Metropolitan Historical Commission
Sunnyside in Sevier Park
3000 Granny White Pike
Nashville, Tennessee 37204

TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
AND THE
METROPOLITAN NASHVILLE
HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Present the

36th Annual

Song and Story: Exploring Nashville's Past, Present, and Future

Friday, February 10, 2017

8:30 am—4:00 pm

Tennessee State University
Avon Williams Campus
10th & Charlotte Ave.
Nashville, Tennessee

Please Join Us!

On February 10, 2017, Tennessee State University's College of Liberal Arts and the Metropolitan Historical Commission will celebrate the contributions of African Americans to Nashville and Tennessee history. For thirty-five years, this award-winning conference has brought together historians, students, educators, community leaders, and others interested in African American history and culture.

This year's conference will examine Nashville's challenges of integration through inspiring presentations from local scholars with Volunteer State, Vanderbilt, Fisk, and TSU, as well as professors from Columbia University and Union College. As always, music will be a highlight of the conference, with a presentation on two Memphis jazz greats, and performances by the TSU Jazz Collegians and Angela Yvonne Stockdale. Tennessee History Day students will present their award-winning documentaries on African-American history in Tennessee.

Please plan to join us for this very special Nashville Conference on African American History and Culture as we use songs and stories to explore Nashville's past, present, and future.

Planning Committee

Conference Co-Chairs

Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr.
Fisk University

Linda T. Wynn
Tennessee Historical Commission/Fisk University

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Preliminary Program

9:00 am	**Welcome** Tim Walker, MHC Executive Director Linda T. Wynn, Conference Co-Chair
9:20	**Revitalized Community: Bordeaux Since the 2010 Flood** Dr. Deidre Hill Butler, Union College
9:45	**George Washington Cable and the Open Letter Club: Interracial Dialogue in Nashville** Dr. Carole Bucy, Davidson County Historian
10:10	**Lifting Every Voice: Hattie S. Jackson and Early Twentieth Century Social Activism in Nashville** Dr. Learotha Williams, Jr., TN State University
10:30	**Break**
10:45	**Invisible Lines and Invisible History: A Nashville Story** Dr. Daniel Sharfstein, Vanderbilt University
11:10	**Remarks**
11:30	**Musical Performance** Angela Yvonne Stockdale, Fisk University
Noon	**Lunch (provided)**
1:30 pm	**Busing Hubert: Desegregation's Many Stories in Nashville, Tennessee** Dr. Ansley T. Erickson, Columbia University
2:00	**Tennessee History Day Student Presentations** Kaylie Pomerantz and Laila Stempkowski Alyssa Neuhoff
2:30	**Musical Performance** Dr. James Sexton, TSU Jazz Collegians
3:00	**When Tennessee Travels: The Music of Alberta Hunter and Lil Hardin Armstrong** Dr. K. T. Ewing, Tennessee State University
3:30	**Closing Remarks** Dr. Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr., Conference Co-Chair

Conference Registration

February 10, 2017

Registration fee is $25.00.
Make checks payable to:
TSU Foundation: TSU/MHC Conference

Mail to:
Metro Historical Commission
3000 Granny White Pike
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Registration form and fee MUST be received by January 20, 2017.

Name ______________________

Address ______________________

City, State, Zip ______________________

Email Address (for confirmation) ______________________

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Questions? Call us at 615-862-7970
Preregistration is strongly encouraged.
Registration cannot be taken over the phone.

Profiles of *African Americans* in Tennessee

The First Day of (Desegregated) School in Nashville, September 9, 1957

Following the 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, which declared school segregation unconstitutional, some African American families in Nashville began seeking to enroll their children as students in what were then all-white schools. Families of over twenty children filed suit against the school system in September 1955 after being denied admission to the school closest to their home.

Court hearings and public meetings were held throughout 1956, and the school board worked to develop a plan acceptable to the Federal district court. This plan, which became known as the "Nashville Plan" called for desegregating schools one year at a time, beginning with the first grade for the 1957-58 school year. Opposition grew through the summer of 1957, in anticipation of African-American students enrolling at previously white schools. Infamous white supremacist John Kasper visited Nashville and inflamed segregationists throughout August, holding meetings and rallies in parks and on school grounds.

On August 25, 1957, thirteen African-American parents registered their first-grade children to attend their (white) neighborhood school. Although there were protestors at the schools, there were no incidents of violence. However, many of these families received threatening letters and phone calls over the next few days, as did teachers and principals at these schools.

September 9, 1957, was the first day of desegregated school in Nashville.

Clemons School: Four black first-grade students enrolled at Clemons School, on 12th Avenue South, on September 9. None of them had registered early, and so the organized protestors had not paid much attention to Clemons. One of the first-graders was six-year-old Joy Smith, the daughter of Kelly Miller Smith; Joy stayed at Clemons through the sixth grade.

Bailey: Bailey School, on East Greenwood Avenue, had one African American student pre-register to attend. A crowd of a several dozen white protestors gathered at the school, but no black families brought their children. The child who had been pre-registered was in the care of her grandparents, who, like many of the other families, had received threatening phone calls. They transferred their granddaughter, and no African-American students attended Bailey in 1957-58.

Caldwell: Records indicated that at least thirteen African-American students were in the Meridian Street neighborhood of Caldwell School, although none pre-registered. Still, over a hundred protestors gathered at Caldwell that morning, and when three families came to school on the first day, the crowd grew violent: cursing, spitting on the children, and throwing rocks. While the principal kept the families in his office, several people entered the school, searching classrooms for the black children before being detained by police. It was determined that transfer records for these three children were incomplete, and they were not enrolled at Caldwell. No African-American children attended Caldwell in 1957-58.

Glenn: Located on Cleveland Street in East Nashville, Glenn Elementary was the focus of the white supremacists' efforts on September 9. Approximately two dozen African-American children were eligible to enter first grade at Glenn based on their address, and segregationists spent the greatest amount of time at Glenn. John Kasper made an appearance to fuel the gathering crowd's

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ire. Only three African-American children came to school that first day, entering the building with their parents through a jeering mob with a few policemen for protection. While the two young girls who were pre-registered were shown to classrooms, several white parents began withdrawing their students. Approximately half of Glenn's enrollment of five hundred was marked absent on the first day of school, but within a week, the normal attendance pattern resumed.

Fehr: Fehr School in the Salemtown area had the second-largest number of potential African-American students who could attend, although only four came on the first day of school. They were faced with a crowd of over two hundred protestors who cursed the children as they entered, and two white women were arrested for disorderly conduct. When school let out at noon, real trouble began. As the crowd began throwing rocks and bottles, Linda McKinley's mother pulled a nail file from her pocket in protection, and was arrested. As the custodian of the school lowered the American flag, protestors assaulted him and slashed the tires of his car. Of the first African-American students at Fehr, only Linda McKinley returned to Fehr for second grade.

Buena Vista: Three African American children had preregistered to attend first grade at Buena Vista School on 9th Avenue North. A large crowd of protestors gathered, but they remained somewhat restrained. Although they had signs and shouted slogans, there was no violence, although an ominous parade of vehicles painted with KKK signage and waving Confederate flags circled the building. Two of the three students who enrolled that first day, Erroll Groves and Ethel Mai Carr, remained at Buena Vista all year, and would attend through sixth grade.

Jones: North of Buena Vista, also on 9th Avenue North, four African American students entered the building through a noisy crowd of protestors, although no violence broke out. Like the other families, these families had been subjected to a barrage of threats against their home, their families, and their children. All four children who entered Jones that first day completed the first grade there, and three returned for second grade the following year.

Cotton: No African-American children had pre-registered at Hattie Cotton, and no protestors lined the schoolyard as a lone young black girl entered the school with her mother. Word spread quickly, however, and several protestors were outside the school at dismissal. The parade of segregationists' cars circled the school throughout the morning. As the children began leaving, the principal, Margaret Cate, noticed that no one had arrived to pick up the child. Her mother, frightened by the protestors, had called a taxi for her, which had come but not waited. Cate took the child home in her own car, and later than night received a threatening phone call.

Although no violence had erupted at Hattie Cotton during the school day, shortly after midnight, the largest act of violence would occur there, when a large case of dynamite exploded at the front of the school. This act of violence shocked most citizens of Nashville, and civic leaders from Mayor Ben West to Police Chief Hosse, to Criminal Court Judge Charles Gilbert led the city in denouncing the violence and the protestors; John Kasper was arrested. Eleven of the sixteen children returned to their now desegregated schools on the second day, now under a heavy police presence. Within a week, enrollment figures had resumed in Nashville schools.

Tara Mitchell Mielnik, Ph.D.

Metropolitan Nashville Historical Commission

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Profiles of *African Americans* in Tennessee

Coach Ed Temple and the Tigerbelles

Known internationally as a Hall of Fame track coach with a career that spanned over four decades, Coach Ed Temple was born in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, where he excelled as an athlete, competing in high school varsity sports in football, basketball, and track. Following his high school graduation, Temple enrolled at Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial College (now Tennessee State University), where his former Pennsylvania neighbor, Tom Harris, had become track coach. Temple ran track and studied Health and Physical Education at Tennessee A&I, and also met an A&I coed, Charlie B. Law, who became his wife. At about the same time, Coach Harris accepted a position at another school and Temple graduated from A&I; President Walter S. Davis then appointed Temple as women's track coach to replace Harris.

In those early coaching years, Coach Temple coached track, worked in the university post office, continued his education, and started a family with his new bride, Charlie B. Temple recalled in an interview that "for a hundred and fifty dollars a month, I coached the women's track team, ran the university post office, and went to graduate school." One of his first runners was Nashvillian Jean Patton, who took first place in the 100 meters at the 1951 Pan American Games. Temple worked with rising track star Mae Faggs, who competed in the 1948 Olympics, and also worked with high school girls who were interested in running track, including Barbara Jones, as the A&I junior team. Faggs and Jones were part of the world-record setting 1952 Olympic gold-medal relay team, along with Catherine Hardy and Janet Moreau. Jones remains the youngest woman to win an Olympic gold medal in track and field.

Beginning in the 1950s, Coach Temple called his women's track team the "Tigerbelles," an appellation which has remained with the team. Coach Temple and his wife Charlie B. became surrogate parents to the young track stars, ensuring that they continued to achieve both academically as well as athletically. The Temples helped the young women overcome adversity they faced by being both women and African-American athletes. They faced both stereotypes against women athletes and Jim Crow as they traveled to athletic competitions across the country. Coach Temple's Tigerbelles won the 1955 national AAUP track championship, the first time that Tennessee A&I won an integrated national championship in any sport. Temple later recalled that as the team travelled back to Tennessee, they stopped to eat and were told that the restaurant "did not serve colored people," when the bus driver told the restaurant manager that these "young ladies had just won the national championship;" they were permitted to eat.

Coach Temple taught his athletes credos that are applicable to all student athletes:

"Accept hard work in practice with no exception."
"Make the champion's choice. Improve or stand still."
"Make weaknesses work for you by working to correct them."
"THINK you can win; HOPE to win; TRY to win."
"Never underestimate your ability. Who knows how far you can go?"
"Seek perfection. Few attain it, but all who seek it gain."

This publication is a project of the 2012 Nashville Conference on African-American History and Culture. The authors compiled the information. The Metropolitan Historical Commission edited and designed the materials. Image provided by Tennessee State University Library Special Collections.

Under Coach Temple, the Tigerbelles achieved great Olympic success throughout the 1950s and 1960s and beyond. In addition to the gold medalists at the 1952 Olympics, six members of the Tigerbelles returned to the Olympics in 1956. There the entire US 4 x 100 relay team included Tigerbelles Faggs, Wilma Rudolph, Margaret Matthews, and Isabelle Daniels. In a race that featured all three medal teams breaking the existing world record, the US team brought home the bronze medal. Teenage junior member Willye B. White earned a silver medal in long jump, the first time an American had ever received a medal in that event. White became the first American track and field athlete to participate in five Olympic games. Coach Temple was called upon to coach the US Olympic teams in 1960 and 1964, which included several of his Tigerbelles. Wilma Rudolph became the first American female athlete to win three gold medals in a single Olympics in 1960. In 1964, the 4x100 team took the silver medal. Edith McGuire added a gold in the 200 meters and another silver, finishing second to fellow Tigerbelle Wyomia Tyus in the 100 meters. Tyus became the first athlete, male or female, to win back-to-back Olympic gold medals, with her performances in the 100 meters in 1964 and 1968. Also in 1968, Tigerbelle Madeline Manning became the first American woman to win gold in the 800 meters, and at that time was the youngest to ever win. Overall, Coach Temple's Tigerbelles have received over twenty Olympic medals, including current TSU track coach Chandra Cheeseborough, who won silver in the 400 meters and gold in both the 4x100 and 4x400 relays at the 1984 Olympics.

Coach Ed Temple is one of America's all-time greatest coaches in track and field. In addition to his Olympic successes, his Tigerbelles have won thirty-four national team titles, and thirty medals in the PanAmerican Games. In the days of both Jim Crow and the Cold War, he coached the 1958 US Women's track tream for the first-ever US-Soviet track meet, and later, the 1975 team for the first ever China-US meet. Coach Temple's honors are too numerous to mention, but include an honorary doctorate from his alma mater; the Nashville's Sports Council's trophy for best local amateur athlete bears his name; and a Nashville street has been named in his honor. He is a member of a number of Halls of Fame, including the Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame (1972); the Tennessee State University Sports Hall of Fame (1983); the Pennsylvania Sports Hall of Fame (1987); the USA Track and Field Hall of Fame (1989); the Ohio Valley Conference Hall of Fame (1995); and the US Track and Field and Cross Country Coaches Association Hall of Fame (1996). He retired in 1993 after forty-three years of coaching at Tennessee State University. The father of two grown children, he now works to provide scholarships for low-income children to attend New Hope Academy in Franklin, Tennessee, through the Ed Temple Fund. He is also a member of the Metropolitan Nashville Sports Authority. Coach Temple opened doors for young African-American women athletes that had previously been closed, and as he led these women, he created a wealth of opportunity for his first athletes and the many hundreds that would follow in their fleet footsteps.

Yildiz Binkley
Reavis Mitchell
Tara Mitchell Mielnik

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Profiles of *African Americans* in Tennessee

Alberta Hunter (1895-1984)

A celebrated blues singer, songwriter, international cabaret entertainer, and nurse, Alberta Hunter was born in Memphis, Tennessee, on April 1, 1895, to Laura Peterson Hunter. Her father, Charles Hunter, a Pullman porter, died of pneumonia in late February 1895, less than two months before her birth. The youngest of three children, her older brother John died shortly after being born and her older sister, La Tosca Hunter, was born two years earlier.

Following Charles Hunter's death, the Hunter family lived with her mother's parents, Henry and Nancy Patterson. Four years after Hunter's birth, her grandfather Henry Patterson died. His death left his wife and daughter as the family's primary wage earners. Nancy Patterson took in laundry and cared for her granddaughters, while their mother worked outside the home. Hunter was close to both her mother and grandmother. Patterson, a member of Collins Chapel Colored Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church, carried both of her granddaughters to church with her. Collins Chapel, like most African American churches during the eon of racial segregation, served as educational, political, and social centers. At Collins Chapel that Hunter received an education in social norms; she was heavily influenced by her church attendance there.

Laura Hunter stayed with her mother until 1903, when she moved her family into a room in a house across from the Beale Street Baptist Church. Later she moved into a house on Lane Street. She surrounded herself with a community of women who in one way or another assisted her in the rearing of her daughters. Hunter and her sister attended Grant School, an elementary school for African American children located on Auction Street. It was at school that her love of music and singing began. Despite the archetypes of middle-class propriety and Christian values her mother and grandmother attempted to inculcate within her, Hunter's interest in music also attracted her to what some considered the less desirable parts of Memphis. Later, the milieu of Beale Street, the blues center of the city, would impact Hunter's musical career.

At the age of 13, Hunter was sexually abused by a boyfriend of "Aunt Nellie," the white landlady at the boardinghouse where she resided with her mother and sister. Fearing retribution from her white male abuser and the possibility that divulging the incident could cost her family their home, she never reported the abuse to her mother. She also endured other acts of sexual abuse from a local school principal, as well as physical abuse from her stepfather, Theodore Beatty. At age 15, to supplement the family's income, she began working as a laundress. Looking for asylum from sexual and physical maltreatment and penury, Hunter turned to the pulsating musical environs of Beale Street.

By age 16 Hunter grew weary of her life in Memphis and moved to Chicago. Once in the "Windy City" she lived with Ellen Winston, a friend of the family. She found employment as a domestic, the same type of work she had in Memphis. Finally, she began her singing career at Dago Frank's, a small bar patronized by pimps and prostitutes. From 1914 to 1921 Hunter was at the top of the African American music scene. Hunter brought the sounds of Beale Street to the North and was one of the first signers to perform W. C. Handy's *St. Louis Blues* and *Beale Street Blues* in Chicago. In 1919, Hunter married Willard Saxby Townsend, a former soldier who later became a labor leader for baggage handlers via the International Brotherhood of Red Caps. The marriage was short-lived, as they separated within months. The couple officially

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divorced in 1923.

Purportedly, Hunter was a lesbian, although she kept her sexuality relatively private. In August 1927, she sailed for France, accompanied by Lottie Tyler, the niece of comedian Bert Williams. It is reported that their relationship lasted until Tyler's death. Although portrayed by academic researchers and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered (LGBT) activists, Hunter never overtly embraced any association with "same-gender-loving communities".

A contemporary of blues artist Bessie Smith, a fellow Tennessean, Hunter made her first recording on the Black Swan label with her own song, *Down Hearted Blues*. She replaced Smith in the leading role of the musical, *How Come*? In 1927 she toured Europe that included a leading role in the London production of *Showboat* with Paul Roberson. Hunter had a successful European career, including a role in England's first color film, *Radio Parade of 1935*. It was in Europe that she developed a sophisticated cabaret act. Hunter returned to the states at the beginning of the Second World War and offered to headline a 1945 United Service Organizations (USO) tour to Europe, Japan, and Korea. Her first retirement from the field of entertainment took place in 1954. A year later, she embarked upon a new career in health care. At the age of 60 Hunter volunteered at the Joint Diseases Hospital in Harlem, then began her second career as a practical nurse at Goldwater Hospital on Roosevelt Island in New York City, where she labored for the next twenty years.

After retiring from the nursing profession, Hunter began a second musical career. In October 1977, she began performing at the Cookery in Greenwich Village at the insistence of Barney Josephson. A year later, on October 6, 1978, Tennessee Governor Ray Blanton declared an "Alberta Hunter Day" and Memphis mayor Wyeth Chandler presented her with a key to the city on Beale Street. In December 1978, she was invited to the White House to perform for President Jimmy Carter. In 1978, she was also signed by Columbia Records and went on to record four more albums before her death. In February of the following year, she performed for the closing of the governors' conference in Washington, D.C.

Hunter's musical revival lasted six years; she toured in Europe and South America, made television appearances, and enjoyed her renewed recording career as well as the fact that record catalogs contained her old recordings, going back to her 1921 debut on the Black Star label.

Alberta Hunter, an internationally renowned "singer of songs" and cabaret star in the 1920s and 1930s who, after two decades of retirement, began a second successful singing career in her 80s, died October 17, 1984, at her home on Roosevelt Island in New York. She was survived by her nephew, Samuel Sharpe Jr., of Denver, Colorado. Hunter remains were interred in Ferncliff Cemetery and Mausoleum located in Hartsdale, Westchester County, New York. Hunter's life was documented in *Alberta Hunter: My Castle's Rockin'* (1988 TV movie), a documentary written by Chris Albertson and narrated by pianist Billy Taylor, and in Cookin' at the Cookery, a biographical musical by Marion J. Caffey that toured the United States. Hunter's comeback album, *Amtrak Blues*, was honored by the Blues Hall of Fame in 2009. Two years later, Hunter was inducted into the Blues Hall of Fame. In 2015, her native city inducted her into the Memphis Music Hall of Fame for her lifetime achievement in music.

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Linda T. Wynn
Tennessee Historical Commission/
Fisk University

Profiles of *African Americans* in Tennessee

Lillian "Lil" Hardin Armstrong (1898-1971)

Acclaimed musician Lil Hardin Armstrong was born in 1898 to William and Dempsey Hardin in Memphis, Tennessee. In the late 1900s, Memphis was a city that flowed with the pace of the Mississippi River. Sometimes peaceful, at times turbulent, always in motion, the Bluff City was home to a significant black population that grew larger after the Civil War. The Hardin family was among the residents who relocated there in hopes of a better life. Lil grew up in a home with her parents and her grandmother, a woman who had intimately known slavery. As the shadow of Jim Crow grew darker over the South, Priscilla Martin resolved that her granddaughter would have a better future than anyone imagined possible.

After recognizing her daughter's keen interest in an old harmonium, Dempsey invested in music lessons with Ms. Violet White, a private tutor. Young Lil took quickly to formal instruction and soon outgrew Ms. White's teaching. Pleased by her daughter's progress, Dempsey enrolled her in the Hooks School of Music, headed by Mrs. Julia Britton Hooks. Mrs. Hooks, a well-known civil rights activist, founded the school as an extension of her mission to provide young black children with the best possible opportunities to excel. Lil's talent continued to flourish, and she generously referred to herself as a child prodigy in later interviews.

The Hooks School of Music was not Hardin's only influence. Swirling, strong, and pulsing with rhythm, Beale Street was a nexus of black Memphis. It was home to everything from legitimate commerce to illicit crime. It served saints and sinners alike. Beale Street was also the perfect place for mid-Southerners to listen to the growing blues genre. Like fellow Memphian Alberta Hunter, Lil was fascinated with the sounds of W. C. Handy's band slowly strolling down Beale, playing tunes that would shape the sounds of the city for decades to come. However, the street's reputation did not sit well with Dempsey. She forbade her daughter to visit Beale Street.

In the fall of 1915, Lil made the two-hundred-mile journey from Memphis to join Fisk University's college preparatory program in Nashville, Tennessee. By the time she arrived, the university had a reputation for excelling in music, most notably because of the Jubilee Singers. In addition to the school's musical reputation, its stringent adherence to Christian moral principles appealed to Dempsey's urge to keep her young daughter away from the temptations of Beale Street. Lil chafed under the strict rules at Fisk, but she also grew as a musician. One of her biggest disappointments was learning that she'd been taught incorrect techniques at the Hooks School. In spite of her progress at Fisk, she withdrew from the university in search of more adventure.

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Lil found another opportunity to pursue music when her family relocated to Chicago with her stepfather. The petite teenager secured her first job in the Windy City as a music demonstrator at Jones Music Store on State Street. When an employee was unable to impress her with his performance of a piece of sheet music, Lil asked to play it for herself. She surprised him and the store owner with her ability to read and flawlessly perform sheet music on the spot. Not only could Lil read sheet music, she could also quickly memorize and play any song by ear. These talents served her well as she climbed the city's entertainment ladder. She worked a series of entry-tier entertainment gigs until she landed bigger opportunities at the De Luxe Café and the Dreamland Café. She was enamored with the big city. However, remnants of the South met her in the Midwest. Coincidentally, she played accompaniment for another Memphis native, Alberta Hunter, at the Dreamland. Though their careers eventually drove them in different directions, they would continue to cross paths and praise each other's artistry, aesthetics, and professionalism.

Lil also met another talented musician at the Dreamland. When he arrived in Chicago, Louis Armstrong was playing second trumpet to bandleader King Oliver in his Creole Jazz Band. Lil initially paid little attention to Louis until King Oliver mentioned his superior skills. Professional appreciation soon turned into romantic love, and the hot new couple became the band's centerpiece. Lil and Louis Armstrong married in 1924. Rightfully credited with identifying Armstrong's potential for stardom, Lil Hardin's legacy is often mentioned only in relation to Louis. However, her music catalog and business acumen speak for themselves. These accomplishments stand on their own artistic and professional merits.

For roughly fifty years Lil's entertainment career included work as an accompanying pianist, band leader, and soloist. She cut several records for large companies such as Decca Records and Riverside Records. She composed a number of original songs, most notably "Just For A Thrill", "Struttin' With Some Barbecue", "Perdido Street Blues", and "I'm Not Rough." Ray Charles amplified the popularity of "Just for a Thrill" in his 1959 rendition of the song. In 1961 Lil reunited with Alberta Hunter and Lovie Austin, another entertainment veteran, to record "Chicago: The Living Legends." The album, a reflection on the impact of black women in music, was one of her last.

Following Louis Armstrong's death in July 1971, Lil Hardin Armstrong collapsed at her piano during a tribute concert for him in Chicago in August. She died on August 27, 1971, and is interred in Lincoln Cemetery in Chicago. The City of Chicago renamed a community park in her honor in 2004. She was posthumously awarded with induction to the Memphis Music Hall of Fame in 2014. Her music catalog remains among the most influential in jazz history.

K. T. Ewing, Ph.D.
Tennessee State University