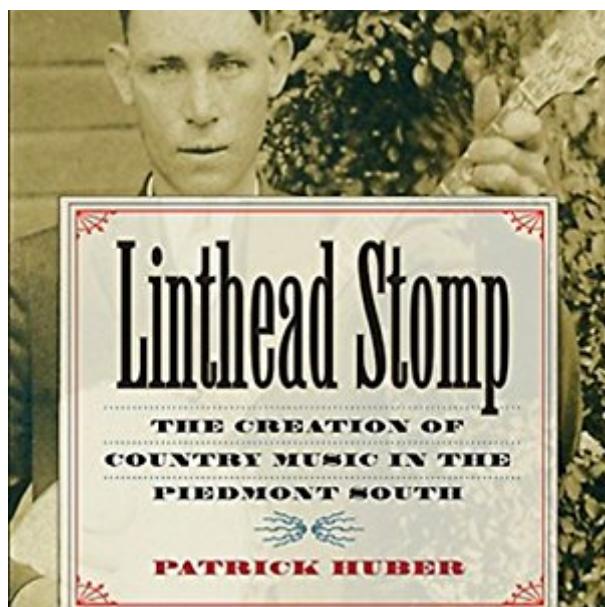


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# **Linthead Stomp: The Creation Of Country Music In The Piedmont South**



## Synopsis

Contrary to popular belief, the roots of American country music do not lie solely on southern farms or in mountain hollows. Rather, much of this music recorded before World War II emerged from the bustling cities and towns of the Piedmont South. No group contributed more to the commercialization of early country music than southern factory workers. Huber explores the origins and development of this music in the Piedmont's mill villages and offers vivid portraits of a colorful cast of Piedmont millhand musicians, including Fiddlin' John Carson, Charlie Poole, Dave McCarn, and the Dixon Brothers.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A good book but somewhat hard to follow as there are only a couple of chapters in the 440 page book, and rare are the breaking off points where one can pick up again tomorrow. A chronicle of who, what, and when of hillbilly music coming out of the textile mills of pre-WWII. Overall a good book, especially if you're into history or music....or both.

Linthead Stomp is, as the subtitle says, a story of how country music was created from a musical core in the Southern Piedmont of Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia. The subtext is that contrary to the popular imagination the music that was before country was created by mostly urban workers employed at one time or another in the numerous textile mills in the area. The book does this by profiling four artists who recorded before World War II; "Fiddlin'" John Carson, Charlie Poole, Dave McCarn. and the Dixon Brothers. The book makes it's case easily enough. Fiddlin' John Carson

spent most of his life living and working in Atlanta. The Dixon Brothers and Dave McCarn worked, when they worked at all, in the mills. Charlie Poole, whose main occupations were music and alcohol, worked at some point in the mills. These artists, and many others, were not backwoods hillbillies eking at a marginal subsistence, brewing moonshine, and spitting tobacco. The musical influence of the mountain hollows actually came later with the advent of the Lomax family and the folk revival of the 1960's. It's for this reason, the musicians were urban, more or less, they recorded in urban centers, very often in New York, they were employed in the mills, that beyond stating the facts of the musicians lives the author has had to work at it to get to book length. There is a lot of repetition. The same facts are stated again and again for each artist as in the case of Dave McCarn his recording career was very limited. Charlie Poole, who had a prolific recording career during his short life in a alcoholic haze, gave, as the author says, no interviews and left no personal writings. Still this book is recommended to all who want to understand where country, bluegrass, and old time music came from. Each of the artists is treated with great respect and put in the context of their time some of which is both surprising and should not be so surprising. These artists were categorized in the Hill Billy category when none of them were mountain folk. That is how their music sold. Charlie Poole was heavily influenced by the jazz, blues, and popular music of his time, and yet his recording company would not record him outside of his category and his attempts to obtain a wider audience and expand his music met with indifference. The artists were frequently publicized in clothes they never wore in order to be portrayed as some part of an older, simpler, and better time in the past. A lot of the big hats and big hair that's part of modern country music is undoubtedly derived from this yearning for a past that never existed.

The most interesting "old time music" book I have read in quite some time. The author manages to place several icons of early country music into a cultural context not done before... the millhands of the Southeast United States. Another reason to lament the loss of the cotton mills. I was also introduced to Dave McCarn, a hard living and seldom heard artist. A wonderful study, and I have added "linthead" to my vocabulary. Jim Linderman "Dull Tool Dim Bulb" Take Me to the Water: Immersion Baptism in Vintage Music and Photography 1890-1950

Great experience!~

Enjoyable read

Just plain boring

Linthead Stomp: The Creation of Country Music in the Piedmont South by Patrick Huber (University of North Carolina Press, 2008, 440 pages, \$35.99/19.99) tells the story of how workers in cotton mills and other industrial settings in the Piedmont were essential to the development of what we know as country and bluegrass music just after World War II. Focusing on the lives of four seminal mill hands during the 1920's and 1930's, Linthead Stomp argues persuasively that without the intermediary insertion of the factory experience, country and bluegrass music could not have developed. The legend says that the music grew and developed on the back porches and parlors of farms in the mountains of Appalachia. This myth has been ably reinforced by the heavy emphasis upon the Carter Family and Jimmie Rodgers important recordings during the 1927 Bristol sessions held by Ralph Peer of the Victor Recording Company, whose newspaper advertisements invited country musicians to come make recordings, many of which soon became "Hillbilly" hits. This book emphasizes that Peer also made field recordings at sessions in the Piedmont regions of North Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama in Charlotte, Atlanta, and Birmingham which featured many old-time musicians whose skills had been developed in the environment of the mill villages surrounding textile mills in that region. In his priceless introduction, Huber develops the ideas surrounding the upwelling of musical expression in which men and women migrating to the industrializing South after post Civil War reconstruction were housed in mill villages, employed in the menial drudgery of factory work, and paid near starvation wages which were still better than what the way they were able to live on their subsistence farms back in the mountains and on marginal farms. These workers were exposed to a range of musical influences previously unavailable to them which included radio, vaudeville, minstrel shows, and African-American Piedmont blues, jazz, and the popular music of Tin Pan Alley. Even in the rigidly segregated society of this time, the songs of Appalachia, many handed down for generations from their English, Scottish, and Irish origins, were able to merge and be influenced by a broad cultural mix. Many of the mills provided educational programs, particularly in home-making skills, athletics, and music, which served to provide recreation for the mill hands, largely in order to forestall labor unrest and discourage organized labor from becoming influential in the South during the post WW I era. The availability of cheap, factory made instruments was also crucial in this development. Using four emergent musicians as representatives of this influence, Huber concentrates on biographical portraits of Fiddlin' John Carson, Charlie Poole, Dave McCarn, and Dorsey Dixon, each of whose contributions were significant while representing different strains that found their voice as country music and its

offshoot, bluegrass, developed and dominated. The remainder of my review as well as videos of each feature singer/composer can be found on my blog at [Ted Lehmann \(. blogspot \(. com](http://Ted Lehmann (. blogspot (. com) Please consider ordering through the portal there

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