



# American Legends: The Life of Dolly Parton

*Charles River Editors*

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\*Includes pictures

\*Includes Parton's own quotes about her life and career

\*Includes a bibliography for further reading

“If you don’t like the road you’re walking, start paving another one.” – Dolly Parton

“I’m not offended by all the dumb blonde jokes because I know I’m not dumb... and I also know that I’m not blonde.” – Dolly Parton

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.

Few celebrities are as much a product of their native land as Dolly Parton. While many celebrities have desperately tried to get as far away as possible from their impoverished upbringings, Parton constructed her star persona around the image of Appalachian country music culture. In many ways, Parton was raised in a quintessential Appalachian family, and while she has been resolute in expressing her affection for this background, it is impossible to deny that her upbringing posed obstacles that were difficult to overcome and related to societal and industrial levels. However, as Curtis Ellison put it, “A good part of Parton’s public image has been one of rustic coziness rendered in picturesque regional [Appalachian] idioms.” Not only did she make her performing debut at the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, but despite forays into pop music, her performing style remains anchored in the brand of country music that made the Grand Ole Opry one of the iconic performing venues in the United States. On a personal level, despite spending much of her time in Hollywood, Parton continues to maintain an amusement park in Tennessee—the aptly titled “Dollywood”—and her frequent appearances there attest to her enduring connection to the land of her upbringing.

As much as Dolly Parton is identified with rural Tennessee, her star image has progressed beyond the socially conservative climate of the Smoky Mountain region. At first glance, Parton appears to embody the regressive image of the objectified woman, and given her busty figure and numerous cosmetic surgeries, it’s clear she cares a great deal about her appearance. As she once joked, “The only way I’d be caught without makeup is if my radio fell in the bathtub while I was taking a bath and electrocuted me and I was in between makeup at home. I hope my husband would slap a little lipstick on me before he took me to the morgue.” However, there is also a way in which she has come to represent liberated femininity. Indeed, since making her entrance into the performing industry in the late 1960s, Parton has striven to attain a level of mastery over her career that was unusual for her time, and she has been successful in controlling the discourse that surrounds her, a feat achieved through highly deliberate responses to interviews and publicity requests. It is telling that one of Dolly’s most famous songs is “9 to 5”, an indication that she represents American working women.

American Legends: The Life of Dolly Parton chronicles how Parton’s family background and performing career established her persona, as well as her nuanced relationship with gender and social issues. Along with pictures of important people, places, and events, you will learn about Dolly Parton like never before, in no

time at all.

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