

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

SHREVEPORT MUNICIPAL MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM

Page 1

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Shreveport Municipal Memorial Auditorium

Other Name/Site Number:

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 705 Elvis Presley Avenue (formerly Grand Avenue)

Not for publication: N/A

City/Town: Shreveport

Vicinity: N/A

State: Louisiana

County: Caddo

Code: 017

Zip Code: 71101

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: ___

Public-Local: X

Public-State: ___

Public-Federal: ___

Object: ___

Category of Property

Building(s): X

District: ___

Site: ___

Structure: ___

Object: ___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

1

1

Noncontributing

___ buildings

___ sites

___ structures

2 objects

2 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 1

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: N/A

SHREVEPORT MUNICIPAL MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- Entered in the National Register
- Determined eligible for the National Register
- Determined not eligible for the National Register
- Removed from the National Register
- Other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

SHREVEPORT MUNICIPAL MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: Recreation and Culture	Sub: Auditorium
Current: Recreation and Culture	Sub: Auditorium
Recreation and Culture	Sub: Museum

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Moderne

MATERIALS:

Foundation: concrete
Walls: brick, limestone
Roof: other: tar and gravel
Other: limestone

SHREVEPORT MUNICIPAL MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

Page 4
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form**Summary**

The Shreveport Municipal Auditorium is nationally significant as the home of KWKH's *Louisiana Hayride*, country music's most innovative and experimental radio show from 1948 until 1958, when the show ended its national network affiliation. Although the *Grand Ole Opry* was the nation's most popular radio show at the time, a large majority of the *Opry*'s stars were culled from the *Hayride*'s stage. The *Hayride* was the proving ground for new talent and the *Opry* management would lure them away when they became sought after performers. The *Hayride*'s willingness to accept unconventional performers and to be the harbinger of new sounds, placed the show in a position to help dictate the development of the country music and rockabilly sound during the 1940s and '50s. The *Hayride* was known as the "Cradle of the Stars," and as such, it helped launch the careers of such notable country and rockabilly musicians as Hank Williams, Kitty Wells, Johnny Cash, and Elvis Presley.

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Shreveport Municipal Memorial Auditorium (1929) is a five story civic center at the western edge of downtown Shreveport, Louisiana, in the northwestern section of the state. The large rectangular building, almost 129,000 square feet, occupies an irregularly shaped lot with approximately two acres at the corner of Elvis Presley Avenue (formerly Grand Avenue) and Milam Street. The surrounding neighborhood contains a combination of light industrial buildings and important historical resources, including a large, park-like cemetery across a side street from the auditorium and several major Victorian-era houses. Minor alterations have been made to the building since its construction and it retains a high degree of historic integrity.

The auditorium building is constructed of brick and limestone and features intensive Modernistic styling. It follows the Rationalist tradition in that the entrance, office areas, exhibition and meeting spaces, seating area, and fly gallery are all clearly articulated on the exterior, giving the auditorium its lively, albeit fairly rigidly symmetrical massing.

The exterior is a tour de force of intricately worked brick and carved limestone, the latter accenting the parapets, windows, and principal entrances. A five-bay central block with a lower wing on each side is the most visually prominent portion of the front façade. The bays have ornamentally carved limestone balconies and brick quoin piers which rise to a massive brick and limestone parapet. The building is so intensively ornamented that even the tiny spaces between the brackets supporting the balconies feature stylized motifs. The parapet features alternating arabesque panels elaborately picked out and embellished by sunburst, diamond-shaped, and other motifs. It culminates in a carved limestone frieze with a strong rhythmic pattern of exaggerated chevrons. The five-bay grouping is flanked by two massive bas relief eagles clutching stylized swords which hold limestone banners with inscriptions. One reads, "The world must be made safe for democracy. Woodrow Wilson," and the other, "The work of righteousness shall be peace. Isaiah 37:17." A secondary, central frieze bears the inscription "DEDICATED TO THOSE WHO SERVED IN THE WORLD WAR." These inscriptions bespeak the auditorium's dedicated purpose as a monument and memorial to the veterans of World War I. Behind the central block, the crowning auditorium space has its own parapet with nine bands of brick in an emphatic alternating chevron pattern.

The front facade is the most elaborate, but all elevations are richly detailed. Many of the copious corners and angles of the building are enlivened with vertical reeding formed by protruding brick corners. Protruding bricks are also used to create numerous luxuriant decorative bands and quoins. The rear is the most striking of the secondary elevations. Its fly gallery features four massive piers with elaborate brickwork between them, including chevrons, bands of protruding bricks, and overlaid curvilinear brick moldings over the stage doors.

SHREVEPORT MUNICIPAL MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM**Page 5**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

On the first floor, the five-door main entrance leads to a large, rectangular, two-story lobby which gives way to a tall inner hallway. Both the lobby and inner hall parallel the front façade, and the inner hallway adjoins the main auditorium space. Perpendicular side halls connect to each end of the inner hall and lead to various ancillary areas, including stair halls, exhibit and meeting spaces, dressing rooms, etc. Entry to the auditorium seating area is from doors in the inner hallway and side halls, and the large, high stage is located directly across the vast space (6,300 square feet) from the inner hallway entrances. The auditorium space currently seats 3,005 people, with 570 portable chairs on the floor in front of the stage, 543 seats in the orchestra section which partially encircles the space, 558 seats in the dress circle above the orchestra tier (part of the mezzanine), and 1,334 seats in the balcony. (The 3,005 total is less than the approximately 3,400 seats provided during the years of the *Louisiana Hayride's* occupancy.) The portable seats can be removed to provide a dance floor.

The second floor of the auditorium has meeting rooms and dressing rooms, as well as the upper levels of the lobby and inner hallway, and the mezzanine level of the auditorium space. Balcony seating occupies most of the third level, which also includes a projection room. A ballroom is located on the fourth floor. There is also a large basement with storerooms, equipment rooms, and utilitarian public restrooms below the lobby.

The public spaces have a number of geometric decorative elements that exhibit the interior's Moderne styling. The double framed, open beam lobby has stylized Egyptian entrance openings, octagonal arabesque panels, fluted rectangular panels, a colored and patterned concrete floor, and two limestone second story balconies (one on each end) featuring arabesque panels and over-large teeth-like dentils protruding from the bottom edges. Spanish-looking, multi-paneled wooden doors with transoms and glazing that resembles bottle glass also contribute to the Moderne feeling of the room. The inner hallway's concrete floor is also geometrically patterned, and its ceiling displays a very pronounced diamond pattern formed of wooden members. The lobby's Egyptian entrance openings are repeated in the hallway, and rectangular reeded panels decorate the walls. A colorful plaque honoring the American Legion surmounts the inner hallway's central entrance to the auditorium space. Moderne curved walls flank the hallway's two secondary auditorium entrances.

The auditorium's decoration is found primarily on the stage and the ceiling. The former displays stylized symbols of democracy, peace, and prosperity in the plaster above the rectangular proscenium, which also has stylized Mayan-looking tea relief panels at each of its two corners. The ceiling, revealed in 2000 after remaining hidden behind a dropped ceiling for almost fifty years, features thick decoratively painted parallel beams separating rows of star-shaped light fixtures with glass panes that are subdivided by elements resembling wagon wheel spokes.

A tall, rectangular ballroom on the fourth floor features a wooden parquet floor, a concrete beamed ceiling, limestone balconies on each end, and a small, low platform (probably for a band) at one end. Other noteworthy interior decorative features in the building include skyscraper styled newel posts on the stair hall landings between the first and second floors, arabesque hanging pendant light fixtures made in Germany in the lobby and ballroom, and Art Deco styled hanging light fixtures and sconces (also made in Germany) in the hallways.

The building has been renovated twice. A 1950s-era project included installation of a handicapped ramp on the left side of the front façade; modernization of a few of the offices; replacement of seats in the orchestra section; and addition of a dropped ceiling in the auditorium. The office was originally built as one large room. It was located on the north front corner of the first floor and was the same size as the Committee Room, or meeting room, on the south front corner of that floor. The office is still located in the same place, but the former large room has been subdivided into four spaces. These are a gift shop, two storage rooms for gift shop items, and an office with built-in book shelves which are probably not original. Work in 2000 also relocated the handicapped ramp to the right side of the front façade; installed a handicapped ramp in the auditorium space; removed seats

SHREVEPORT MUNICIPAL MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM**Page 6**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

in section two to provide for wheelchair seating; removed the dropped ceiling added in the 1950s; installed a sprinkler system; and completed general repairs. These rehabilitation projects made minimal changes to the building's historic features and restored the auditorium's historic ceiling and light fixtures. Although the Shreveport Municipal Memorial Auditorium has been adapted for contemporary use it still retains a high degree of historic integrity.

Non-Contributing Resources

This property includes two non-contributing resources (objects). A statue of Elvis Presley stands on the sidewalk in front of the Shreveport Municipal Memorial Auditorium. It was installed on October 15, 2004, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Presley's first appearance at the auditorium on the *Louisiana Hayride*. A statue of Shreveport native James Burton, who played lead guitar for Elvis Presley from 1969 to 1977, was installed on August 21, 2005, on the sidewalk near the Presley statue. Although the statues are not attached to the auditorium building, they are located on the property and have been counted as non-contributing resources because they were added after the building's period of significance.

SHREVEPORT MUNICIPAL MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM**Page 7**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
 Nationally: X Statewide: Locally:

Applicable National

Register Criteria: A X B X C D

Criteria Considerations

(Exceptions): A B C D E F G

NHL Criteria: 1, 2

NHL Theme(s):

III. Expressing Cultural Values
 2. Visual and performing arts
 3. Mass media
 6. Popular and traditional culture

Areas of Significance: Performing Arts

Period(s) of Significance: 1948-1958

Significant Dates: August 7, 1948 (Hank William's debut); April 3, 1948 (Kitty Wells's debut);
 October 16, 1954 (Elvis Presley's debut); November/December 1955 (Johnny
 Cash's debut)

Significant Person(s): Hank Williams; Kitty Wells; Johnny Cash; Elvis Presley

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Jones, Roessle, Olschner & Wiener (architects)
 Ashton Glassell Co., Inc. (builders)

Historic Contexts: XXII. Music
 D. Popular
 J. Forums (Halls and Auditoriums)
 K. Soloists and Ensembles
 N. Music for Radio and Television

SHREVEPORT MUNICIPAL MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM**Page 8**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

The Shreveport Municipal Memorial Auditorium is nationally significant in the area of performing arts as the home of the *Louisiana Hayride*, a weekly country music radio program broadcast by station KWKH live from the auditorium's stage from 1948 until 1960. The *Hayride* introduced, promoted, and nurtured a phenomenal number of extraordinarily talented musicians and songwriters who later achieved national prominence in American music. Music historians consider the *Hayride* "the most experimental and innovative major country radio show"¹ between 1948 and 1958. The show earned the nickname "Cradle of the Stars"² because it repeatedly premiered talented singers who rose to stardom at the *Hayride* and then left for Nashville's *Grand Ole Opry*, considered the Mecca of country music. Observers have since called the *Hayride* a "springboard," "launching pad," "artist's hothouse," "proving ground," "stepping stone," and "star maker,"³ as well as a "farm club" for the *Opry*, all of which are well deserved. Essentially, the *Grand Ole Opry* would not have experienced the success it did had it not been for the talent being funneled through the *Louisiana Hayride*. The Shreveport Municipal Auditorium is nominated under National Historic Landmark Criterion 1 for its significance in American music history, with a period of significance from 1948 to 1958, when the program's national radio network affiliation ended. The Shreveport Municipal Memorial Auditorium retains a high degree of historic integrity.

Artists of the first order launched from the *Hayride* stage include Hank Williams, recognized as the "father of contemporary country music,"⁴ Kitty Wells, known as the "Queen of Country Music,"⁵ and Johnny Cash. The *Hayride* also gave Elvis Presley his first national exposure and helped popularize his rockabilly style of music to a wide audience. During its lifetime, the *Hayride* played a critical role in the evolution and popularization of country music. The Shreveport Municipal Auditorium is therefore also significant under National Historic Landmark Criterion 2 for its association with the musical careers of Hank Williams, Kitty Wells, Johnny Cash, and Elvis Presley.

Country Music: Its Background and Importance

As Bill C. Malone, the dean of country music historians, has explained, country music "defies precise definition, and no term (not even 'country') has ever successfully encapsulated its essence. It is a vigorous hybrid form of music, constantly changing and growing in complexity, just as the society in which it thrives also matures and evolves."⁶ Nevertheless, a general understanding of country music is necessary to comprehend its importance. A review of where and how the music originated and evolved will help create that understanding.

¹ Stephen R. Tucker, "Louisiana Saturday Night: A History of Louisiana Country Music" (PhD diss., Tulane University, 1982), 488.

² Tracey E. W. Laird, *Louisiana Hayride: Radio and Roots Music along the Red River* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 107.

³ Ibid., 5, 107, 110, 151; Robert Gentry, comp., *The Louisiana Hayride: The Glory Years - 1948-60: A Compilation of Newspaper Articles, Pictures and Advertisements*, vol. 1 (1948-55) (n.p., n.d.), 206; Robert Gentry, comp., *The Louisiana Hayride: The Glory Years - 1948-60: A Compilation of Newspaper Articles, Pictures and Advertisements*, vol. 2 (1956-60) (n.p., n.d.), 198; Paul Kingsbury, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Country Music: The Ultimate Guide to the Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 304; *KWKH 25th Anniversary Souvenir Booklet* (n.p., n.d.), 7, copy loaned by Stage of Stars Museum, Shreveport, Louisiana; LPB, *Cradle of the Stars: The Story of the Louisiana Hayride* (West Long Branch, NJ: White Star, 1984).

⁴ Biography files, copied from Country Music Hall of Fame, copies at Stage of Stars Museum, Shreveport, Louisiana.

⁵ Mary A. Bufwack and Robert K. Oermann, *Finding Her Voice: The Saga of Women in Country Music* (New York: Crown, 2003), 180; Robert K. Oermann, *A Century of Country: An Illustrated History of Country Music* (New York: TV Books, 1999), 108.

⁶ Bill C. Malone, *Country Music, U.S.A.*, rev. ed. (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1985), 2.

SHREVEPORT MUNICIPAL MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM**Page 9**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Country music's distant ancestors were Celtic folksongs, ballads, and dance and fiddle tunes dating back to Elizabethan and pre-Elizabethan times. This music arrived in North America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, carried by English, Scottish, and Irish immigrants who left the British Isles for a new life in the colonies. Once in America, musicians adapted the songs to their experiences by simplifying them, substituting new American words for British terms, writing new lyrics for old tunes, and writing new melodies and lyrics in the old style. Originally a part of each colony's culture, this music remained popular in the South long after the pressures of industrialization and urbanization caused most residents of other regions to discard it. Reasons suggested for its preservation include the isolation of certain areas in the South, as well as the fact that many Southerners continued to believe in the old-time cultural values the music represented.

With the fiddle remaining the primary instrumentation (the guitar would not become generally available until the 1880s and 1890s), amateur Southern musicians continued to develop the traditional music in their care. Because white Southerners and African-Americans interacted so closely, indirectly and sometimes directly sharing musical ideas and styles, the latter's music played an important part in this evolution. As the nineteenth century progressed and travel and information dissemination became easier, other valuable input came from outside sources. The sacred music tradition, for example, brought new hymns and singing styles to the South, where residents met periodically at local churches and courthouses to enjoy "singing conventions."⁷ At the same time, the genteel songs of popular composers like Stephen Foster became available in sheet music form, and their lyrics appeared in newspapers and magazines. Traveling minstrel, medicine, showboat, and (at the end of the period) vaudeville shows introduced other types of popular (and sometimes rowdy) music. Whenever a Southern musician heard something he liked, he carried the song or singing style home to add to his repertoire and share with his neighbors. More sharing occurred as people moved from place to place within the South. When folklorists and "song collectors"⁸ began gathering material (then known variously as "old-time" music, "folk" tunes, "songs from Dixie," "old southern tunes," etc. and today called "roots" music)⁹ in the early twentieth century, they found a large cadre of traditional Southern sacred and secular music. It is this body of work that recording and radio industry entrepreneurs began disseminating as hillbilly music in the 1920s and 1930s.

According to Mary A. Bufwack and Robert K. Oermann, the first country music dealt with themes that seem old fashioned by today's standards. It drew

its inspiration from Victorian culture. Innocent romance and sentiments of home, family, and religion predominated as country themes. Old-time country music mourned dead children; praised the Lord; revered Mother; waxed nostalgic for the good old days; pitied the poor; idealized rural life; preserved our folk music heritage; and venerated hearts-and-flowers love. [However,] World War II and its aftermath changed all of that forever. Country songwriters and performers faced the new, spiritually troubled times . . .¹⁰

by adding new subjects to their music. Ever since the war, historian Malone states, country songs have communicated the contradictions and tensions of modern life, exploring such "warring impulses"¹¹ as religion vs. frolic, hedonism, and humor; home and family vs. infidelity (which Malone calls rambling); companionship vs. individualism; nostalgia vs. modernity; and politics.

⁷ Patrick Carr, ed., *The Illustrated History of Country Music* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1979), 12.

⁸ Ibid., 31.

⁹ Laird, *Louisiana Hayride*, 46-48.

¹⁰ Bufwack and Oermann, *Finding Her Voice*, 167-168.

¹¹ Bill C. Malone, *Don't Get Above Your Raisin': Country Music and the Southern Working Class* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 14.

SHREVEPORT MUNICIPAL MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM**Page 10**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

With its many messages, country music has become the voice of the common man – the nation’s working class. It communicates his concerns and the realism of his experiences. As Malone explains, it expresses his “preoccupations with survival”¹² and the uncertainties of life in an “often-indifferent world.”¹³ Sometimes it provides a temporary escape through the fantasy in its lyrics. Although most of it still emerges from the South, “increasingly,” the historian continues, “the message has resonated with those in other regions and from other backgrounds who, like their southern counterparts, have felt dwarfed by the complexities of a troublesome and uncertain future.”¹⁴ Country music’s audience is now not only national, but is international in scope. Whether in the United States or abroad, as legend Kitty Wells has explained, “country music relates to people because they think that what happened in the songs might have happened to them or to somebody they know.”¹⁵ It is for these reasons that country music, and the *Louisiana Hayride*’s contributions to it, are so important.

The Rise of Country Music

The traditional music preserved in the South remained a local product until the phonograph reached America’s middle class. When by 1920 the demand for recordings had depleted the supply of available music, the industry began a search for new material and markets. Okeh Records, one of the companies then producing and selling records, decided to establish sub-categories of music targeting specific groups and regions and began traveling the South looking for prospects. By mid-1921 company executive Ralph Peer had identified the first of these groups, “race” music (Peer’s name),¹⁶ which featured the songs of black musicians and targeted an African-American audience.

Peer discovered his second target group (fans of old-time music) by accident. *The Illustrated History of Country Music*, edited by Patrick Carr, tells the story. While on a recording trip to Atlanta in 1923, as a favor to a scout who had brought other musicians to his attention, Peer:

recorded a fifty-five year-old fiddler from Fannin County, Georgia, named Fiddlin’ John Carson. On his record, Carson combined two of the most important nineteenth-century performing traditions: the solo fiddle and the vocal. He sang in a rough, untutored voice, and played the fiddle simultaneously. And his two selections reflected two song traditions: “The Little Old Log Cabin in the Lane” was of course from the pop-vaudeville tradition, while the other side, “The Old Hen Cackled and the Rooster’s Going to Crow,” was probably an old minstrel song that had gone into folk tradition. The record, in short, was a perfect symbol of the diverse strains of nineteenth-century music merging under the pressure of the new mass media.¹⁷

When the record reached hit status by selling out its first pressing in 1924, Peer was stunned. He quickly realized he had stumbled upon a whole new market eager for access to traditional Southern music, a market he dubbed “hillbilly.”¹⁸

From this beginning, the commercialization of country music occurred quickly. Other companies began traveling the South in search of hillbilly artists. (Field recording would continue at least through 1933 and would include, in 1927, Peer’s discovery of the Carter Family, called by some the most influential group in country music history.) Late 1924 saw the completion of the record industry’s first catalog of country music, issued by Columbia. Before long the genre produced its first superstar. A non-Southerner, Vernon Dalhart was

¹² Ibid., 13.

¹³ Ibid., ix.

¹⁴ Ibid., 28.

¹⁵ Bufwack and Oermann, *Finding Her Voice*, 176.

¹⁶ Carr, *Illustrated History of Country Music*, 33.

¹⁷ Ibid., 28-29.

¹⁸ Laird, *Louisiana Hayride*, 48.

SHREVEPORT MUNICIPAL MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM**Page 11**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

a popular vocalist who discovered his talent for interpreting old-time music when his previous singing career sagged. Dalhart would record numerous country records under various names.

Hillbilly music definitely met the hopes of the record executives searching for profits. As historian Tracey E. W. Laird explains:

Between 1925 and 1929, the peak of phonograph sales before World War II, hillbilly releases grew from 225 to 1,250. Even during the Great Depression, when record sales dropped by 1933 to 7 percent of their 1929 levels, hillbilly records remained surprisingly resilient. At that time, when hillbilly music received little exposure on the radio networks, it remained a relatively viable entity on phonograph records.¹⁹

Despite the slowness of radio networks to pick up on the hillbilly phenomenon, local radio embraced country music almost from the start. Free radio programming became available in 1920 when Pittsburgh's KDKA aired the first commercial broadcast in the United States. By the end of 1922, the year when Atlanta's WSB began offering old-time music to its listeners, eighty-nine of the over five hundred stations in operation, were located in the South. By 1930, over six hundred stations existed; and despite the economic hardships of the Depression years, sales of radio receivers continued to rise. By 1938, over 80 percent of households in America had access to a radio. Even after the national networks began forming in the mid-1920s, local radio stations still had empty time slots to fill. They often gave these spots to old-time traditional music – a development that happened throughout the nation, not just in the South. The pattern was for live local performers to sing and play on short programs assigned to the very early morning hours (the only time, radio executives assumed, that rural audiences could listen). When the broadcasts proved popular, programmers gave them more advantageous schedules. The artists performed for free, their only reward the opportunity to announce their upcoming live performances. “By the 1930s,” says Laird, “local radio broadcasts . . . became the prime venue for unsung hillbilly musicians to further their careers.”²⁰

Early on, local radio executives invented an additional way to showcase the music. In January 1923, Fort Worth's WBAP broadcast the first radio barn dance. Although WBAP's program was short-lived, the format, according to Patrick Carr, “was to become one of the most common in country music broadcasting.”²¹ Chicago's WLS soon began a program which would run for nearly forty years and organize the first package tours to take country performers to the people. Nashville's WSM debuted a barn dance in 1925; it would not become known as the *Grand Ole Opry* until 1928. By 1932, both WLS and WSM had increased their power to 50 thousand watts, greatly extending their coverage areas. “By the end of the . . . 1930s,” Carr asserts, “there were barn dances on both the East and West coasts of the nation,”²² including shows in New York City and Hollywood! The networks eventually jumped on the barn dance bandwagon. Naming it the *National Barn Dance*, NBC picked up the Chicago program in 1933. Six years later it added part of the *Opry's* weekly broadcast to its lineup. Reflecting just how much the public enjoyed old-time music, the 1930s and 1940s also saw hundreds of large and small radio stations across the nation begin their own barn dances, also known as jamborees. Because of atmospheric conditions, the barn dances coming from stations with more powerful signals were sometimes heard thousands of miles from their points of origin.

Historian Carr provides a good explanation of the radio barn dance. It took the form of a variety program “that featured a sort of repertory company of different types of musicians; it was informal and unstructured, and the

¹⁹ Ibid., 49.

²⁰ Ibid., 65.

²¹ Carr, *Illustrated History of Country Music*, 60.

²² Ibid., 78.

SHREVEPORT MUNICIPAL MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM**Page 12**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

company of musicians was presented as one big happy family.”²³ In addition to its solo singers and brother and sister acts, the company usually included stereotypical characters like the country sweetheart and the hillbilly comic. The fare included all kinds of old-time music, “from barbershop quartets to Hawaiian bands to . . . sentimental songs;”²⁴ but the most important focus of the early barn dance show was the fiddle or string band. By the end of the 1930s, however, this part of country music moved to the background as singing stars gained more popularity.

As Robert K. Oermann has pointed out, “The radio barn-dance era was a time of tremendous growth for the country-music industry.”²⁵ One year’s figures tell the story. In 1936 *Radio Guide* magazine estimated that country music’s barn-dance performers were a \$25 million dollar business, stating that five thousand radio programs had featured hillbilly music in 1935. And country music’s popularity continued to grow. World War II actually helped by providing broadcasts of traditional music to homesick soldiers and sailors, as well as by bringing together musicians from different parts of the country to share ideas. The golden age of the barn dance lasted well into the 1950s and saw the *Louisiana Hayride* become the nation’s second most important and influential country music radio show.

KWKH and the Louisiana Hayride

The *Louisiana Hayride* was the product of Shreveport AM radio station KWKH; and by the time of the *Hayride*’s birth in 1948, KWKH was a fifty-thousand watt country music powerhouse. Founded in 1922, the station became the sole property of wealthy and unconventional local businessman W. K. Henderson in 1924. Henderson purchased the call letters, so like his own initials, from a Georgia station; built a new and more powerful transmitter at his home outside Shreveport; and made the station his personal soapbox. Because the federal government had not yet regulated signal strengths, people as far away as Europe as well as local residents heard his eccentric complaints against retail chain stores, chain radio stations, and the United States Department of Commerce (later the Federal Radio Commission). Between Henderson’s tirades the station aired music, entering the country arena big-time in late 1927 with the premiere of the *Jimmie Davis Show*. (As every Louisiana school child knows, Davis popularized the song, “You Are My Sunshine,” and used that popularity -- as well as the KWKH transmitter -- as a stepping stone to two terms as the state’s governor.²⁶) As historian Tracey E. W. Laird has explained, Davis’ weekly Friday evening show “inaugurated the station’s future influence in country music”²⁷ because it drew thousands of fan letters and taught other hillbilly performers the value of radio exposure. Throughout the 1930s, the station aired the music of live country bands and singers even after it joined a network and its ownership transferred to the company operating the *Shreveport Times*. Gradually, says Laird, KWKH “carved a regional niche of national significance”²⁸ in country music.

Like the formats of numberless radio stations across America, KWKH’s hillbilly programming included live early morning and noontime slots filled by an ever-changing cadre of entertainers. It also included two barn dance precursors to the *Louisiana Hayride*. In 1936, the weekly *Hillbilly Amateur Show* debuted. Broadcast on Sunday afternoons and hosted by Bob and Joe Shelton, two brothers known as The Sunshine Boys, the live program routinely drew a larger audience than its City Hall Auditorium home could hold. In 1940, the *Saturday Night Roundup* replaced the Sunday program. It featured as many as twenty-five performers on any given Saturday night. However, World War II caused the cancellation of the *Roundup*, as the draft took many musicians and gas rationing restricted the rest. The station’s professional staff was also impacted. When the musicians and radio staff returned to civilian life in 1945, KWKH’s country music fans awaited them.

²³ Ibid., 60.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Oermann, *Century of Country*, 53.

²⁶ Laird, *Louisiana Hayride*, 71-74.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 59.

SHREVEPORT MUNICIPAL MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM**Page 13**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

With the passage of more than fifty years, the memory of who actually suggested that KWKH start a new barn dance has become blurred. However, the stories of the various claimants are not as important as is the fact that by working together, all contributed to the *Louisiana Hayride*'s birth and success. Those who played pivotal roles included Dean Upson, the station's new commercial manager who persuaded sponsors to underwrite the program and served as its first producer; Horace Logan, the show's long-time master of ceremonies, who also assumed production duties when Upson left the station shortly after the show's debut; the Bailes Brothers, a popular country singing group that performed on the *Hayride* and helped recruit talent in the early days; and Henry Clay, the station manager with final authority to approve the concept. As time passed, he became more and more involved, says *Hayride* historian Stephen Tucker, in "maintaining and expanding a network of stations, overseeing labor contracts, [and] booking talent,"²⁹

Logan claimed to have chosen the show's name, which he admitted was not original. A 1930s Broadway song, a 1944 movie, and a 1941 book had each previously used *Louisiana Hayride* as its title. (The latter, by author Harnett T. Kane, was a history of Louisiana politics focusing upon the recently assassinated Huey P. Long.) However, Logan was aware of no rules prohibiting the "borrowing"³⁰ of a title for a radio show. Since the words captured the program's focus and location in two succinct and catchy words, *Louisiana Hayride*, the show became known as such.

The stage and radio show premiered at 8:00 p.m. on April 3, 1948, in Shreveport's Municipal Memorial Auditorium, a venue capable of holding an audience of approximately 3,400. With the exception of a one-hour segment in which network obligations took precedent, KWKH broadcast the entire three-hour show. (The network conflict would soon be resolved.) The inaugural performers included the Bailes Brothers; the Four Deacons; Johnny and Jack and the Tennessee Mountain Boys, with Miss Kitty Wells; Curley Kinsey and the Tennessee Ridge Runners; Harmie Smith and the Ozark Mountaineers; Pappy Covington's band; the Mercer Brothers; and Tex Grimsley and the Texas Playboys.

As far as the radio and Municipal Auditorium audiences were concerned, the show was an immediate smash. Historian Laird has devoted an entire chapter of her book, *Louisiana Hayride: Radio and Roots Music Along the Red River*, to the question of why Shreveport was positioned to nurture and support the *Hayride* at this time. She concludes that it happened because culture (in this case country culture) follows commerce. Located on the Red River in the northwest corner of Louisiana, early Shreveport was a river port with a large territory spreading into East Texas, Southern Arkansas, and (claims Laird) even Southeast Oklahoma. (Today the region surrounding the city is called the Ark-La-Tex.) The town was also a strategic point on the overland trail to Texas, and by the end of the nineteenth century would be a significant railroad hub. In Shreveport, the cultures of the Deep South and the frontier west met head on. The South, in the form of agriculture and the cotton boll, came to dominate; but the wild side of frontier life was never far from the surface. Thus, says Laird, people from different backgrounds "interacted across borders of race and power at a mid-nineteenth-century cultural crossroads, and the inevitable tensions of contact, both positive and negative, lent a singular character to . . . [the] region."³¹ And, she continues, "A direct connection exists between the spirit and energy of the *Louisiana Hayride* and the character of the place"³² Musically, that character was fed by the same sources that contributed to the development of traditional old-time music in other parts of the South – sacred songs, the steamboat, the minstrel show, etc. However, according to Laird, in Shreveport it also drew from the rowdy

²⁹ Tucker, "Louisiana Saturday Night," 414-415.

³⁰ Horace Logan and Bill Sloan, *Louisiana Hayride Years: Making Musical History in Country's Golden Age* (New York: St. Martin's, ca. 1998), 21-22.

³¹ Laird, *Louisiana Hayride*, 13.

³² *Ibid.*

SHREVEPORT MUNICIPAL MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM**Page 14**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

entertainment tradition of the town's red light district. The result of this mixture, says Louisiana Public Broadcasting in a video documentary chronicling the *Hayride*, was a "chemistry of music unique to the area."³³

Other commentators have focused upon different reasons to explain why the *Hayride* developed and succeeded in Shreveport. For example, Stephen Tucker, another *Hayride* historian, reminds us that in the immediate post-war years "the entire North Louisiana-East Texas region was experiencing an economic upsurge that was tied to the area's expanding oil and gas industry."³⁴ This meant that most people had extra money for entertainment; and at 60 cents for adults and 30 cents for children, *Hayride* tickets were a bargain. In addition, the prosperity brought new residents to town, and many were former rural dwellers reluctant to abandon their old culture. Shreveport's lack of a television station in 1948 was another reason for the *Hayride*'s popularity, for there was nothing else to do on a Saturday night. Of course, credit must be given to KWKH, which over the years had made itself a force in country music. The station had the facilities, including a fifty-thousand watt clear broadcast channel that could send its signal all the way to the Pacific Coast at night, and reputation to produce the show. It also had a staff that Tucker has described as "flexible, ambitious, and totally professional."³⁵ In addition, this staff was innovative and willing to take a chance on performers whose styles were different from the norm. At the very beginning, they were fortunate to have access to excellent local talent available at low cost. And as author K. D. Hobgood points out, the station's staff proved to be gifted at "recognizing young talent."³⁶ Finally, one must acknowledge that the growing popularity of country music itself contributed to the *Hayride*'s success.

Whatever the reasons, the *Hayride*'s popularity and audience quickly spread. Just five months after the premiere, a local magazine reported that Shreveport was "becoming the folk music center of the Southwest."³⁷ Fans returned to the Municipal Auditorium every week, many of them coming from East Texas and southern Arkansas as well as metropolitan Shreveport and western Louisiana.

The shows those fans saw and others heard over the airwaves were what program engineer Bob Sullivan, who was interviewed by historian Tracey Laird, called happenings. For example, performers arrived dressed as they planned to appear on stage. "There was no rehearsal," Sullivan recalled, "everybody just showed up."³⁸ The audience was so relaxed that the auditorium seemed to have something of a carnival atmosphere. As Hi Roberts, one of the *Hayride*'s several announcers, explained, the audience felt and acted like the *Hayride*'s family. People freely roamed the aisles where friends and family members greeted one another and promoters hawked free autographed photos of their client performers. Meanwhile, amateur photographers took their own pictures. Interspersed between performances, audience participation contests also contributed to the fun. For these reasons, the *Hayride* seemed casual, friendly, and chatty to observers.

Yet this relaxed atmosphere belied the organizational efforts of producer Horace Logan, who carefully structured the program for maximum entertainment, excitement, and impact. For those in the live audience, the evening started with a short pre-show warm-up designed to get them involved. Logan would pose a series of questions, the last of which always inquired if the audience contained any Texans. A large Texas contingent always made up part of the live audience, and they always responded with loud shouts. These cheers, picked up by microphones Logan had ordered placed within the audience, were the first sound the radio listeners heard each week. Next came the show's theme song, sung by the entire cast assembled before the show's painted backdrop: "Come along, everybody come along, while the moon is shining bright," they sang, "We're going to

³³ LPB, "Cradle of the Stars."

³⁴ Steve Tucker, "The Louisiana Hayride, 1948-1954," *North Louisiana Historical Association Journal* 7 (Fall 1997): 188.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 190.

³⁶ K. D. Hobgood, "Hayride Heyday," *SB Magazine* (November 2000): 26.

³⁷ Tucker, "The Louisiana Hayride, 1948-1954," 191.

³⁸ Laird, *Louisiana Hayride*, 92.

SHREVEPORT MUNICIPAL MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM**Page 15**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

have a wonderful time at the Louisiana Hayride tonight.”³⁹ An instrumental piece played by one of the Hayride’s two house bands followed the theme. Then performances by established cast members and new acts began.

Logan broke the three-hour program into hour or half-hour segments (the length seems to have varied over time) hosted by multiple masters of ceremonies. In addition to providing for variety in announcers, the producer constructed each segment to showcase a variety of acts. That way the show did not force artists to directly compete and the variety kept the audience interested. The result, as Stephen Tucker explains, was “a rich mixture of gospel music, sentimental or ‘heart’ songs, pop tunes, contemporary country hits, honky-tonk weepers, bluegrass tunes, comedy and novelty numbers, and folk music.”⁴⁰ To keep the show moving at a lively pace, Logan allowed each act to present only two numbers but allowed the artists to choose what those songs would be. If the audience showed its approval by cheering loudly enough, he allowed the act to present another two songs during an encore later in the show. The most popular artists received invitations to return the next week. Thus, each singer or band had to perform at its best each time it took the stage. The *Hayride* offered one-year contracts to those who repeatedly proved their worth.

While Logan usually assumed responsibility for choosing *Hayride* performers, station manager Henry Clay worked to build a regional radio network to augment KWKH’s powerful fifty-thousand watt signal. His efforts reached fruition in February 1950 with the organization of the *Louisiana Hayride* Network. Although its membership was fluid, at its largest the network consisted of twenty-seven stations distributed throughout Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. At least one of the network members, KWKH’s sister station in Little Rock, also broadcast at 50 thousand watts. Thus, *Hayride* music was heard from Mexico’s Yucatan Peninsula to Canada and, according to KWKH officials, the program drew fan mail “from practically every state in the Union.”⁴¹ With the exception of KWKH and the Little Rock station (both of which carried the entire program), the network affiliates carried only the first thirty minutes of the show. Taped transcriptions of previous programs also aired on some stations. The practice of airing shortened versions continued when national network ties finally materialized. In early 1953, CBS began an hour long, weekly country music showcase called *Saturday Night --- Country Style*. According to Logan, it featured “six country music shows scattered across the country from West Virginia to Texas. The *Hayride* was one of the six and . . . [was] heard in a thirty-minute segment every third Saturday over the network, coast-to-coast.”⁴² The following year the Armed Forces Radio Network picked up a weekly thirty-minute segment. The various network affiliations brought the *Louisiana Hayride* and its performers to millions of listeners.

The Cradle of the Stars

It only took the premiere broadcast for Shreveport and a spot on the *Hayride* to become the intermediate goal for aspiring country musicians. Within less than a year the program was known as the Cradle of the Stars because it introduced and assisted talented new artists who used the program as a springboard to the *Grand Ole Opry*, and stardom. As Hank Williams Jr. has commented, “if the *Opry* was the promised land, the *Hayride* was heaven’s gate.”⁴³

The *Hayride* helped ambitious performers in four ways. First, it recognized their talent and with its acceptance of innovation and willingness to take a chance, gave both conventional and unconventional new singers the opportunity to perform. Second, it provided a nurturing platform where future stars could learn to read an

³⁹ Peter Guralnick, *Last Train to Memphis: The Rise of Elvis Presley* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1994), 139.

⁴⁰ Tucker, “Louisiana Saturday Night,” 426.

⁴¹ *KWKH 25th Anniversary Souvenir Booklet*, 7.

⁴² Logan and Sloan, *Louisiana Hayride Year*, 98.

⁴³ LPB, “Cradle of the Stars.”

SHREVEPORT MUNICIPAL MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM**Page 16**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

audience, perfect their styles, and gain confidence in their performing skills. Third, the program gave struggling newcomers a modicum of economic security in a difficult business. The weekly Saturday programs gave them an income they could count on and left them free to book other shows during the week. *Hayride* package tours (those in which a group of *Hayride* performers traveled and performed together in towns throughout KWKH's listening area) also provided income. Fourth, and most importantly, the *Hayride* provided national exposure for singers usually unknown outside the confines of their hometowns or counties. That exposure resulted from KWKH's powerful signal and the *Hayride*'s dissemination via its regional and later national network (the latter equaling 200 stations). Many times the exposure garnered up-and-coming stars invitations to appear on the *Grand Ole Opry*. For this reason, some observers (then and now) have called the *Hayride* the *Opry*'s "minor-league farm club,"⁴⁴ but it was much more. As the careers of three *Hayride* alumni and country music megastars – Hank Williams, Kitty Wells, and Johnny Cash – illustrate and prove, the *Louisiana Hayride* was a star maker.

Hank Williams

Whether outside observers originally dubbed the *Louisiana Hayride* the Cradle of the Stars or *Hayride* officials coined the label in response to their first star's departure for Nashville's *Grand Ole Opry* is a bit unclear. Whoever invented the phrase, its first use came after the *Hayride* made Hank Williams country music's first post-war superstar. Stories conflict concerning how the Alabama singer obtained a spot on the program. The important fact is that he came and, for a while, the *Hayride*'s and Hank's stories became one.

Although Williams had sung in Alabama for several years, he was little known outside that state when he came to Shreveport determined to appear on the *Hayride*. According to the *Encyclopedia of Country Music*, his early songs were considered "anachronistic;"⁴⁵ and according to program producer Horace Logan, his records had gone unsold. Williams definitely needed the *Hayride*, and although program officials did not realize it, they needed Williams. The four-month-old *Hayride* already ranked as a popular local and regional radio program but it lacked the spark - a star needed to raise it to greatness. Williams would provide that spark.

The singer debuted on August 7, 1948. He quickly gained the audience's approval, receiving an ovation and earning an encore on his first night. According to *Hayride* historian Stephen Tucker, "No one . . . had [ever had] such an electrifying impact on the show, at least until another darkly handsome . . . singer from Mississippi came along."⁴⁶ Williams continued to perform on *Hayride* Saturday nights and also began hosting a KWKH morning show, the "Johnny Fair Syrup Hour."⁴⁷ He also booked weeknight performances at schools and nightclubs in the Ark-La-Tex region. Local and network radio exposure brought him fans from everywhere. However, the pivotal event occurred at one fall *Hayride* performance when he sang an old Tin Pan Alley song called "Lovesick Blues." The audience loved it. However, Williams' record producer, Fred Rose, disliked the song. Historian Tracey Laird speculates that it was the confidence the singer gained from performing "Lovesick Blues" repeatedly at the *Hayride* which gave him the courage to trust his instincts and record the number. "Lovesick Blues," remembers Horace Logan, propelled Williams "straight to the top of the country music world"⁴⁸ and on to the *Grand Ole Opry*. Thus, as Stephen Tucker concludes, "Hank Williams quickly established himself as the *Hayride*'s first legitimate solo star and in the process established the program as a major launching pad for the best new talent in the country."⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Laird, *Louisiana Hayride*, 107; Colin Escott, *Hank Williams: The Biography* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1994), 75; Logan and Sloan, *Louisiana Hayride Years*, 126; Michael Streissguth, *Like a Moth to a Flame: The Jim Reeves Story* (Nashville, TN: Rutledge Hill, 1998), 117.

⁴⁵ Kingsbury, *Encyclopedia of Country Music*, 590.

⁴⁶ Tucker, "Louisiana Saturday Night," 430-431.

⁴⁷ Malone, *Country Music, U.S.A.*, 241.

⁴⁸ Logan and Sloan, *Louisiana Hayride Years*, 40.

⁴⁹ Tucker, "Louisiana Saturday Night," 430-431.

SHREVEPORT MUNICIPAL MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM**Page 17**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Today, according to music critic Stephen Thomas Erlewine, many observers consider Hank Williams, who died tragically at age twenty-nine, to be “the defining figure of country music.”⁵⁰ The Country Music Hall of Fame confirmed this view by making him one of its first three inductees in 1961. His popularity and influence endure because he wrote and recorded now-classic songs with emotional lyrics that defined his era. Furthermore, says Erlewine, he “established the rules for all the country performers who followed him,”⁵¹ and many claim him as an inspiration. As late as 1999, a boxed set of Williams’ music in compact disk form scored two Grammy Awards. Country music would certainly be very different today were it not for the career of Hank Williams.

Hank Williams, Jr., himself a country music artist, is emphatic in his praise for the *Louisiana Hayride* and the role it played in his father’s career. Says Williams, “The *Hayride* was a star maker. It built hundreds of careers in country music – more than any other show of its kind. All told, it produced about two dozen of the [twentieth] century’s premier country music artists. My daddy was the first of these. . . .”⁵²

As historian Laird explains,

Williams’ initial ten-month-long *Hayride* stint [he would return to the show briefly before his untimely death] . . . effectively set a pattern followed by many future country music luminaries: he came to Shreveport, won an enthusiastic regional following, honed his performance style through radio shows and numerous personal appearances, released one or two records that sold well and gained national attention, and shortly thereafter, left for Nashville.⁵³

Instead of bemoaning Williams’ loss, *Hayride* officials concentrated on finding new stars. Their instincts, especially those of program producer Horace Logan, for recognizing innovation and talent brought other future country music legends, including Kitty Wells and Johnny Cash, to the *Hayride* stage.

Kitty Wells

Future superstar Kitty Wells (Ellen Muriel Deason Wright) participated in the *Hayride*’s premiere broadcast in 1948. However, her role was not that of star. She worked as the girl singer and one of the background vocalists in the group known as Johnny and Jack and the Tennessee Mountain Boys. Johnny was Johnny Wright, Wells’ husband. Johnny and Jack had worked together before World War II and reunited when the conflict ended. Like other groups trying to survive in country music in the post-war era, they bounced from one radio station and barn dance to another. The mother of three children, Kitty apparently performed only when she was needed. For example, Johnny and Jack played the *Grand Ole Opry* before coming to Shreveport, but Kitty rarely performed with them.

When the group relocated to Louisiana in early 1948, Wells took a more active role. For a time, historian Tracey Laird relates, she worked as a disk jockey “known as the ‘Little Rag Doll’ for the quilt pieces she sold during a daily half-hour radio program.”⁵⁴ Johnny and Jack regularly featured her on their own KWKH radio shows as well as in their *Hayride* appearances. The group left Shreveport in 1950 but soon returned to the city and its barn dance, where Wells continued to sing. Advertisements in the June 1951 Shreveport *Times* clearly list her as a performer in her own right, separate from Johnny and Jack, who are also listed. Thus, she

⁵⁰ Biography files, copies from Country Music Hall of Fame.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² LPB, “Cradle of the Stars”; Logan and Sloan, *Louisiana Hayride Years*, vii.

⁵³ Laird, *Louisiana Hayride*, 97-98.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

SHREVEPORT MUNICIPAL MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM**Page 18**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

continued to gain experience while learning that a woman could be a legitimate, independent attraction in the then male-dominated country music business.

Johnny, Jack and Kitty again left the *Hayride* in 1952, returning to the *Opry*. Shortly after, Wells recorded her first hit record, “It Wasn’t God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels (Her previous recordings had been unsuccessful.)” The song was a smash and Wells became a sensation. Because she was the first woman to achieve solo popularity in country music, she soon earned the title “Queen of Country Music”, and her later accomplishments support the label. Over the years, she charted eighty-one hits, twenty-three of which reached the Top Ten. According to the Biography Files of the Country Music Hall of Fame, she was voted *Billboard’s* number one female country artist for eleven straight years, and other trade magazines awarded her similar titles between 1952 and 1965. In 1968, she hosted her own syndicated television show. 1976 saw her election to the Country Music Hall of Fame, while 1986 brought her the Pioneer Award from the Academy of Country Music. Finally, in 1991 she received a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award. In addition to these accomplishments, Wells broke down the barriers keeping female performers in the background of country music and, thus, paved the way for the careers of later legends like Patsy Cline, Tammy Wynette, Loretta Lynn, and Dolly Parton.

Although Wells’ breakthrough occurred outside the *Louisiana Hayride’s* stage, her time on the program and at KWKH was critical to her career. While singing in Shreveport and environs, she sustained her craft, gained confidence, and most importantly, remained in show business at a time when most authors agree she wished to retire to stay at home with her children. As Tillman Franks, a Shreveport country music musician, manager, and producer active throughout the *Hayride* years, has commented, Wells “cut her eyeteeth on the *Hayride* and KWKH.”⁵⁵

Johnny Cash

Johnny Cash played his first *Hayride* show in 1955 and remained until July 1956. A recently signed recording artist with very little live performance experience under his belt, Cash was a bundle of raw talent ready for molding. His experience working the *Hayride* and other Ark-La-Tex venues did just that, refining his style and building his confidence. Like Williams, he would leave the *Hayride* for Nashville and, as Horace Logan confirms, go on to “attain worldwide fame as one of the most exciting, innovative, and durable performers of the next forty years.”⁵⁶

Johnny Cash’s first record, “Cry, Cry, Cry,” was released by the Sun Record Company of Memphis, Tennessee, on June 21, 1955. At that time, Cash had almost no experience as a performing artist. “Cry, Cry, Cry” hit number one on the local Memphis country chart in September, reached number fourteen on the national country and western chart in November, and Johnny Cash became the “outstanding new act in Memphis” for 1955.⁵⁷ Although Cash had a limited vocal range, his raw talent, big voice, and distinctive sound were extraordinary communicators with great appeal.

Cash’s first appearance on the Louisiana Hayride was in November or December of 1955, and encoored with his new, unreleased song, “Folsom Prison Blues.” This performance was the song’s debut on national radio,⁵⁸ and it soon became a classic. “Folsom Prison Blues” entered the country music top ten by the spring of 1956, and led to Cash’s first appearance on the Grand Ole Opry. In April 1956, Sun Records released “I Walk the Line,” “a spell-binding performance that many would place among the greatest popular songs of the twentieth

⁵⁵ Tillman Franks and Robert Gentry, *I Was There When It Happened* (Shreveport, LA: Magic Circle, 2000), 19.

⁵⁶ Logan and Sloan, *Louisiana Hayride Years*, 168.

⁵⁷ Colin Escott with Marin Hawkins, *Good ‘Rockin’ Tonight: Sun Records and the Birth of Rock ‘n’ Roll* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1991), 101.

⁵⁸ Logan and Sloan, *Louisiana Hayride Years*, 212.

SHREVEPORT MUNICIPAL MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM**Page 19**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

century.”⁵⁹ It became Johnny Cash’s first number one country hit, and brought him to the attention of a mass audience as well as television producers.

Cash has said that he wrote “I Walk the Line” the night after his Louisiana Hayride debut;⁶⁰ the Hayride’s popularity continued after Elvis Presley’s last show in March 1956 largely because the national spotlight was also focused on Johnny Cash. By the end of the year, Cash was the third best-selling country artist and one of the first young country artists on the national pop chart after Elvis Presley and others broke down the barriers that had separated different genres of music for decades. Johnny Cash’s career eventually spanned more than fifty years and he is widely regarded as an icon of American music.

In later years, Cash shared memories of his Hayride debut.

“When I was first invited to appear on the Louisiana Hayride, very few people outside the Memphis, Tennessee, area had ever heard of Johnny Cash, much less heard me sing. I’ll never forget how excited I was as I stepped up to the microphone on the stage of Shreveport’s Municipal Auditorium that Saturday night in 1955. Besides the live audience . . . out beyond the footlights, I knew that thousands of radio listeners across the whole country were about to hear my voice for the first time. . . .

But when I finished my first number and heard the cheers and applause from the crowd in front, it made those butterflies go away and gave me the greatest feeling anybody can imagine. I’ve had many unforgettable moments in my career since then, but that first night on the Louisiana Hayride has always been in a class by itself

. . . .The nationwide exposure I got on the Hayride, via the CBS Radio Network, was the key factor in making my early records successful. Within a year, my name and voice were familiar to country music fans from coast to coast. The Hayride gave me the boost every successful recording artist has to have, just as it had with Hank Williams, Kitty Wells, Webb Pierce, Faron Young, Slim Whitman, Jim Reeves, and Elvis Presley before me.”⁶¹

Cash in later years shared his memories of his *Hayride* debut, which came “at a time when I probably couldn’t have gotten a shot at a national audience anywhere else.”⁶²

When I was first invited to appear on the *Louisiana Hayride*, very few people outside the Memphis, Tennessee, area had ever heard of Johnny Cash, much less heard me sing. I’ll never forget how excited I was as I stepped up to the microphone on the stage of Shreveport’s Municipal Auditorium that Saturday night in 1955. Besides the live audience of thirty-eight hundred [*sic.*; see Section 7) people out beyond the footlights, I knew that thousands of radio listeners across the whole country were about to hear my voice for the first time.

It made this old Arkansas farmboy mighty nervous, I can tell you. The biggest audience I’d played for up to then had been maybe two or three hundred folks, and the idea of performing for so many people all at once filled my stomach with butterflies.

⁵⁹ Michael Streissguth, *Johnny Cash: The Biography* (Cambridge, MD: Da Capo Press, 2006), 78.

⁶⁰ Streissguth, *Johnny Cash*, 77.

⁶¹ Logan and Sloan, *Louisiana Hayride Years*, xi-xii.

⁶² *Ibid.*, xi.

SHREVEPORT MUNICIPAL MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM**Page 20**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

But when I finished my first number and heard the cheers and applause from the crowd out front, it made those butterflies go away and gave me the greatest feeling anybody could imagine. I've had many unforgettable moments in my career since then, but that first night on the *Louisiana Hayride* has always been in a class by itself.⁶³

"The nationwide exposure I got on the *Hayride*, via the CBS Radio Network," Cash concluded, "was the key factor in making my early records successful."⁶⁴

The *Hayride*'s Influence on Country Music

Country music evolved from the body of traditional songs preserved by Americans, and especially Southerners, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This music continued to evolve, or change, after its discovery by recording company executive Ralph Peer in 1923. As the stories of Hank Williams, Kitty Wells, and Johnny Cash hint, and as current country music performer Hank Williams, Jr. explains in the Louisiana Public Broadcasting documentary about the program, "The *Hayride* . . . did a lot to refine and redefine what was then called hillbilly music and make it a respected part of America's musical culture."⁶⁵ Three interrelated factors were responsible for the program's impact on the evolution and popularity of country music after World War II; broadcast range, innovation, and the *Hayride*'s influence upon the *Grand Ole Opry*.

At its peak, the program's broadcast range was vast. As historian Tracey Laird explains:

The radio station enjoyed the dual benefit of a strong signal and a strategic location. KWKH's 50-kilowatt transmitter allowed the AM signal to cover a huge geographic area. It reached listeners in twenty-eight states, but much of its audience was in the lower South and Southwest, the direction toward which its potent transmitter pointed after sundown.⁶⁶

In addition, the owners of KWKH also owned KTHS, a 50,000-watt powerhouse in Little Rock, Arkansas, with a signal reaching far to the north and east. The two stations alone sent the *Hayride* to a large national audience. And the 50,000-watt twins were not alone; the signals of the stations making up the program's network carried the music even further. As a result, millions of people heard and enjoyed what author K. D. Hobgood called "cutting-edge"⁶⁷ country music on the *Louisiana Hayride* on Saturday nights.

It was the knowledge of this potential exposure and of the *Hayride*'s innovative approach to programming that lured hopeful country performers to Shreveport. In his memoir of his *Hayride* years, program producer Horace Logan explained the show's programming philosophy. "We didn't have any qualms about experimenting," he said. "If we saw a trend emerging, we tried to make the most of it – and we didn't mind starting some new trends, either."⁶⁸ Historians agree with Logan. Says Stephen Tucker, the *Hayride* was "easily the most experimental and innovative major country radio show"⁶⁹ between 1948 and 1958. According to Tracey Laird *Hayride* officials "were . . . more ready than most to take chances. Artists whose styles did not easily fit into increasingly discrete musical categories, artists who would have been rebuffed by the self-consciously traditional

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., vii.

⁶⁵ LPB, "Cradle of the Stars"; Logan and Sloan, *Louisiana Hayride Years*, viii.

⁶⁶ Laird, *Louisiana Hayride*, 7.

⁶⁷ Hobgood, "Hayride Heyday," 27.

⁶⁸ Logan and Sloan, *Louisiana Hayride Years*, 126.

⁶⁹ Tucker, "Louisiana Saturday Night," 488.

SHREVEPORT MUNICIPAL MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM**Page 21**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Opry, found a welcome at KWKH.”⁷⁰ And she continues, “They kept an entrepreneurial eye out for new talent and an ear to the ground for changes in what people might like to hear and when they would like to hear it.”⁷¹

Despite the *Hayride*’s innovation, broadcast range, and popularity, the *Grand Ole Opry* remained the nation’s most popular and influential country music radio show. Yet, the *Opry* would not have known the level of success it achieved during this period had the *Hayride* not existed. The *Opry*’s practice of “stealing” the *Hayride*’s best performers secretly endorsed the *Hayride*’s creative decisions and passed them along to an even wider audience than that reached by the *Hayride*.

The *Opry*’s publicly unacknowledged (at the time) policy of raiding the *Hayride*’s talent pool was possible because the two shows had fundamentally different approaches to choosing talent. The *Opry* focused upon proven stars and very rarely invited newcomers without hit records to its stage. (Elvis Presley was an exception.) The *Hayride*, on the other hand, encouraged new artists and trendsetters. As Michael Streissguth, a biographer of country performer Jim Reeves, has chronicled, “*Opry* manager Jim Denny observed the spring of talent that gushed in Shreveport and dispatched a clandestine talent scout to most every *Hayride* show.”⁷² As a result, said long-time *Hayride* producer Horace Logan years later, “*Hayride* ‘graduates’ became the lifeblood of the *Opry*.”⁷³ “For every top star that didn’t go on to the *Opry* after a stint on the *Hayride*,” Logan continued, “at least a half-dozen did make the move to Nashville.”⁷⁴ Tommy Hill, an observer and artist who played on the *Hayride* from 1952-1954, agrees, claiming, “There was a point where if you took every person off the *Opry* who had ever performed on the *Hayride*, you would have no *Opry*!”⁷⁵ In his memoirs, Logan expressed frustration over the *Opry*’s refusal to credit the *Hayride* for its role in discovering and nurturing new talent. “The people who ran the *Opry* shamelessly raided our talent over and over again,” he explained, “then ordered the stars it took away from us never to mention the *Hayride* while performing on the *Opry*.”⁷⁶

Despite the lack of recognition of its role at the time, music historians now emphatically agree that, during its lifetime, the *Louisiana Hayride* increased the popularity of country music and, equally important, influenced its creative direction. The “men who would help define the country sound of the 1950s crowded the Municipal Auditorium stage almost every Saturday night,”⁷⁷ comments Michael Streissguth. “A seemingly endless flow of talent came to Shreveport,” agrees Stephen Tucker, “so many stars that to chart their careers is to virtually trace the development of country music after World War II.”⁷⁸

Elvis Presley and Rockabilly Music

Elvis Presley’s October 1954 introduction to a national audience, says historian Tracey Laird, “stands as a pivot point where the natural extension of a long [country music] tradition made a sudden abrupt shift toward a new musical paradigm.”⁷⁹ According to author K. D. Hobgood, Presley’s appearance on the *Hayride* is “considered the beginning of a new era, one tied with rock ‘n’ roll.”⁸⁰ Elvis Presley fundamentally altered the future of popular music and culture in America, and the *Louisiana Hayride* played a critical role in that process.

⁷⁰ Laird, *Louisiana Hayride*, 6.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Streissguth, *Like a Moth to a Flame*, 117.

⁷³ Logan and Sloan, *Louisiana Hayride Years*, 128.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Hobgood, “Hayride Heyday,” 31.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 126.

⁷⁷ Streissguth, *Like a Moth to a Flame*, 75.

⁷⁸ Tucker, “Louisiana Saturday Night,” 441.

⁷⁹ Laird, *Louisiana Hayride*, 127.

⁸⁰ Hobgood, “Hayride Heyday,” 29.

SHREVEPORT MUNICIPAL MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM**Page 22**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Innovative and willing to take a chance on new entertainment approaches, the *Hayride* provided the perfect venue for Presley. People tend to forget that his musical roots were grounded in the country sound, and he considered himself a country singer - the “Hillbilly Cat”⁸¹ – when he came to Shreveport. He had already played to good crowds in Memphis, his hometown, and even had an appearance at the *Grand Ole Opry* under his belt. Presley’s emerging style did not fit the conservative *Opry*, however, and its audience did not know how to react to him.

The story of Presley’s first *Hayride* performance is legendary. First, announcer Frank Page introduced Elvis, who was so nervous he kept interrupting the master of ceremonies. Says Page, when Elvis:

started singing, he sorta rocked forward on his feet and looked like he was about to leap right out into the audience. He shook his legs just a bit but I believe that was nerves more than anything else. All in all, I’d say he showed restraint before the crowd of mostly older, married couples. He seemed at times pinned in, like he was struggling to contain this enormous kinetic force. It slipped out a little there at the end and, to my surprise, the audience seemed to connect with and even appreciate what Elvis was doing.⁸²

Despite Page’s assertion to the contrary, Presley’s unconventional music initially stunned the majority of the *Hayride*’s audience. Guralnick says Page and producer Horace Logan had to encourage the crowd to cheer. A younger audience attended the second show that night. This time he clicked and, as Tillman Franks comments, “The roof caved in. He was on his way.”⁸³

Hayride management offered Presley a standard one-year contract, which his parents signed for the underage singer. He quit his day job in Memphis at Crown Electric and committed himself to music full time. Like those who had come before and those who would come after his time on the *Hayride*, he began spending Saturday nights singing at the Municipal Auditorium and booking weeknight performances at other Tennessee and Ark-La-Tex venues. A year later his contract was renewed.

According to *Hayride* historian Stephen Tucker, “The approximately sixteen months that Elvis spent on the *Hayride* proved invaluable to his career.”⁸⁴ Working the *Hayride* built his confidence, and gave him the “freedom to perfect a performance style, a repertoire, and an image which were all controversial.”⁸⁵ The local and national exposure he gained through personal appearances and national radio broadcasts began to build the devoted fan base that would last throughout his life. Colonel Tom Parker became “special adviser” to Presley in August 1955 and soon brought an end to his *Hayride* career in March 1956. Under Parker’s guidance, Presley eventually became an international music and movie superstar. After a final charity concert in December 1956, he never returned to the *Louisiana Hayride*.

Presley’s time on the *Hayride* was also significant because it helped to popularize a new type of music – rockabilly. The layman attempting to understand rockabilly finds its definition to be difficult, contentious, and individual. The word comes from combining two terms – hillbilly (as in the old name for country music) and rock ‘n’ roll – and points to the music’s origin in the country tradition. Thus, simplified definitions like “hillbilly rock ‘n’ roll”⁸⁶ or “rock ‘n’ roll performed by a country singer or in a country style”⁸⁷ tell part of the

⁸¹ Laird, *Louisiana Hayride*, 121.

⁸² Frank Page and Joey Kent, *Elvis: The Hayride Years '54 – '56* (Chicago: JAT, 2003), 6.

⁸³ Franks and Gentry, *I Was There When It Happened*, 83.

⁸⁴ Tucker, “Louisiana Saturday Night,” 487.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 488.

⁸⁶ Carr, *Illustrated History of Country Music*, 288.

⁸⁷ Craig Morrison, *Go Cat Go! Rockabilly Music and Its Makers* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 11.

SHREVEPORT MUNICIPAL MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM**Page 23**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

story but leave out important information. As Robert Oermann explains, rockabilly was also the “intermingling of southern black and white music traditions.”⁸⁸ Musician Carl Perkins calls it “a country man’s song with a black man’s rhythm.”⁸⁹ Rockabilly, says historian Tracey Laird, reflected the “tempestuous social changes taking place in America’s race relations in the 1950s.”⁹⁰ Presley’s “stage persona and his music conveyed a rebellion of manners through an intuitive blend of black and white styles.”⁹¹

Elvis and the rockabilly musicians who followed him at the *Louisiana Hayride* and elsewhere specifically aimed this assertive, fast, emotionally intense, and rhythmic music at youth, an audience previously ignored by the music industry. As Craig Morrison explains in *Go Cat Go! Rockabilly Music and Its Makers*, rockabilly song lyrics sang of “fast living, cars, parties, unusual characters, male-female relationships, and teenage fashions and frustrations.”⁹² They found an eager audience in 1950s kids described by Laird as striving for “new means of expression – in dress, attitude, patois, and soundtrack -- that would distinguish. . . [them] from the world of adults.”⁹³

The Hayride’s Decline

Although Elvis Presley was a difficult act to follow, the *Hayride* continued to attract talented and ambitious singers and turn them into stars. Johnny Cash, for example, played the *Hayride* during and after Presley’s tenure, as did Jim Reeves and Johnny Horton. George Jones is another future star who played the venue after Elvis left. However, Presley set changes in motion that did not bode well for the program’s future. Before Elvis, the show’s Municipal Auditorium audiences consisted of adults, often accompanied by their children, who loved and expected to hear traditional country music. But even on the first night of Presley’s sixteen-month *Hayride* career, according to Tillman Franks (who was there), that audience began to shift to the teenage set. As word of Presley’s appeal spread throughout the Ark-La-Tex, each week more teens, both boys and girls, packed the building. David Kent, an observer who would later become associated with attempts to revive the cancelled program, described the new audience as “squealing at the top of their lungs, storming the stage and raising a hoorah that was entirely un-Country-Western-like. . . .”⁹⁴ They literally squeezed the older, more traditional fans out. After Presley’s departure, other *Hayride* singers began to imitate him and the rockabilly sound, with the result that mainstream country acts sometimes found themselves pushed aside, and the older country fans failed to return to the *Hayride*.

The *Hayride*’s decline and eventual end cannot be blamed solely on Presley, rockabilly music, and the temporary decrease in country music’s popularity that they caused. Music and *Hayride* historians have identified several other factors that also contributed to the end. These include:

1. completion of the nation’s transformation from a rural to an urban and industrial character.
2. Shreveport’s lack of recording studios, booking agencies, and music publishing companies, i.e., related businesses needed to support the music industry. Nashville developed these enterprises, but short-sighted Shreveport businessmen, especially those with the *Hayride*’s and KWKH’s parent company, declined to do so.

⁸⁸ Oermann, *Century of Country*, 141.

⁸⁹ Morrison, *Go Cat Go!*, 5.

⁹⁰ Laird, *Louisiana Hayride*, 124.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 124-125.

⁹² Morrison, *Go Cat Go!*, ix.

⁹³ Laird, *Louisiana Hayride*, 125.

⁹⁴ Tucker, “Louisiana Saturday Night,” 521.

SHREVEPORT MUNICIPAL MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM**Page 24**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

3. the loss of the *Hayride*'s place on CBS's national radio network, which had occurred by 1958. This development probably resulted from changes in radio format, for throughout the 1950s local disk jockeys playing recorded music replaced network programming and live musical broadcasts.
4. competition from television's free programming, which finally arrived in Shreveport in 1953.
5. competition from sports, especially Saturday college football games, which lured fans to stadiums and glued others to their television sets.
6. rising production costs, which included talent fees and facility rentals. Station manager Henry Clay blamed this problem when asked why KWKH cancelled the *Hayride*.

As a result of all these forces, the *Louisiana Hayride* faded away. Information concerning the exact date of its demise is contradictory, a problem possibly attributed to the fact that KWKH replaced its weekly broadcasts with twice monthly, then monthly presentations before pulling the plug. November 1958 and August 27, 1960, both appear in country music histories as the closing date. Its end, said one fan, was "just like a death of a type. It was a big chunk out of our lives."⁹⁵ However, the program did not completely disappear; for according to long-time producer Horace Logan, KWKH continued to circulate and play tapes of previous shows for years. Attempts have been made by country music entrepreneurs to revive the show, but so far none has succeeded.

The *Louisiana Hayride*'s Legacy

Today, the *Louisiana Hayride* is considered legendary. As *Hayride* historian Stephen Tucker maintains, the show "remains one of country music's most revered institutions,"⁹⁶ with "a devoted and loyal following that has endured to the present day."⁹⁷ In addition to Hank Williams, Kitty Wells, Elvis Presley, and Johnny Cash, the *Hayride* introduced and/or nurtured the careers of at least twenty-three major country music stars now included in the Country Music Hall of Fame, including Slim Whitman, Webb Pierce, Jim Reeves, Faron Young, George Jones, and other important artists in the post World War II development of country music not covered in this study. Finally, the show left a body of work including 550 Saturday night broadcasts of the best country music available at the time. The Shreveport Municipal Memorial Auditorium, home of the *Louisiana Hayride* and the building with which the *Hayride* is directly associated, clearly has national significance in American music history in the area of performing arts.

Today the Shreveport Municipal Memorial Auditorium still hosts fund raisers, musical concerts, a guitar festival, speakers, and performances by the casts of traveling Broadway shows. An annual Mardi Gras ball, other dances, receptions, and even catered dinners are held in the auditorium space, and the building's manager reports that usage is increasing. The building is also the site of the Stage of Stars Museum, opened in June 2004. The museum's exhibits celebrate the *Louisiana Hayride* and the World War I soldiers in whose honor the Auditorium was built. In the three years since its opening, the museum has received visitors from forty-five states and fourteen foreign countries.

⁹⁵ LPB, "Cradle of the Stars."

⁹⁶ Tucker, "The Louisiana Hayride, 1948-1954," 197.

⁹⁷ Tucker, "Louisiana Saturday Night," 527.

SHREVEPORT MUNICIPAL MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM**Page 25**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Biography Files. Country Music Hall of Fame, Nashville, Tennessee.

Bufwack, Mary A. and Robert K. Oermann. *Finding Her Voice: The Saga of Women in Country Music*. New York: Crown, 2003.

Carr, Patrick, ed. *The Illustrated History of Country Music*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1979.

Escott, Colin. *Good Rockin' Tonight: Sun Records and the Birth of Rock 'n' Roll*. New York: St. Martin's, 1991.

———. *Hank Williams: The Biography*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1994.

Franks, Tillman and Robert Gentry. *I Was There When It Happened*. Shreveport, LA: Magic Circle, 2000.

Gentry, Robert, comp. *The Louisiana Hayride: The Glory Years – 1948-60: A Compilation of Newspaper Articles, Pictures and Advertisements, Vol. 1 – 1948-55*. n.p.

———, comp. *The Louisiana Hayride: The Glory Years – 1948-60: A Compilation of Newspaper Articles, Pictures and Advertisements, Vol. 2 – 1956-60*, n.p.

Guralnick, Peter. *Last Train to Memphis: The Rise of Elvis Presley*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1994.

Hobgood, K. D. "Hayride Heyday." *SB Magazine* (November 2000): 25-31.

Kingsbury, Paul, ed. *The Encyclopedia of Country Music: The Ultimate Guide to the Music*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

KWKH 25th Anniversary Souvenir Booklet. Stage of Stars Museum Collection, Shreveport, Louisiana.

Laird, Tracey E. W. *Louisiana Hayride: Radio and Roots Music along the Red River*. Oxford, MA: Oxford University Press, 2005.

LPB. "Cradle of the Stars: The Story of the Louisiana Hayride." West Long Branch, NJ: White Star, 1984.

Logan, Horace and Bill Sloan. *Louisiana Hayride Years: Making Musical History in Country's Golden Age*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1999.

Malone, Bill C. *Country Music, U.S.A.* Rev. ed. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1985.

———. *Don't Get Above Your Raisin': Country Music and the Southern Working Class*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2002.

Morrison, Craig. *Go Cat Go! Rockabilly Music and Its Makers*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1996.

Oermann, Robert K. *A Century of Country: An Illustrated History of Country Music*. New York: TV Books, 1999.

SHREVEPORT MUNICIPAL MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM**Page 26**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Page, Frank and Joey Kent. *Elvis: The Hayride Years '54-'56*. Chicago: JAT, 2003.

Streissguth, Michael. *Johnny Cash: The Biography*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo, 2006.

———. *Like a Moth to a Flame: The Jim Reeves Story*. Nashville, TN: Rutledge Hill Press, 1998.

Tucker, Stephen R. "The Louisiana Hayride, 1948-1954." *North Louisiana Historical Association Journal* 7, No. 5 (Fall 1977): 187-202.

———. "Louisiana Saturday Night: A History of Louisiana Country Music." PhD diss., Tulane University, 1982.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
 Previously Listed in the National Register. NR # 91000624, 05/28/1991
 Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
 Designated a National Historic Landmark.
 Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #
 Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State Agency
 Federal Agency
 Local Government
 University
 Other (Specify Repository):

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: Approximately 2 acres

UTM References: **Zone Easting Northing**
 15 429300 3596780

Verbal Boundary Description: See attached sketch map.

Lot eight (8), lot nine (9), lot ten (10), lot eleven (11), lot twelve (12), lot thirteen (13), lot fourteen (14) of Haven, Perrin and Zeigler Subdivision of Ten Acre Lot Seventeen (17) of the City of Shreveport, Caddo Parish, Louisiana, as recorded in Book 4, Page 264 of the Conveyance Records of Caddo Parish, Louisiana, less and except that portion of Lot 14 dedicated for Reynolds Street by Ordinance No. 173 of 1928, together with all buildings and improvements thereon; and lot seventeen (17), lot eighteen (18), lot nineteen (19), lot twenty (20),

SHREVEPORT MUNICIPAL MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM**Page 27**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

lot twenty-one (21), of the W. R. Carter Subdivision of Block Number Three (3) of the Ten Acre Lot Five (5) of the City of Shreveport, Caddo Parish, Louisiana as recorded in Book "U", Page 726 of the Conveyance Records of Caddo Parish, Louisiana, less and except that portion of Lot 21 dedicated for Reynolds Street by Ordinance No. 173 of 1928 and less and except that ten foot (10') portion of Lots 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21 dedicated for widening of alley west of Texas Avenue by Ordinance No. 98 of 1928; together with all buildings and improvements thereon; and that portion of Baker Street closed by Ordinance No. 98 of 1928 lying between lots ten (10) through fourteen (14) of Haven Perrin and Zeigler Subdivision and lots seventeen (17) through twenty-one (21) of W. R. Carter Subdivision, together with all buildings and improvements located thereon.

Boundary Justification: The boundary reflects the parcel of land historically occupied by the auditorium.

SHREVEPORT MUNICIPAL MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM**Page 28**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Patricia Duncan, Architectural Historian, National Register Program

Address: Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation
P. O. Box 44247
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Telephone: (225) 342-8160

Date: March 2007

Edited by: Jody Cook, Historian
National Park Service
Southeast Regional Office
100 Alabama Street SW
Atlanta, GA 30303
(404) 562-3117, ext. 515Caridad de la Vega, Historian
National Park Service
National Historic Landmarks Program
1849 C Street NW (2280)
Washington, DC 20240

Telephone: (202) 354-2253

DESIGNATED A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK
October 6, 2008