

FILM SOURCES

The release of these DVDs by Shanachie Entertainment and the Country Music Hall of Fame® and Museum will give new life to what had been only a fond, shadowy memory. For many years, it was assumed that all of the many television performances by Flatt & Scruggs under Martha White sponsorship, beginning in 1955 and continuing until early 1969, had gone the way of dust.

In May 1989, however, a representative of Willis (Bill) and Katherine Graham contacted the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum on the couple's behalf. Bill Graham was a prime mover in the Nashville-based Noble-Dury Advertising Agency, the company that for many years represented Martha White Mills. While cleaning out the garage at his house on Tyne Boulevard in Nashville, Graham discovered old film copies and videotapes of vintage country music shows, including twenty-four episodes of the *Flatt & Scruggs Grand Ole Opry* show, and he donated the shows to the museum. Up until that time, the general belief was that the Flatt & Scruggs shows all had been erased or taped over, and that no copies survived. To find twenty-four shows intact amounted to discovering a treasure-trove for Flatt & Scruggs fans.

Graham died in 1990 at the age of sixty-nine. A Memphis native, he and wife Katherine had moved to Nashville in 1946, when Graham accepted a job at WSM radio. He later joined Noble-Dury, and he eventually bought the company. In the 1960s, Graham established Show Biz Inc., a pioneering TV syndication company.

A versatile writer, Graham created many songs and jingles, including BMI award-winning hits for top country performers Billy Walker and Jim Ed Brown, and crafted the

“Grand Ole Opry Tonight” theme. He also managed the careers of country artists through his company Top Billing Inc.

Soon after Graham’s film donation to the museum, another party contacted museum acquisitions chief Bob Pinson offering twelve more Flatt & Scruggs films—completely different installments—and Bob arranged to acquire those shows for the museum’s collection. Within a year, we went from believing none of the Flatt & Scruggs shows existed to having an abundance of episodes.

The preserved shows are films, recorded first on two-inch videotape, then transferred to film for broad distribution. Many were stored in metal cans that carried stickers from a Chicago TV station, WTTW, where the videotape-to-film transfers might have taken place. Other stickers indicated that some of the films might have been processed at MPL (Motion Picture Labs) in Memphis.

In recent months, with grant funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the films have been inspected and re-housed. A few have been transferred to Beta SP and shown in the museum’s Ford Theater, but most have not been seen since their original broadcast.