

- The nominee(s) made a significant contribution to the arts or entertainment industry in one or more of the following areas: music, dance, theater, writing, visual arts, motion pictures, television, or radio.  
A “significant” contribution would be iconic in terms of renown and the impact on the artistic disciplines or popular culture.

Nominee's Stage Name	Prince Albert McCoy
Nominee's Given Name	Prince McCoy
Date Range of Winston-Salem Residency (ex: 2015-2020)	1927-1968
Category -Select One	Music

#### Required Documentation

- Attach nominee’s performance/accomplishment biography which must include at least 5 years of accomplishments in the arts, culture, or entertainment field.
- Attach a list of nominee’s civic/community involvement.
- Attach a copy of nominee’s death certificate or obituary.

Nominee's Professional Accomplishments/Biography	<a href="#">Prince McCoy_Bio.pdf</a>
Nominee's Civic/Community Involvement	<a href="#">Prince McCoy_Bio_1.pdf</a>
Nominee's Death Certificate or Obituary	<a href="#">Prince McCoy_Evergreen Cemetery.jpeg</a>

(Section Break)

#### Nominator Information

First Name	Steve
Last Name	Jones
Address	2612 Alderney Ln
City	Winston-Salem
State	NC
ZIP Code	27103
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Prince McCoy  
From Find A Grave Website

In 1882, March 19, Prince Albert McCoy was born in St. Joseph, Louisiana. His mother moved with him to Greenville, Mississippi, his childhood home. At some point, he became a musician, leading an orchestra that played dances, civic functions, etc.

W. C. Handy was an orchestra leader who played polished show tunes and marches. Though he was exposed to the blues in the late 1800s, he had what music historians call an “enlightenment” to the power of that music in the early 1900s (circa 1903). In his 1941 autobiography, Handy wrote about playing a dance for white people at a courthouse in Cleveland, Miss. At one point, some people in the crowd asked Handy to play “some of our native music.” Handy gave it a shot, but the crowd was not satisfied and asked instead if a local band could play, according to Jim O’Neal, a researcher for the blues trail.

A trio of ragged-looking musicians took the stage, led by a guitar player who Handy described as a “long-legged chocolate boy.” They commenced to rock the courthouse with a style of music that had the crowd dancing and tossing silver dollars at the stage in appreciation.

Handy stood on the sidelines amazed, not just at the music’s raw power, but the ecstatic reaction from the crowd. The scene, and others, convinced Handy that the music deserved a wider audience, O’Neal said. “That showed him the beauty of primitive music,” O’Neal said. “It was not for the art of it, but for what it could do to a crowd.”

The trio was left nameless, but Handy researcher Elliott Hurwitt has found at least four unpublished manuscripts of Handy’s autobiography that identify the “long-legged chocolate boy” as Prince McCoy, a popular band leader in the Mississippi Delta at the time. For unknown reasons, McCoy’s name was stricken from the published autobiography, relegating him to obscurity. Hurwitt’s discovery, which he made in 2006, has rekindled interest in McCoy.

News accounts indicate McCoy developed his music and led seven- and eight-piece orchestras.

In 1909 the Vicksburg Herald reported that his band was already “of Delta-wide fame.”

In 1910, he played for the Alabama-Ole Miss football game in Greenville.

In 1916 he played for street dance on the block of Main Street near his marker, courthouse dances in Cleveland and Rosedale, and even the Mt. Heroden Literary Society in Vicksburg where he played violin solos and duets in 1921.

In an earlier, also unpublished, manuscript, Handy wrote: “McCoy used to play a piece called: ‘I’m A Winding Ball And I Don’t Deny My Name.’” The song, also known as “Winin’ (or Windin’) Boy Blues” among other titles, is identified with New Orleans icon Jelly Roll Morton, although Morton did not record it until 1938. Another seminal number played by McCoy resulted in Handy’s first published musical work, “Memphis Blues,”

according to Handy band member Stack Mangham of Clarksdale, who recalled, "It was the same thing we heard that night in Cleveland." A clarinetist who later played in McCoy's band, Douglas Williams, also had connections with Handy. In 1917 Handy published and recorded a Williams composition, "Hooking Cow Blues." Williams recorded 24 sides of his own in Memphis for Victor in 1928-1930.

In 1927, McCoy left Mississippi for Winston-Salem and married the former Carrie Young of Chester County, S.C.

In 1934, Prince and Carrie first show up in the Winston-Salem city directory, where he listed his occupation as a musician, living on East Eighth Street. O'Neal's research shows that he played with an eight-piece orchestra that traveled with Maxey's Medicine Show, entertaining the crowd with vaudeville songs. "This was a big show on the scale of the larger minstrel shows with a fleet of vehicles carrying people around," O'Neal said. "It was a free show, and Maxey would make his money trying to sell tonics to the crowd." O'Neal found one advertisement of the medicine show playing in Boston, giving McCoy, a product of the segregated South, a chance to see the country.

Around 1943, McCoy left music as a professional pursuit and became a janitor for the Bowman Gray School of Medicine, a position he held for several years.

In January 1951, the only known photo of McCoy was published in a company newsletter. McCoy towers above several fellow employees at a Christmas party for the black employees, a violin case tucked under his left arm, indicating he had been part of the party's music program. Librarians at the Coy C. Carpenter Library at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center scanned their records and found it.

In the 1950s, the tall, soft-spoken man used to play his violin on the front porch of the duplex that the McCoy's lived in between Patterson Avenue and Chestnut Street, next to Alma Peay and her mother and grandparents. Peay's memories of Prince McCoy are somewhat hazy. After all, she was a young child of maybe 4 or 5 years old then.

The McCoy's and the Peay's attended First Baptist Church, then on the corner of Sixth and Chestnut streets.

In December 2017, Peay viewed a film that someone in the church made on Jan. 26, 1947 to commemorate the groundbreaking of its new home on Highland Avenue. It is remarkable footage, showing streams of churchgoers in long coats and hats, dressed in their Sunday finest on a cold and misty winter day. The sharp-eyed Peay spotted McCoy, playing in a small orchestra outside the site of the new church, a violin propped against his chin.

The church's pastor at the time, Rev. David Hedgley had a daughter Christine Hedgley. In the film, she's the young clarinet player in front of McCoy. She is now Christine Hedgley Johnson, who lives in Santa Fe, N.M., after a long career with the U.S. Public Health Commissioned Corps. In the film, she was about 11 years old, and was a student at 14th Street Elementary School. "In the black community at that time, if you played an

instrument in the school band, you automatically played in the church band,” Johnson said. She knew McCoy as a reserved man who played jazz gigs with local black musicians, including Harry Wheeler, a legendary band director at the old Atkins High School. “Most of his music was outside the church. White people paid for him and his band to play gigs, their graduations and receptions and stuff like that,” Johnson said. “He did a lot of music for the doctors when they had receptions and Christmas parties.”

He and Carrie, who died in 1962 at the age of 62, had no children, and no relatives have been found.

Widower of Carrie (Young) McCoy.

Late in life, he moved to Blair’s Rest Home on East Fourth Street, and died on Feb. 4, 1968, at the age of 85.

In 2013, a historical marker was unveiled at the site of the courthouse dance in Cleveland, mentioning McCoy’s impact on Handy. But for all his influence on Handy, little is known about McCoy.

As of Thursday, October 19, 2017, McCoy has a historical marker on the Mississippi Blues Trail, joining a roster of some of the most revered artists in all of American music, including Robert Johnson, Muddy Waters, Howlin’ Wolf, Elvis Presley, John Lee Hooker and of course, Handy, who is credited with taking the blues to the mainstream with his compositions “St. Louis Blues,” “Yellowdog Blues” and “Beale Street Blues.” For more research credits, see: [msbluestrail.org/blues-trail-markers/prince-mccoy](http://msbluestrail.org/blues-trail-markers/prince-mccoy)

The Mississippi Blues Trail and Hurwitt are among those hungry for information on McCoy. He never published or recorded music, so there is no trail of documentation that could give glimpses into his musical career.

O’Donnell, Lisa. (2017). "Janitor at Bowman Gray School of Medicine recognized for long-hidden influence in development of American blues music." Winston-Salem Journal.

[journalnow.com/relishnow/music/janitor-at-bowman-gray-school-of-medicine-recognized-for-long/article\\_b52c9c59-10c0-5485-9004-b2bc20c86079.html](http://journalnow.com/relishnow/music/janitor-at-bowman-gray-school-of-medicine-recognized-for-long/article_b52c9c59-10c0-5485-9004-b2bc20c86079.html)

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