



THE EAST TENNESSEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MUSEUM of EAST TENNESSEE HISTORY  
Making history personal

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Museum of East Tennessee History Wins Highest Honor Among Awards at 2017 Tennessee Association of Museums Conference**

(Knoxville, TN) – The Museum of East Tennessee History was recently selected to receive the 2017 President’s Award, the highest project-based recognition presented by the Tennessee Association of Museums (TAM), for the *Come to Make Records: Knoxville’s Contribution to American Popular Music* exhibition, which also won TAM Awards of Excellence in the categories of best temporary exhibition and audiovisual component for an exhibition, for the introductory film produced by East Tennessee PBS. The President’s Award recipient is chosen from the top five scoring awards and the winner determined by the votes of the past presidents. The awards were presented at the recent Tennessee Association of Museums Conference held in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee.



*Ken Mayes, TAM president, presents awards to Lisa Oakley, curator of education, and Adam Alfrey, curator of exhibitions.*

*Come to Make Records* was organized by the East Tennessee Historical Society in partnership with the Knox County Public Library and the Tennessee Archive of Moving Image and Sound, a division of the Calvin M. McClung Historical Collection, as a temporary exhibition at the Museum of East Tennessee History and was on display April through October, 2016. The exhibit was developed to coincide with and provide context for the re-release of the St. James Sessions as a CD boxed set, which had been lovingly re-mastered by colleagues at the Tennessee Archive of Moving Image and Sound and Bear Family Records. In 1929 and 1930, the record label Brunswick-Vocalion took advantage of new technology that made recording equipment portable and traveled to Knoxville. Brunswick set up a studio in the St. James Hotel and recorded more than 40 artists who played not just country, but also jazz, blues and gospel. What is so striking about the St. James Sessions – especially when compared with similar location recordings made in Bristol and Johnson City at the same time – is their diversity. While many of the songs Vocalion recorded are “old time” stringband, jazz, big band, gospel, and blues make up a sizeable part of the collection. Additionally, many African American artists recorded tracks, including the Tennessee Chocolate Drops, Leola Manning, and Odessa Cansler. *Come to Make*

*Records* explored this musical and cultural diversity and challenged notions of what early 20<sup>th</sup> Appalachia actually looked and sounded like. The exhibition was sponsored by Clayton Homes and, along with associated programming, including the *Knoxville Stomp: Festival of Lost Music*, was the result of partnerships among Knox County Public Library, Tennessee Archive of Moving Image and Sound, East Tennessee PBS, Visit Knoxville, the East Tennessee Historical Society, and WDVX Radio.

“We value recognition from our peers in the museum field as a high compliment,” says Cherel Henderson, director of the East Tennessee Historical Society. “*Come to Make Records* was a very popular exhibition, reaching into the memories of Knoxvilleians, those across the region, and beyond.”

The purpose of the Awards of Excellence is to recognize, encourage, and promote excellence within the activities of the Tennessee museum community. Nominations are made either by museum staff or community individuals and are submitted in January to regional representatives for adjudication. Each entry is presented to the TAM Awards Committee, which is composed of six regional representatives, two at-large members, and the committee chair. The committee makes the final decisions for the awards. Awards are based on creativity, originality, resourcefulness, success, support of museum mission statement, and utilization of staff and volunteers.

#### **About the Tennessee Association of Museums:**

Founded in 1960, the Tennessee Association of Museums fosters communication and cooperation between museums, cultural societies, and other members on matters of common interest to all. Our goal is to inform the public on the importance of understanding and preserving Tennessee's cultural, historical, and scientific heritage. We also encourage publication and dissemination of information on the state's past as well as the development of professional standards of members who bring that past to the public. The organization is currently comprised of 109 museums and historic sites from across the state.

#### **About East Tennessee Historical Society**

Established in 1834, the East Tennessee Historical Society is widely acknowledged to be one of the most active history organizations in the Southeast, and enjoys a national reputation for excellence in programming and education. For 183 years the East Tennessee Historical Society has been helping East Tennesseans hold on to our unique heritage—recording the events, collecting the artifacts, and saving the stories that comprise the history we all share.

The historical society pursues its education mission through publications, lectures, conferences, school programs, museum exhibits, and heritage programs such as the popular First Families of Tennessee and the Civil War Families of Tennessee. The East Tennessee History Center houses the staff and programs of the East Tennessee Historical Society, the Museum of East Tennessee History, the Calvin M. McClung Collection, and the Knox County Archives. For more information visit the website at [www.eastTNhistory.org](http://www.eastTNhistory.org).

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