

# The Bandera PROPHECY

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Today in Texas history

By Bandera Spirits of Texas

On this day in 1933, country music pioneer Jimmie Rodgers, nicknamed "the Singing Brakeman," died in New York City at the age of 35. Rodgers, born in Mississippi in 1897, worked as a brakeman on railroads throughout the South and learned songs from black railroad workers, who also taught him to play the banjo and the guitar. A severe case of tuberculosis, contracted in 1924, forced Rodgers to retire from the railroad.

In 1927 he signed a contract with the Victor Talking Machine Company, and his records catapulted him to almost immediate fame. He recorded 111 songs altogether and sold 20 million records between 1927 and 1933.

Rodgers enthralled radio, recording and stage audiences with his performance of songs that seemed to catalogue the varied memories and experiences of small town and rural Americans. To seek relief from tuberculosis, Rodgers moved to the Hill Country and in 1929 built a \$50,000 mansion in Kerrville, but left there to live in a modest home in San Antonio in 1932.

Among the many performers who either knew or were influenced by Rodgers are Mance Lipscomb, Freddie King, Ernest Tubb, Lefty Frizzell, Tommy Duncan, Kenneth Threadgill and Bill Neely.