

This Day in History... November 23, 1992

Death of Roy Acuff

The “King of Country Music,” Roy Claxton Acuff, died on November 23, 1992. He was the first living inductee into the Country Music Hall of Fame and is often credited with helping to popularize the style on a larger scale.

Acuff was born on September 15, 1903, in Maynardville, Tennessee. His father was a talented fiddler and his mother an accomplished pianist. When he was young, he learned to play the harmonica and jaw harp, and entertained guests by balancing tools on his chin. Acuff sang in the school choir and performed in every play they held.

Acuff was more focused on athletics, though he turned down a scholarship for Carson-Newman University. Instead, he played for a few smaller baseball teams around Knoxville and fought an occasional boxing match. In 1929, Acuff joined the Knoxville Smokies minor-league baseball team. However, during spring training he suffered a severe case of sunstroke and collapsed on several occasions. Sick and unable to play, he had a nervous breakdown and couldn't stand to be in the sun any more. As he recovered, he began playing the fiddle again, often on the porch after the sun set, developing his own unique country music style.

In 1932, Acuff joined a traveling medicine show. He and other performers played music to draw in crowds to purchase patent “medicines.” Because they had no microphones, Acuff learned to sing loud, an ability that would eventually help him stand out among performers.



Acuff's band and two of his albums (Songs of the Smoky Mountains and Smoky Mountain Memories) were named for the Smoky Mountains where he grew up.

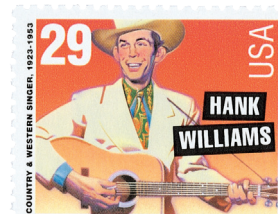
Together with Chicago songwriter Fred Rose, Acuff formed Acuff-Rose Music in 1942. Though Acuff initially planned it as a company to produce his own music, he realized that many country artists had been mistreated by other firms and he invited them to join. It quickly became the most significant country music publisher, helping to further popularize the music form.

In 1948, Acuff ran unsuccessfully for governor of Tennessee. He left the Opry for a time, touring the West. In 1962, he became the first living musician inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame. After a car accident in 1965, he considered retiring and made a few rare appearances at the Opry. In 1972, he was featured on a song by the Nitty Gritty Band, which helped him to re-gain some of his former popularity. Then in 1980, he moved into the Opryland grounds and performed daily. He often showed up early to do odd jobs, such as stocking soda in the refrigerators. Acuff received the Golden Plate Award from the American Academy of Achievement, the National Medal of Arts, and a lifetime achievement award from the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Acuff died from congestive heart failure on November 23, 1992.



Issued for Acuff's 100th birthday in 2003.

Acuff left the medicine show in 1934 and formed the Tennessee Crackerjacks, later the Crazy Tennesseans. Together, they recorded “The Great Speckled Bird” and “Wabash Cannonball,” two of Acuff's most popular songs. In 1938, the group made their debut at the Grand Ole Opry as the Smoky Mountain Boys. They quickly became regulars at the Opry and are credited with making it one of the most important country music institutions. In 1940, the band went to Hollywood and appeared in several films including *Grand Ole Opry*, *O, My Darling Clementine*, *Night Train to Memphis*, and *Home in San Antone*.



Hank Williams once said of Acuff, “He's the biggest singer this music ever knew. You booked him and you didn't worry about crowds.”

This Day in History... November 23, 1992

Death of Roy Acuff

The “King of Country Music,” Roy Claxton Acuff, died on November 23, 1992. He was the first living inductee into the Country Music Hall of Fame and is often credited with helping to popularize the style on a larger scale.

Acuff was born on September 15, 1903, in Maynardville, Tennessee. His father was a talented fiddler and his mother an accomplished pianist. When he was young, he learned to play the harmonica and jaw harp, and entertained guests by balancing tools on his chin. Acuff sang in the school choir and performed in every play they held.

Acuff was more focused on athletics, though he turned down a scholarship for Carson-Newman University. Instead, he played for a few smaller baseball teams around Knoxville and fought an occasional boxing match. In 1929, Acuff joined the Knoxville Smokies minor-league baseball team. However, during spring training he suffered a severe case of sunstroke and collapsed on several occasions. Sick and unable to play, he had a nervous breakdown and couldn't stand to be in the sun any more. As he recovered, he began playing the fiddle again, often on the porch after the sun set, developing his own unique country music style.

In 1932, Acuff joined a traveling medicine show. He and other performers played music to draw in crowds to purchase patent “medicines.” Because they had no microphones, Acuff learned to sing loud, an ability that would eventually help him stand out among performers.



Acuff's band and two of his albums (Songs of the Smoky Mountains and Smoky Mountain Memories) were named for the Smoky Mountains where he grew up.

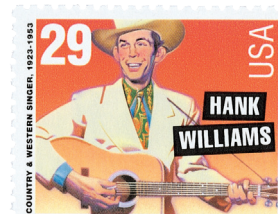
Together with Chicago songwriter Fred Rose, Acuff formed Acuff-Rose Music in 1942. Though Acuff initially planned it as a company to produce his own music, he realized that many country artists had been mistreated by other firms and he invited them to join. It quickly became the most significant country music publisher, helping to further popularize the music form.

In 1948, Acuff ran unsuccessfully for governor of Tennessee. He left the Opry for a time, touring the West. In 1962, he became the first living musician inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame. After a car accident in 1965, he considered retiring and made a few rare appearances at the Opry. In 1972, he was featured on a song by the Nitty Gritty Band, which helped him to re-gain some of his former popularity. Then in 1980, he moved into the Opryland grounds and performed daily. He often showed up early to do odd jobs, such as stocking soda in the refrigerators. Acuff received the Golden Plate Award from the American Academy of Achievement, the National Medal of Arts, and a lifetime achievement award from the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Acuff died from congestive heart failure on November 23, 1992.



Issued for Acuff's 100th birthday in 2003.

Acuff left the medicine show in 1934 and formed the Tennessee Crackerjacks, later the Crazy Tennesseans. Together, they recorded “The Great Speckled Bird” and “Wabash Cannonball,” two of Acuff's most popular songs. In 1938, the group made their debut at the Grand Ole Opry as the Smoky Mountain Boys. They quickly became regulars at the Opry and are credited with making it one of the most important country music institutions. In 1940, the band went to Hollywood and appeared in several films including *Grand Ole Opry*, *O, My Darling Clementine*, *Night Train to Memphis*, and *Home in San Antone*.



Hank Williams once said of Acuff, “He’s the biggest singer this music ever knew. You booked him and you didn’t worry about crowds.”