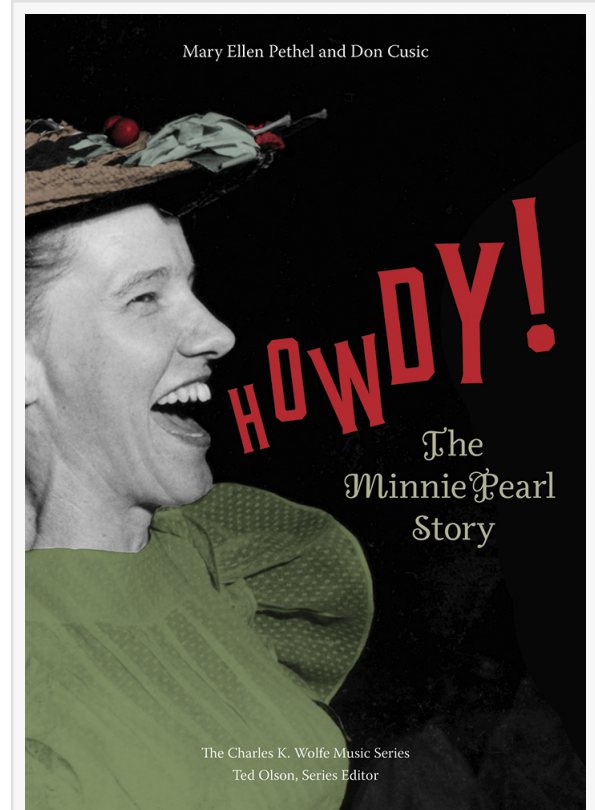


Award Winning Authors Dr. Mary Ellen Pethel & Dr. Don Cusic Deliver Definitive Biography of Country Legend Minnie Pearl

NOW AVAILABLE - "Howdy! The Minnie Pearl Story" Tells the story of the witty, trail blazing "Queen of Country Comedy"

NASHVILLE, TN, UNITED STATES, October 9, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The performer known as Minnie Pearl was born Sarah Ophelia Colley in 1912 and grew up in Centerville, Tennessee. During the Great Depression, Sarah moved to Nashville to study theater at the Ward-Belmont School. After graduating, she joined a touring theater company and performed throughout the Southeast. It was on the road, in 1936, that she met Mattie Burden, who became the inspiration for the iconic persona Minnie Pearl — a witty country girl known for her signature greeting and straw hat with a dangling price tag. Years later, Minnie Pearl would be crowned the "Queen of Country Comedy" at the Grand Ole Opry, share the stage with Johnny Cash and Patsy Cline, and blaze a trail for generations of female performers who followed in her footsteps.



Howdy! The Minnie Pearl Story Cover Art. (Courtesy UT Press)

With [Howdy! The Minnie Pearl Story](#), authors Dr. Mary Ellen Pethel and Dr. Don Cusic have delivered the definitive biography of this country legend. Rich with 155 historic photographs and drawing from archives and interviews with those who knew her, Howdy! covers the many chapters of Sarah Ophelia Colley Cannon's life, capturing both her enduring humor and the woman behind the laughter. Sources include Dolly Parton, who says, "Minnie was more than a big laugh. She was a big heart, and I will always love her," and k. d. lang, who notes, "Minnie understood where country music needed to go and who it needed to embrace. She was a visionary."

Mary Ellen Pethel and Don Cusic's book is the 18th in UT Press's Charles K. Wolfe Music Series, edited by Ted Olson. The series was launched in honor of the late Charles K. Wolfe (1943–2006),

whose pioneering work in the study of American vernacular music brought a deepened understanding of a wide range of American music to a worldwide audience. In recognition of Dr. Wolfe's approach to music scholarship, the series includes books that investigate genres of folk and popular music as broadly as possible. Previously released titles in the series include *Waylon: A Biography* and *The Story of the Dulcimer*.

Howdy! *The Minnie Pearl Story* is available for purchase at utpress.org and wherever books are sold.

Dr. Mary Ellen Pethel is an associate professor and academic leader at Belmont University Where she directs interdisciplinary initiatives, including the Global Honors Program.

An award-winning author of six books on education, women, and sports, her most recent book is *Title IX*, Pat Summitt, and Tennessee's Trailblazers. A public historian, she served as a consultant and cast member for the documentary, *Facing the Laughter: Minnie Pearl*. Dr. Pethel also leads Nashville Sites as Executive Director and serves as an archivist at Harpeth Hall School.

Dr. Don Cusic is an award-winning American author, songwriter, and record producer best known as a historian of U.S. popular music. He is the author of more than 30 books, most of them related to country music, including biographies of legendary performers such as Eddy Arnold, Roger Miller, Merle Haggard, and Gene Autry. His most recent book, *Chet Atkins: Mr Guitar* was met with wide-acclaim.

Dr. Cusic is a special correspondent for *Billboard Magazine*, a book reviewer for *MusicRow Magazine*, and an editor for the trade magazines *Record World* and *Cashbox*. He also served as a consultant for Ken Burns' acclaimed documentary miniseries *Country Music*.

He holds the position of Curb Professor of Music Industry History at Belmont University in Nashville, where his former students include country stars Brad Paisley and Chris Young. In addition to his teaching and writing, Dr. Cusic is a frequent contributor of liner notes for prominent recording artists and has written numerous encyclopedia entries, magazine articles, and book chapters.

In August, 2025, Don was honored with the Colonal aide de camp Award In 2022, he was inducted into the Western Music Association Hall of Fame, recognizing his enduring impact on the history and preservation of American music.

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