

Tony Thomas Classes for the Berkeley Old Time Music Convention September 2021

“Gus Cannon and the Big Banjo World of 120 Years Ago” Thursday September 23

“Gus Cannon and Five String Banjo in the Era of the Blues” Sunday September 26

We will discuss Gus Cannon’s life and music focusing on his 1927 to 1930 recordings. You do not need to attend one class to enjoy the other. It is not necessary to play the banjo to enjoy or understand either class. Readings and links that can help inform you are listed below, but you do not need to read or view them to enjoy these classes.

All links [like this](#) are live Internet links. Clicking on them on a device with Internet access will take you to their web location and for books and CDs where they are on Amazon.

Web: Read this short online essay I wrote for Oxford University Press first:

[“The Banjo and African American Musical Culture”](#)

Books:

If you can, read “Gus Cannon—‘The Colored Champion Banjo Pugilist of the World’ and the Big World of the Banjo” by Tony Thomas in *Banjo Roots and Branches* and “Why African Americans Put the Banjo Down” by Tony Thomas in *Hidden in the Mix: The African American Presence in Country Music*. Library, Kindle, borrowed, and used copies are just as good as fully purchased copies. You will enjoy these classes if you do not read any of this.

Recordings:

There are many YouTubes of Cannon’s recordings, but we are only interested in the 1927 to 1930 recordings. Just Google “Gus Cannon” and “YouTube.” For “Gus Cannon, Five String Banjo, and Black Music in the Era of the Blues” try to observe differences between Cannon’s Jug Stomper’s 1930 recording of [“Mule Get Up in The Alley”](#) with the Noah Lewis Jug Band’s Recording of [“New Minglewood Blues”](#).

To hear it all, get Document Records’ reissue of Cannons 1927-30 recording. They contain more and have not been modified in pitch or speed as other collections have. You need not hear them to enjoy the classes but doing so will vastly improve your life.

[Gus Cannon Vol. 1 \(1927-1928\)](#) and [Gus Cannon & Noah Lewis Vol. 2 \(1929-1930\)](#)

You can email Tony Thomas at tonythomasbanjo@gmail.com about Cannon, the classes, the banjo, or anything else.