

Amory, Mississippi. Where is this place and, more importantly, why should I care? This little known city of 7,300 +/- is located in North East Mississippi in Monroe County. Home to dedicated and gifted student athletes, brilliant and inventive students and youth, and community involved citizens Amory is a railroad city at heart. In 1887, the officials for Kansas City, Memphis and the Birmingham Railroad requested a survey of a railroad right of way that would connect Birmingham and Memphis. The halfway point would soon be named Amory after Mr. Harcourt Amory from Massachusetts. Mr. Amory was in the cotton and cotton factory business and served as an executive officer for Lancaster Mills. He was a graduate of Harvard University and a collector of rare Lewis Carroll materials.

Amory has been visited by British royalty, presidents, Hollywood stars, and famous musicians and athletes. Amory is home to the National Guard Old Amory. This is a historic building in Amory built originally for the National Guard and later served as a venue for artists to perform. Johnny Cash, Carl Perkins, and Elvis Presley were known to perform at the National Guard Old Armory multiple times during the mid 1950 era. Johnny Cash and Carl Perkins have reminisced in various articles, biographies, and autobiographies that the song "Blue Suede Shoes" was written as a result of a concert held in Amory, Mississippi at the National Guard Old Armory where the two performed. Stan Perkins, son of Carl, has performed there multiple times during fundraisers for the building that have taken place annually since the beautiful renovation on the building courtesy of the generous Dalrymple Foundation. The love for the city of Amory exhibited by the Dalrymple foundation is evident in the roles they play within the city and community events. Amory, as a hometown often will, has a way of staying in your soul. You never forget Main Street, Frisco Park (home of the Frisco Engine 1529 that carried President Franklin D. Roosevelt to Amory in 1934), the school (Go Panthers), parades, and community events. Amory Native Sam Haskell never forgot his roots. As a top executive for the William Morris Agency he used his connections to help those in his home town. His mother instilled within him the importance of education which he shared through the creation of *Stars Over Amory* (later known as *Stars Over Mississippi*). This was a concert that brought stars such as Whoopi Goldberg, Dolly Parton, Brad Garrett, Tom Arnold, John Dye, Kathy Ireland, Vince Gill, Phil Hartman, Nell Carter, Mary Ann Mobley, Gary Collins, Debbie Allen, Jaleel White, Sela Ward, Joan Van Ark, Ray Romano, Prince Edward of Windsor, and many more to Amory to support education by raising funds for the Mary Kirkpatrick Haskell Scholarship Foundation.

These celebrities and talented individuals visited Amory. That's great, but still, why should I care? We also know how to produce talent for the world to enjoy. Some of our most notable residents include Lt. Col. Herman Carter of the original 33 Tuskegee Airmen, John Dye known for his roll on *Touched by an Angel*, All-American football player Rufus French, Will Hall, actress Taylor Spreitler, singer and songwriter Priscilla Barker, actor and writer Gary Grubbs, musician Lucille Bogan, who was an early and controversial blues singer who broke ground and barriers for female singers across all racial lines, Floyd Mayweather, Sr., Mitch Moreland, John Milstead, Kit Thorn, and much more.

You may now add to our list of inspiring performers and athletes the name Trent Harmon. From his youth his family encouraged the talents he exhibited through church, community functions, the annual Amory Railroad Festival, Amory School productions that led to performances at the Orpheum Theater in Memphis, TN, and college performances. His multitalented and supportive family owns and operates a restaurant called the Longhorn Fish and Steakhouse in Becker, MS (a small town south of Amory) where he often sings. Whether you watch "American Idol" or not, you have surely seen and heard via social media and traditional media outlets of Trent Harmon the "Mississippi Man" from Amory who has taken the musical giant known as "American Idol" by storm. He is breaking stereotypes of how others view Mississippians through his talent for music. We do not all walk, talk, and sound alike. We do not all listen to country music. Mississippi,

as all other states, is diverse in musical culture. Amory is located less than thirty minutes from the birthplace of Elvis Presley for instance. Mississippi has produced diverse talent in various genres from Rod Brasfield, Jimmy Buffett, B. B. King, Blind Melon, 3 Doors Down, Jerry Clower, Elizabeth Greenfield, Faith Hill, the Mississippi Mass Choir, and so many more talented athletes, musicians, and performers. Molded from musical exposure diverse in blues, rockabilly, folk, country, and rock Trent has created a sound that surprises and delights.

For those of you who don't know, he is doing fairly well (understatement). He is currently in the Top 24 and a popular favorite for viewers, fans, and Amory. Much as the National Guard Old Armory influenced music through collaborative efforts and projects by musicians, shows such as "American Idol" serve the same purpose. There can only be one winner, but do we not all win something from the show? Talent is something created naturally via genetics and nurtured by family, love, environment, and community. There is so much talent displayed for our enjoyment as a result of this television show and others that follow the same format. To see another of Amory's wonderfully talented people displayed on national television for the world to enjoy simply makes us #AmoryProud. Trent, enjoy this time, this collaboration with other talented beings, and this wonderment, but always remember where you come from is proud of you. No matter the outcome, Trent, don't stop believing.

#AmoryProud

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