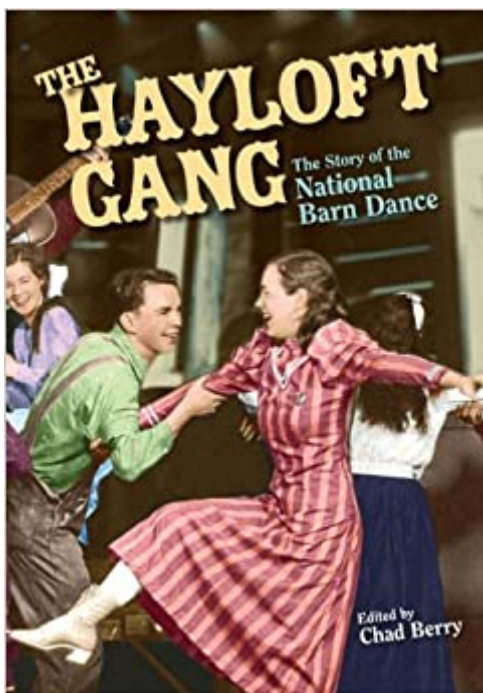


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The Hayloft Gang: The Story Of The National Barn Dance (Music In American Life)



Synopsis

The National Barn Dance was the nation's most popular country music radio show during the 1930s and 1940s, essentially defining country and western entertainment until it was supplanted by the Grand Ole Opry and rock 'n' roll in the 1950s. Broadcast for more than three decades from Chicago on WLS's powerful 50,000-watt signal, the show reached listeners throughout the Midwest, the East Coast, and large regions of the South, delivering popular entertainment to rural and urban areas and celebrating the folk traditions that were fading in an increasingly urbanized America. Drawing on the colorful commentary of performers and former listeners, these essays analyze the National Barn Dance and its audience, trace the history of barn dance radio, explore the paradox of country music in a major urban center, investigate notions of authenticity in the presentation of country music and entertainment, and delve into other provocative issues raised by the barn dance phenomenon. Contributors are Chad Berry, Michael T. Bertrand, Lisa Krissoff Boehm, Don Cusic, Wayne W. Daniel, Loyal Jones, Kristine M. McCusker, Stephen Parry, Susan Smulyan, Paul L. Tyler, and Michael Ann Williams. [↗](#)

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Anyone interested in the history of country music on radio should have this book in their collection. A very fine documentary on the WLS National Barndance by Stephen Parry is shown periodically on the PBS stations, and along with this book will give the viewer/reader an insight as to what went on behind the scenes and on stage to make this radio program last from the 1920's up to the 1950's. How it finally met its demise do to the advent of rock and roll. The book contains lots of photographs of the cast of the NBD, as well as history as to how some of the acts were formed. Strangely enough, the city where the Barndance emanated from was not Nashville, Tennessee, (It pre-dated the Grand Ole Op'ry) Wheeling West Virginia, or any southern state. It was broadcast from downtown Chicago, Illinois, back in the days of Al Capone and Prohibition. A very enjoyable and informative read.

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