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# FARTHER ON UP THE ROAD: The Blues Archive Turns 35

*Greg Johnson, Blues Curator and Professor*



October 2019





1. Blues guitar donated to the Archive
2. Photo from dedication at the Barnard Observatory of the “Documenting the Blues” historical marker (2/27/2009, *see slide 5*)
3. Framed print of Ernest C. Withers and Elvis Presley, inscribed by Withers
4. Timeline of the Blues Archive (*see slide 4*)
5. Poster from “B. B. King in Concert at the Gertrude C. Ford Center for the Performing Arts” as part of the Living Blues Symposium (2/27/2004)



In 1982 and 1983 B. B. King donated almost 10,000 sound recordings from his personal record collection to the University of Mississippi.

In 1983, the university took over the publication of *Living Blues*, acquiring the magazine's large research collection.

The following year, the Blues Archive opened to the public in September 1984.

The Archive has continued to grow over these past 35 years, collecting materials for blues researchers and fans alike.

The Archive houses more than 70,000 sound recordings, 60,000 blues photos, and thousands of posters, books, and research files.

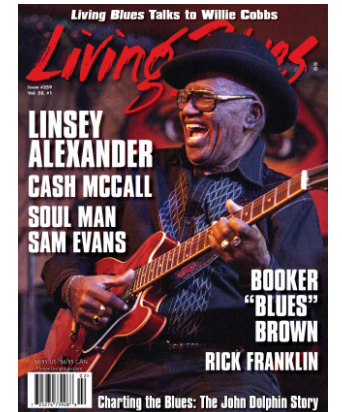
To learn more, visit Archives and Special Collections on the 3rd floor.



# Blues Archive timeline

- 1982-1983  
B. B. King donates 10,000 sound recording from his personal collection to UM
- 1983  
UM takes over publication of *Living Blues* magazine, and acquires its research collection
- September 1984  
The Blues Archive opens to the public
- Since 1984  
The Archive has collected more than 70,000 sound recordings, 60,000 photographs, and thousands of posters, books, and research files

Issue 259 of [\*Living Blues\*](#) magazine (Jan/Feb 2019)





Unveiling of historic marker, “Documenting the Blues”, in front of UM’s Barnard Observatory, home of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, to note both *Living Blues* magazine and the UM Blues Archive.

Photo includes Living Blues magazine staff Amy van Singel (co-founder), Mark Camarigg (publications manager), Jim O’Neal (co-founder), Blues Archive curator Greg Johnson, and Highway 61 Radio Host Scott Barretta.

Marker Text:

**DOCUMENTING THE BLUES.** The University of Mississippi is internationally renowned for its work in documenting

and preserving African American blues culture. In 1983 the Center for the Study of Southern Culture acquired Living Blues magazine, which was founded in Chicago in 1970. The Living Blues and B.B. King collections of records and memorabilia were among the first major components of the Blues Archive, established by the university in 1984.

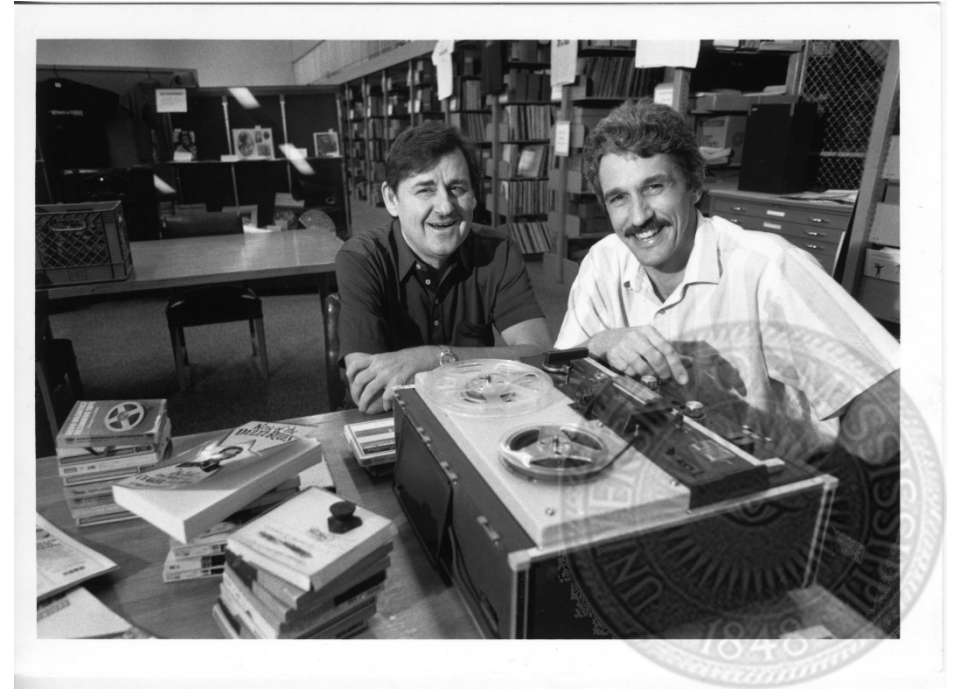




# Photos from the Blues Archive

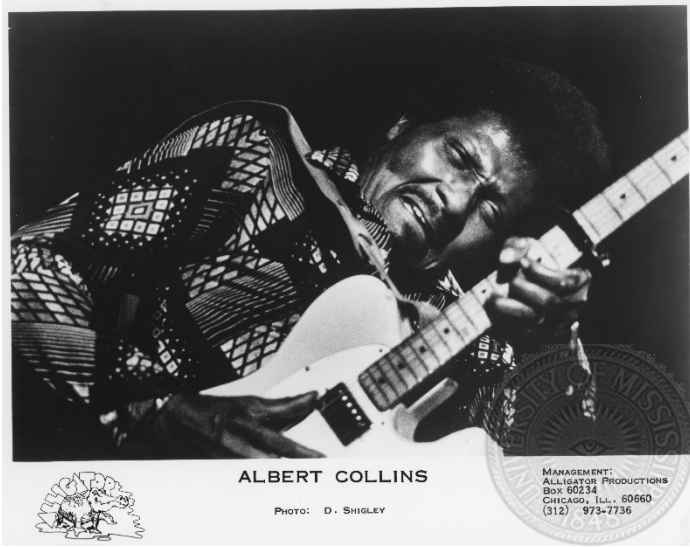


B. B. King visits the Blues Archive (11 June 1985), poses with his favorite record:  
*Genius + Soul = Jazz* / Ray Charles (1961)



Early Blues Archives staff Walter Liniger (left) and blues researcher Gayle Dean Wardlow with some of the interviews Wardlow recorded in the 1960s.

The Blues Archive was housed in Farley Hall until it merged with Archives & Special Collections in 2002.



Albert Collins (1932-1993)



Sister Rosetta Tharpe (1915-1973)



Lady Erma

## Displayed recordings from the Blues Archive:

- B. B. King Live “Now Appearing” at Ole Miss (1980, LP)
- Bottleneck Guitar Trendsetters of the 1930s (1980, LP)
- Rock in a Weary Land / Southern Sons Quartette (LP, Trumpet Records Collection)
- Play Something Pretty / Johnnie Taylor (1979, 45 RPM)
- Bo Diddley / Bo Diddley (B-Side, Checker 814; Sheldon Harris Collection)
- Shim Sham Shimmy / Champion Jack Dupree (1953/1954, 45 RPM)





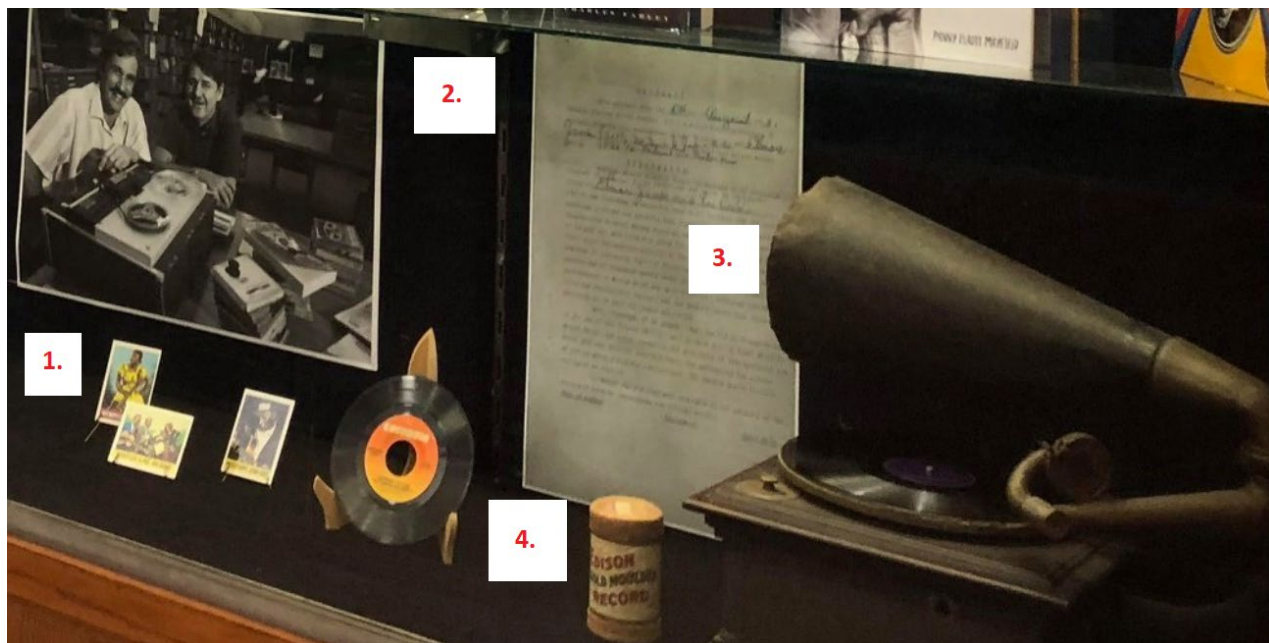
# Displayed books from the Blues Archive:

*(also available in our circulating collections)*

- Taj Mahal / Autobiography of a Bluesman / Taj Mahal with Stephen Foehr (2001)
- Bessie / Chris Albertson (2003)
- Woman with Guitar: Memphis Minnie's Blues / Paul and Beth Garon (1992)
- Soul of the Man: Bobby "Blue" Bland / Charles Farley (2011)
- Live from the Mississippi Delta / Panny Flautt Mayfield (2017)



# Additional artifacts



1. Selection of 3 trading cards from R. Crumb's *Heroes of the Blues* collection: Memphis Minnie, Whistler & His Jug Band, Mississippi John Hurt
2. Enlargement of the first page of the original recording contract for Elmore James with Trumpet Records (Trumpet Records Collection)
3. Antique Victrola
4. Antique wax cylinder: Edison Gold Moulded Record