

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Robert Lockwood, Jr.

---

## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Lockwood, Robert Jr., 1915-2006
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Robert Lockwood, Jr.,
<b>Dates:</b>	January 14, 2005
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2005
<b>Physical Description:</b>	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:44:12).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Blues guitarist Robert Lockwood, Jr. (1915 - 2006 ) was a legendary blues guitarist who was inducted into the Blues Hall of Fame in 1989. Lockwood was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 14, 2005, in Cleveland, Ohio. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2005_017
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

---

## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Guitarist and blues legend Robert Lockwood, Jr., a native of Turkey Scratch, Arkansas, was born on March 27, 1915. Lockwood, who held honorary doctorates from Case Western Reserve University and Cleveland State University, received his early education in Arkansas.

Lockwood's first instrument was the pump organ, which he began to play as a young child; he later learned to play guitar from his stepfather, legendary blues artist Robert Johnson. Lockwood left school and began his professional career at age fifteen, traveling throughout the Mississippi Delta playing in juke joints and parties with Johnson, harpist Sonny Boy Williamson (a.k.a. Rice Miller), Johnny Shines, and others.

Lockwood made his first recordings in 1941 with Doc Clayton on his famous Bluebird Sessions in Aurora, Illinois. Among the four singles made were Take a Little Walk With Me and Little Boy Blue. Later that year, Lockwood returned to Helena, Arkansas, where he hosted a popular live radio broadcast on station KFFA, sponsored by the King Biscuit Company. Lockwood performed in all of the major blues centers, including Memphis, Tennessee, and St. Louis, Missouri; by the early 1950s he was working as one of the top session artists for Chess Records in Chicago.

In the 1960s, Lockwood moved to Cleveland, Ohio, settling down in the Hough community, where he purchased a home and raised his family. Lockwood's solo recording career began in 1970 with the album Steady Rollin' Man. In the 1980s, Lockwood and longtime friend Johnny Shines recorded three albums.

Lockwood won a number of awards, including the W.C. Handy Award for Best Traditional Blues Album in 1980, and the National Heritage Fellowship Award in 1995. In 1989 Lockwood was inducted into the Blues Hall of Fame, and in 1998, he was inducted into the Delta Blues Hall of Fame in Cleveland, Mississippi.

Lockwood and his wife Mary lived in Cleveland, Ohio; he passed away on November 21, 2006.

---

## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Robert Lockwood, Jr. was conducted by Regennia Williams on January 14, 2005, in Cleveland, Ohio, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Blues guitarist Robert Lockwood, Jr. (1915 - 2006 ) was a legendary blues guitarist who was inducted into the Blues Hall of Fame in 1989.

---

## Restrictions

### Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

### Restrictions on Use

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

---

## Related Material

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

---

## Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

### Persons:

Lockwood, Robert Jr., 1915-2006

Williams, Regennia (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Lockwood, Robert Jr., 1915-2006--Interviews

---

African American musicians--Interviews

---

Blues musicians--Interviews

---

## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

---

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

---

## Occupations:

Blues Guitarist

---

## HistoryMakers® Category:

MusicMakers

---

## Administrative Information

### Custodial History

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

### Preferred Citation

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Robert Lockwood, Jr., January 14, 2005. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

### Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

---

## Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

---

## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Lockwood, Jr., Section A2005\_017\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:00 ?

Robert Lockwood, Jr. was born on March 27, 1915 in Turkey Scratch, Arkansas. His father was Robert Lockwood. He was raised by a paternal uncle in Marvell,

Arkansas. His grandfather was a farmer and Baptist preacher who owned a pump organ, which Lockwood learned to play from his cousins at eight years old. His mother, Estelle Starns Lockwood, brought Lockwood to Helena, Arkansas when he was about ten years old. There he attended North End Elementary School and Eliza Miller High School through the seventh grade. As a teenager, Lockwood learned to play blues guitar from the legendary Robert Johnson, his mother's boyfriend. The same year Johnson died, Lockwood was nearly poisoned to death by his girlfriend but was cured by a healer. Lockwood played with older musicians in Helena and alongside Sonny Boy Williamson II on the 'King Biscuit Time' blues radio show in 1940. An ear injury from boxing precluded his military service. Lockwood also talks about the origins and myths of blues music, and fellow musicians.

African American musicians--Interviews.

Blues musicians--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Lockwood, Jr., Section A2005\_017\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:30 ?

Robert Lockwood, Jr. worked as a studio musician for recording executives Leonard and Phil Chess of Chess Records in Chicago, Illinois for almost thirteen years. Lockwood moved to Cleveland, Ohio in the mid-1960s to play with Sonny Boy Williamson II. They performed at Hough Avenue restaurants. Lockwood had three sons and a daughter with Annie Roberts. They married in 1965 and purchased a home in Cleveland. To support his family, Lockwood toured internationally and managed a drugstore. Lockwood and his wife were out of town during the Hough Riots of 1966, but he was told that the riot originated in a dispute between pimps, prostitutes and the owners of The 79er club where he worked. When Lockwood and his wife returned home, they were told not to return to work. Later, he was offered The 79er in exchange for rehabilitating it, but refused. Lockwood also talks about Elvis Presley's and Muddy Waters' music, other genres that preceded and influenced the blues and the unique qualities of his own compositions.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Lockwood, Jr., Section A2005\_017\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:20 ?

Robert Lockwood, Jr. recorded 'Steady Rollin' Man' on Delmark Records in 1970 and 'Hangin' On' on Rounder Records. He also contributed to amateur ethnomusicologist Peter B. Lowry's collection and label, Trix Records. However, Lockwood never received royalties from Lowry. Lockwood recorded one album, 'What's the Score?' on his own label, Lockwood Records, in 1990. In 2001, Lockwood received his first honorary doctorate from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio and another from Cleveland State University in 2002. He has been honored with a National Heritage Fellowship, local holidays in Cleveland and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and a street in Cleveland. At the time of the interview, Lockwood had recently recorded 'Delta Crossroads' for Telarc and his granddaughter was writing his biography. Lockwood also talks about teaching the blues to a younger generation in Cleveland schools and universities, Robert Johnson and exploitation in the music industry. Lockwood plays 'Love in Vain' on his guitar.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Lockwood, Jr., Section A2005\_017\_001\_004, TRT: 0:15:22 ?

Robert Lockwood, Jr. regularly appeared at the annual King Biscuit Blues Festival in Helena, Arkansas; at the time of the interview, he still planned to attend. In this part of the interview, Lockwood talks about his grandchildren, his concerns about the exploitation of African American musicians and his

upcoming ninetieth birthday celebration performances. He reflects upon the rigorous touring schedule that has kept him from taking a vacation throughout his life. Lockwood concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.