

across the South. By 1909, Handy had moved to Memphis, Tennessee and began composing the Blues. While Handy did not create the genre, he is credited with bringing it to a wider audience and popularizing the sound outside of the Delta or the South. His first published composition was the "Memphis Blues," which, along with the "Saint Louis Blues" and the "Beale Street Blues," named for his resident street in Memphis, made him an international success. In Memphis, Handy partnered with Harry Pace and founded the Pace & Handy firm, the first successful African American-owned music publishing company. In 1918, Handy moved to New York City and established the Handy Brothers Music Company in 1921.

He continued to compose and publish music for the rest of his life, alongside writing some books and an autobiography. He regularly returned home to Florence and would perform charity concerts to

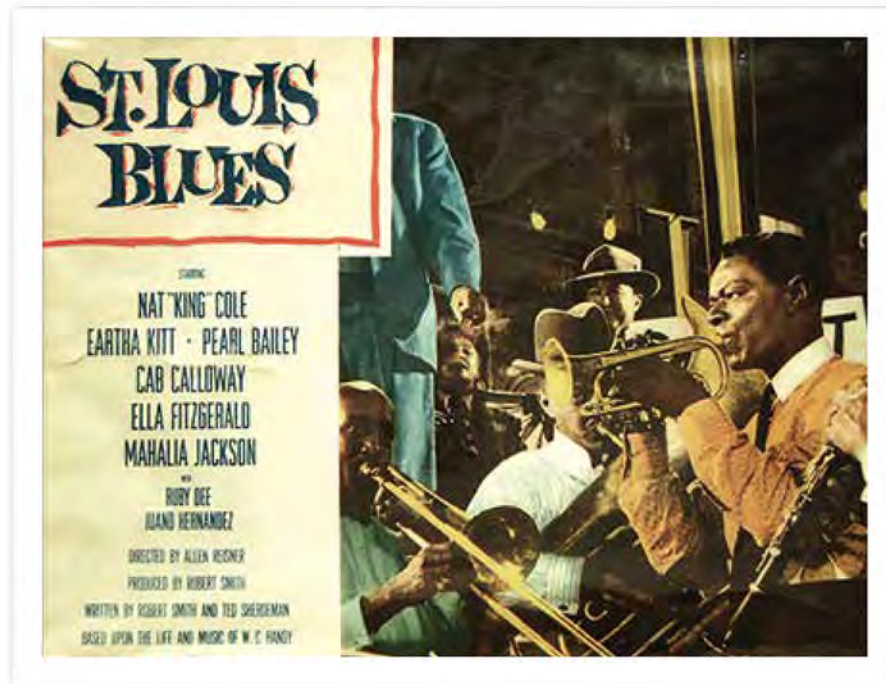
(Below) W. C. Handy, Circa 1940s (Alabama Music Hall of Fame via Encyclopedia of Alabama)



raise money for churches in the Shoals. Much of Handy's music was influenced by religious hymns, and he composed more than 30 spiritual songs. His



(Above) W. C. Handy and Student Donell Callaway, 13 Years Old, New York City, 1954 (www.wbur.org) **(Below)** Poster for the 1958 Film "St. Louis Blues" Based on Handy's Life and Music (Alabama Music Hall of Fame via Encyclopedia of Alabama) **(Right)** Photograph of the Cabin Handy was Born in Before it was Restored, Circa 1950s (Alabama Music Hall of Fame via Encyclopedia of Alabama)



grandfather, Rev. William Wise Handy, had been a pastor of the St. Paul AME Church, as was his father, Rev. Charles Bernard Handy. The Handys were highly involved in the church and helped St. Paul get its second location in downtown Florence in 1895. Later, W.C. would purchase one of the memorial windows in the second church, which would be moved to the third and present church near his childhood home.

The W.C. Handy House and Museum is now located on West College Street next to Burrell Slater High School. The log cabin where W.C. Handy was born was built by his grandfather. It was originally located



about a half mile north in a neighborhood known as Handy Hills. The house was dismantled in 1954 and put in storage until it could be restored and reassembled. In 1970, the cabin was restored to its original condition and moved to its current location. When Handy died in 1958 in New York, he instructed that all his possessions be sent back to Florence. The house museum is filled with original sheet music,



(Above) A U.S. Postal Stamp Featuring W. C. Handy, Issued 1969 (Memphis Music Hall of Fame) **(Below)** Photograph of W. C. Handy House and Museum, 2002 (Historical Marker Database www.HMdb.org, via user Sandra Hughes)

