. 2; Deadline April 15, 2025). Please reach out to *Bulletin* editor [Megan Steigerwald Ille](#) or by using the [SAM Website](#) if you have interest in contributing a short essay, case study, or opinion piece on teaching American music (broadly conceived). Topics might include successful assignments, critical pedagogy, syllabi and curricular changes, or creative lecture design, among others. We hope to feature at least one pedagogical contribution each issue.
- We are currently soliciting media reviews pertaining to American music (including online resources, albums, and documentaries). Please reach out to Media Editor [Samuel Parler](#) if interested in contributing a review.

You can contact members of the editorial board via the [SAM website](#) or via the email addresses listed at the bottom of the *Bulletin* issue.

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Items for submission should be submitted via the [Bulletin's information page](#). Photographs or other graphic materials should be accompanied by captions and desired location in the text. Deadlines for submission of materials are 15 December, 15 April, and 15 August.