

Macon, Uncle Dave (1870-1952)

Encyclopedia Article

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Uncle Dave Macon, singer, songwriter, and banjo player, was one of the earliest pioneers of country music. Born in 1870 in Smart Station, Tennessee, David Harrison Macon grew up in Nashville in the boarding house run by his parents that was frequented by traveling vaudeville musicians. From them, Macon learned how to play the five-string banjo and numerous old folk songs. However, he grew up to earn his living in the hauling business and performed solely as an amateur at local events until he was discovered at the age of 48 by a talent scout for Loew's theaters. His success brought an invitation to join the new *Grand Ole Opry* radio show in Nashville in 1926, and he quickly became one of its most popular stars, both as a solo performer and with his band, the Fruit Jar Drinkers. "Uncle" Dave was a key link between traditional Southern music and modern country music, introducing nineteenth-century folk styles to modern audiences with songs such as "Way Down the Old Plank Road" and "Roll Down the Line." He played until his death in 1952, and he is honored by the annual Uncle Dave Macon Days three-day festival in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, which features the National Old-Time Banjo championships.

Further Reading:

Malone, Bill C. *Country Music U.S.A: A Fifty Year History*. Austin, American Folklore Society, University of Texas Press, 1968.

Stambler, Irwin, and Grelun Landon. *Country Music: The Encyclopedia*. New York, St. Martin's Press, 1997.