



Join the fun in and around Nashville

By Shirley Hallblade

Nashville's cultural attractions are varied and many

A CRL's 8th National Conference, with its dynamic speakers and programs, will bring many library professionals to Nashville, Tennessee, in April 1997. There will be some free time in the schedule, but conference attendees are encouraged to come early and/or plan for an extended stay to take advantage of the many things to see and do in and around Nashville. There is something for everyone—fine arts museums, sporting events, hiking trails, parks, historical sites, venues for live music and the performing arts—as well as the well-known Music Row area and the Opryland complex.

Art and history museums

Cheekwood Botanical Gardens and Fine Arts Center, located near the Belle Meade area of Nashville, offers a varied visual experience of the fine arts, architecture, and horticulture. The 55-acre complex is the former home of the Leslie Cheek family of Maxwell House coffee fame. Today a stately Georgian mansion houses a fine arts collection and features visiting exhibits such as the recent one on Andrew Wyeth. The surrounding gardens and greenhouses are lush with plants and flowers; a Japanese garden offers a quiet place for reflection.

The Carl Van Vechten Gallery on the Fisk University campus houses an impressive collection of works from the 20th century. It includes the Alfred Stieglitz Collection containing works by Georgia O'Keefe, Picasso, and Renoir.

The Parthenon, a full-size replica of the Athenian temple, includes art galleries featuring permanent exhibits of 19th- and 20th-century American painters as well as changing exhibits and shows. It is located in Centennial Park across from Vanderbilt University.

The Tennessee State Museum, located downtown in the Tennessee Performing Arts Center, features permanent exhibits of Tennessee artifacts and regional historical exhibits as well as traveling shows such as the current "Elvis and Marilyn" exhibit about these two pop culture icons.

Offering an extensive view of the popular cultural history of country music, the **Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum** has many exhibits that honor the great composers and entertainers and the history of country music, as well as showcasing contemporary artists. Among the items on display are Elvis Presley's gold piano and his Cadillac convertible. This museum is located less than a mile from downtown, next to Music Row, and is accessible by trolley or short cab ride.

The Cumberland Museum and Science Center features scientific, historical, and natural history exhibits, including live animals, planetarium presentations, and laser shows.

Historical architecture and mansions

Located near the downtown area is the **Tennessee State Capitol**, a marble and limestone building completed in 1845. Its architect, William Strickland, who died before seeing the project to completion, is buried in a niche in one of the capitol's walls. The capitol grounds include the tomb of James K. Polk, eleventh president of the United States.

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Belmont Mansion is an Italian-style villa located on the campus of Belmont University. It was built in 1850 by Adelia Acken, one of the wealthiest women in pre-Civil War times. The mansion survived Union occupation during the Civil War and was the center of Nashville's social life for several decades.

Belle Meade Mansion, known as the "Queen of Tennessee Plantations," was built in 1853 on a 5,300-acre plantation which was also the site of one of the finest thoroughbred breeding farms in America. Today the restored mansion sits on 30 acres of well-maintained grounds. It will be featured on one of the optional tours offered through the conference.

The Hermitage—home of Andrew Jackson ("Old Hickory"), the seventh president of the United States—is a national historic landmark. The recently restored Greek Revival house, with its furnishings used by Jackson and his family along with the surrounding grounds which include log cabins and the family burial site, will be featured on a post-conference optional tour. It is located a few miles from downtown.

Country music

The Grand Ole Opry, originally located in the Ryman Auditorium in downtown Nashville, now has a modern auditorium in the Opryland complex east of the city past the airport. Live performances of this legendary show known as radio's longest-running program are aired over radio station WSM-AM across many states on Friday and Saturday evenings. The theme park itself, focusing on the history of American music, will be open on weekends during the time that ACRL is in Nashville, offering a venue for family entertainment.

The Opryland Hotel, with its recently completed "Delta" addition featuring a 4.5-acre indoor garden with waterfalls, is worth a visit. The hotel has almost 3,000 rooms, several restaurants and shops, and features several indoor

conservatories and water structures. The General Jackson, docked near the Opryland Hotel, is the world's largest paddlewheel showboat and features day and evening cruises with dinner and entertainment. The Nashville Trolley system and water taxis operating on the

Cumberland River between downtown and the Opryland area offer interesting means of transportation and a view of the city.

The **Music Row** area, home of many recording company offices and studios, is a popular site for visitors as well. Bus tours are available and the downtown trolley goes there. The area includes many homes built in the 1920s and '30s that have been converted to offices and shops.

African American heritage

Nashville has a rich African American heritage, both in terms of its ethnic population (one-fourth of the city's residents are of African-American descent) and because of cultural and historical events that occurred there. In the 1950s and early 1960s, local black leaders founded the Nashville Christian Leadership Conference, an affiliate of Martin Luther King Jr.'s Southern Christian Leadership Conference. The group, working with college students and local churches, challenged local segregation policies through sit-ins and other nonviolent protests in shops and at lunch counters.

One of the optional tours to be offered to conference attendees includes visits to sites focusing on Nashville's African-American heritage such as the **National Baptist Publishing Board, Fisk University** (home of the world-famous Fisk Jubilee Singers), **Tennessee State University, Meharry Medical College, Fort Negley**, and various churches.

Recreation and sports

Nashville boasts many parks throughout the city, several of which feature acres of natural envi-

ronments enhanced with walking trails and roads that attract hikers, runners, bicyclists, and horseback riders. **Riverfront Park** downtown and **Centennial Park** a little over a mile from downtown are popular outdoor locations within the city. A little

further out, Radnor Lake and the 4,000 acres of woodlands and fields that comprise **Percy Warner and Edwin Warner Parks** are favorite places to enjoy nature walks and see birds, other wildlife, and the early spring wildflowers which should be in bloom in April.

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Belmont Mansion was built in 1850 and survived Union occupation during the Civil War. It is on the campus of Belmont Univ.

For attendees who enjoy organized sports, the city offers a number of public golf courses and outdoor tennis courts. In addition, the **Centennial Sportsplex** has indoor tennis courts and other facilities. **Greer Stadium** is home to the Nashville Sounds, a Triple A baseball club affiliated with the Chicago White Sox. The **Nashville Speedway** at the state fairgrounds offers NASCAR auto racing. The new arena, located immediately across from the Convention Center, will feature other spectator team sports and functions.

Music and the performing arts

As "Music City," Nashville has scores of venues for live music and performances of the symphony, visiting artists, and more. An article in a future issue of *C&RL News* will focus on the music scene in Nashville, providing a starting guide for conference visitors who want to experience some of the musical entertainment offered downtown and throughout the city.

Beyond Nashville

For those interested in spending additional time exploring the rich history and geography outside the immediate Nashville area, there are several opportunities for short trips or longer excursions. Pleasant drives into the country, a trip along the scenic and historic **Natchez Trace Parkway**, or a journey to the **Nashville Zoo** located on 135 acres of rolling Tennessee countryside are easily managed if you have access to a vehicle.

In and around the Nashville area, history buffs will enjoy a driving tour of various Civil

War sites including those of famous battles such as **Franklin and Shiloh**, as well as antebellum homes that served as headquarters for troops and as hospitals for the wounded. The state has developed a well-marked **Civil War Heritage Trail** to assist visitors interested in this aspect of the state's history.

Close by, within one to two hours of driving, one can visit attractions such as the **Jack Daniel's Distillery** in Lynchburg, the charming city of Franklin in Williamson County, and small communities such as **Bell Buckle**

which have become centers for local artists and craftspersons and which offer folk festivals and crafts fairs.

Venturing further into Tennessee about four hours to the west is **Memphis**, location of the famed **Beale Street** ("Home of the Blues"), **Graceland** (Elvis Presley's home), and **Mud Island** on the Mississippi River.

To the east, one can travel three to four hours and be in the **Great Smoky Mountains National Park**, located near Knoxville. The park is well-known for its beautiful scenery, wildlife, and hiking trails. A variety of motel and cabin accommodations is available in that area, but reservations should be made early.

Scheduled tours

The local arrangements committee has selected some sponsored, optional tours to offer as part of the conference agenda. Several half-day tours are planned for Friday, April 11, prior to the conference. On Saturday evening, April 12, arrangements have been made for tickets and transportation to a performance of the **Grand Ole Opry**. An additional tour offering is planned for Monday afternoon, April 14, following the conference. Details about these tours will be available in the preliminary program that will be mailed later this month and will be posted later on the ACRL National Conference homepage at <http://www.ala.org/acrl.html>. That homepage has links to the Nashville Convention and Visitors Bureau homepage at <http://nashville.musiccityusa.com/tour>, which has additional information about Nashville's attractions. ■