



American Legends: The Life of Gene Autry

Charles River Editors

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“Music has been the better part of my career. Movies are wonderful fun and they give you a famous face. But how the words and melody are joined, how they come together out of air and enter the mind, this is art. Songs are forever.” – Gene Autry

A lot of ink has been spilled covering the lives of history’s most influential figures, but how much of the forest is lost for the trees? In Charles River Editors’ American Legends series, readers can get caught up to speed on the lives of America’s most important men and women in the time it takes to finish a commute, while learning interesting facts long forgotten or never known.

In the early 20th century, Westerns were one of the most popular genres in Hollywood, and one of the young stars at the forefront was Gene Autry, a Texan whose life story made him a natural to be the country’s most famous “singing cowboy”. Autry would become a symbol of masculinity and morality on screen during the 1930s, but it was effortless for someone who had already grown up riding horses to school.

Autry came of age at a time when the “singing cowboy” was at the apex of his popularity, and like his most famous successor, Roy Rogers, Autry actually got his start in show business as a singer. Even today, Autry might be best known for being a pioneer of country music and the author of Christmas hits "Here Comes Santa Claus", "Frosty the Snowman", and "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer". Autry would produce hundreds of recordings during his life, helping ensure the popularity of the country music genre and earning inductions into several related halls of fame.

Of course, the popularity of Autry’s music and country music in general was bolstered by the fact that he became one of the biggest stars in Hollywood. After he was discovered in 1934, Autry made dozens of films and was still one of the industry’s biggest moneymakers when he went off to fight in World War II. Though his movie career had already hit its peak by the time he returned, Autry used his popularity and his skills to transition into television, and he dabbled in all kinds of other ventures, including owning a radio station and professional sports teams. By the end of his long life and career, Autry could lay claim to being the only man with 5 stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame for film, television, music, radio, and live performances.

American Legends: The Life of Gene Autry examines the life and career of one of America’s most famous singing cowboys. Along with pictures of important people, places, and events, you will learn about Gene Autry like never before, in no time at all.

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