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Golden Crest Records: The Independent Record Industry Comes to Long Island

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Abstract: Golden Crest Records was headed by Cold Spring Harbor resident Clark Galehouse at manufacturing premises in Huntington Station from 1956 until his death in 1983. Galehouse saw the independent record business grow from a cottage industry to a powerhouse on the back of rock 'n' roll music. He participated in this growth through his Shelley Products pressing plant, servicing many national labels. Through Golden Crest and other labels, he released a wide range of music from rock 'n' roll and rhythm & blues to the classics; artists included veteran jazz violinist Joe Venuti, composer Alec Wilder and rock 'n' rollers the Wailers. Galehouse also recorded many college bands throughout the country. As a musician, plastics expert, recording engineer and educator he put his talents to full use in the Shelley Products and Golden Crest businesses.

Keywords: Clark Galehouse, Golden Crest Records, Huntington Station, independent record label, pressing plant, recording studio, rock 'n' roll, Shelley Products, Shelley Records, Wailers

1 Before this technological era of music carriers, iPods, MP3s and digital downloads, Golden Crest Records was Long Island's only significant gramophone record company. Operating from 1956 through 1984 and based in Huntington Station, it flirted with national influence through hit records by the Wailers in 1959 and 1964, and released a broad spectrum of American music from rock 'n' roll, doo wop, teen and R&B to the classics, chamber music and jazz. Many describe this period as America's golden age in popular culture when the nation's music, along with its movies, literally conquered the world.

2 As a music history author, I saw Golden Crest as an ideal case study to

research the American independent record industry, which started to take off in the post-World War II years. This research manifested itself in my book, *Record Makers and Breakers: Voices of the Independent Record Pioneers* (University of Illinois Press, 2009). [1]

- 3 The Golden Crest label was a subsidiary of Shelley Products, one of the top independent record manufacturing plants on the Eastern Seaboard, servicing a wide variety of nationally-known labels including ABC-Paramount, Atlantic, Imperial-Liberty, London and United Artists. Yet I was unable to find any local references to the Golden Crest and Shelley businesses at 220 Broadway. Surely the impressive little history book on Huntington Station, with its list of old businesses on the Broadway, would yield results? [2] No, nothing. Why not? Let's dig a little deeper into this forgotten slice of Huntington and Long Island history.



Figure 1: Former Shelley Products building at 220 Broadway, Huntington Station, 2009. (All images courtesy Golden Crest Records, unless noted otherwise).

Post-World War II National Recording Scene

- 4 To put Golden Crest Records into perspective, we need to look at the independent record business in the United States that mushroomed after 1945. At that point the record industry was controlled by major labels RCA Victor, Columbia and Decca. After the end of World War II, the majors concentrated on the profitable pop and classical music markets, clearing the way for the nascent indie labels to target localized markets such as rhythm & blues (then known as race music), hillbilly, gospel, jazz and polka. Out of this new beginning arose independent labels such as Capitol, King, Mercury, Modern, Savoy and Specialty, to be joined a few years later by the iconic Atlantic, Chess and Sun imprints. [3]
- 5 These brash new kids on the block, with energy and enterprise to spare, were able to succeed because there was a wealth of untapped talent available as well as an audience craving for the music of its heritage. An ad hoc business model was set up through a cartel involving record manufacturers (the labels), record distributors with closely defined territories, jukebox box distributors and operators, record shops, record pressing plants, radio stations and disc jockeys, music publishers, trade magazines and booking agents. Add promotion men to the mix – it was mainly a male-dominated industry, but not exclusively so – and the machinery had been created to move a record with speed from studio to consumer. [4]
- 6 Not only was the major labels' stranglehold broken, but the Tin Pan

Alley publishers' monopoly was upset too. As a result, the record market was opened up for every aspiring artist, musician and songwriter throughout the United States. By the mid-1950s, the segregated R&B, hillbilly and gospel styles had converged as rock 'n' roll, with rock music following in the wake of the Beatles-led British Invasion a decade later.

- 7 Huntington Station's Golden Crest Records and Shelley Products were two independently owned businesses that were able to take advantage of this social and cultural revolution through an exploding market.

The Long Island Sound?

- 8 What types of musical styles were prevalent on Long Island? This question poses a big local problem resulting from the Island's close proximity to the major music center of New York. Thus, unlike regional music hubs such as Chicago, New Orleans, Texas, Memphis and Nashville, Long Island never developed its own identifiable style.

- 9 That's not to say the Island was lacking in talent. A glance at the Long Island Music Hall of Fame inductees reveals artists as diverse as Mose Allison, Louis Armstrong, Count Basie, John Coltrane, Billy Joel and Lou Reed; bluesmen Little Buster and Sammy Taylor, once a WUSB Stony Brook disc jockey, were very influential on the local club scene.^[5] Earlier, there was a coterie of jazz singers residing in St. Albans, Queens including Ella Fitzgerald, Lena Horne and Fats Waller (along with Basie), also blues shouter Wynonie Harris; on the distaff side, R&B great Ruth Brown was a teacher's aide in Wyandanch and soul singer Maxine Brown lived in Hempstead. Premier rock 'n' roll/R&B songwriter Mike Stoller was born in Belle Harbor, Queens; equally esteemed songwriter Doc Pomus lived in Lynbrook; and Bayville's singer/songwriter Jimmy Webb is a recent resident.

- 10 Golden Crest Records apart, realtor Lou Fargo operated Fargo Records from Valley Stream in the late 1950s, enjoying a national top 20 hit with "You" by the Aquatones.

- 11 There were a few small labels in Brooklyn and Queens but that was about it. Once again, the pull of New York City was irresistible. For example, the Bell Notes, from East Meadow, had a top 10 rock 'n' roll hit in 1959 with "I've Had It" for Manhattan-based Time Records.

- 12 Not surprisingly, Long Island's suburban pleasures made it a favored place for record men to live and play over the years. Among them were Johnny Bienstock of Big Top (Southampton), Ahmet Ertegun of Atlantic and Seymour Stein of Sire (both in the Hamptons), Doug Morris of Universal Records (Laurel Hollow), Sol Rabinowitz of Baton (Syosset), Bob Shad of Time/Sittin' In With (Great Neck), Jerry Wexler of Atlantic (Great Neck, East Marion, East Hampton) and Hy Weiss of Old Town (Woodbury). Clark Galehouse made his home at Cold Spring Harbor by converting an old boathouse in the 1940s.

Clark Galehouse, Golden Crest Founder

- 13 Born in 1911 at Pontiac, Illinois, Galehouse was a product of the swing jazz era. The call of the big bands led him to play tenor saxophone in Al Capone-owned clubs in Chicago, and to arrange for the bands of Joe Venuti, Anson Weeks and Paul Whiteman. Seeing Tin Pan Alley-

dominated New York as the center of the music universe, he moved there in 1937. While awaiting his union card, he wrote arrangements for Buck Ram (the future genius behind the Platters vocal group) and became a stock arranger for Mills Music. This New York connection would prove to be invaluable in his Golden Crest years. In 1939 he married Aleece, a concert swing harpist who played throughout the United States, also Canada and Mexico, bringing an end to their days on the road.



Figure 2: Clark Galehouse (second from right) with group, early 1930s, Troutdale in the Pines, Colorado.

- 14 After Galehouse formed a plastics company with Arnold Brillhart in Mineola, he branched out in 1947 with Michael Friedman, a major department-store owner and investor from Brooklyn, to launch Shelley Products record pressing plant, named after his infant daughter. In 1951 he relocated the plant from a Roslyn garage to an industrial site at 220 Broadway, Huntington Station. [6]

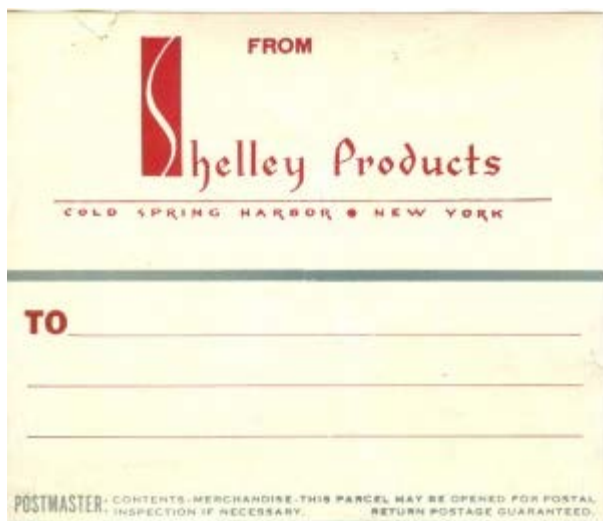


Figure 3: Shelley Products mail sticker, 1940s.

Golden Crest Start-up

- 15 In 1953, Galehouse formed Crest Records in honor of his Creston, Iowa, hometown mainly as a vehicle for western singer Arizona Cliff Martin. Golden Crest was introduced in late 1956, [7] just as rock 'n' roll was establishing itself through Bill Haley and Elvis Presley. However, the

early releases were mostly dated pop reflecting Galehouse's formative years in music.



Figure 4: Golden Crest Folio, c.1957.

- 16 At the time the unbreakable 7-inch 45 rpm single was taking over from the anachronistic, fragile 10-inch 78 rpm disc, made from shellac. Even at this early stage, Galehouse was aware that 12-inch long-playing records were the sound carriers of the future, in terms of content and profitability. Over a nearly 30-year time span, Golden Crest released more than 500 commercial albums (plus many custom releases for colleges and schools) and some 200 45 rpm singles.
- 17 In common with most independent record men, Galehouse formed a music publishing company, CFG (his initials), and affiliated it with Broadcast Music Inc. (known as BMI), a performing rights society. This enabled him to publish much of the original material that was presented for recording, thereby providing a secondary income stream. Although the pressing plant was Galehouse's cash cow, he loved producing and engineering sessions and would make regular field trips to record college and high school bands for custom release on the associated Crest and Silver Crest labels.
- 18 Galehouse first stumbled upon rock 'n' roll in 1956 while snowbound in Denver, Colorado, coming across Mando and the Chili Peppers playing in a long residency at Corky's Corner Lounge. Here was a trendsetting Chicano group from San Antonio, Texas, which recorded a very collectible album, "On The Road With Rock 'n' Roll" and four singles. In a way this Tex-Mex group paved the way for Ritchie Valens, Freddy Fender and other Latinos in rock 'n' roll.



Figure 5: Mando and the Chili Peppers LP, 1957.

- 19 By 1958, Golden Crest was taking aim at the increasingly valuable teen market, sparked by Dick Clark's "American Bandstand" TV show. Responsibility for the singles releases was now in the hands of Seymour "Cy" Levitan from Huntington Bay. Young Golden Crest stockroom clerk and future author Bruce Pollock remembered Levitan as being an intellectual, looking like Adlai Stevenson. However Levitan, known at the time as an artists and repertoire (A&R) man, would prove to lack the magic touch in producing hit records.

'Tall Cool One,' the Wailers and the Northwest Scene

- 20 Meanwhile in the distant Northwest, the Wailers, of Tacoma, Washington, began creating a local stir. An abundantly talented band of high schoolers, they soon felt the need to make a record. Accordingly, founder Johnny Greek and his group introduced themselves to hometown bandleader/composer Art Mineo, a recording artist for the Columbia subsidiary label, Epic. Following referrals from Mineo and Mills Music, Clark Galehouse recorded the Wailers after a dance in Tacoma during a visit to the Seattle area in early 1959. The pick of the tunes was the atmospheric instrumental "Tall Cool One." "Gee, I think we've got a hit," Galehouse told Mineo, who dropped out of the picture to concentrate on his own musical projects.





Figure 6: The Wailers ad (courtesy Billy Miller, Norton Records), 1959.

Audio: The Wailers, "Tall Cool One"

- 21 In late June 1959, "Tall Cool One" reached No.36 on the Billboard Hot 100 during a 13-week stay; along the way the record brushed the R&B chart at No.24. A high point was an appearance on Dick Clark's nationally networked "American Bandstand." The follow-up "Mau-Mau," from the same session, was a jazzier instrumental with a strong dash of the Champs' "Tequila" that peaked at a disappointing No.68. By common consensus, the flip "Dirty Robber," a screaming Little Richard-type rocker by Kent Morrill, should have been the top side.



Figure 7: The Wailers with Dick Clark on "American Bandstand," June 11, 1959.

- 22 In June 1959, the Wailers made the coast-to-coast trip from Washington State in a Pontiac Fury station wagon to record at Golden Crest's new Huntington Station studio. The sessions over three days led to the "The Fabulous Wailers" LP, with its evocative cover photograph. Johnny Greek was prepared to leave home for New York to make music a full-time career but the rest of the Wailers would not give the same commitment. Without the band's wholehearted support, Galehouse did not take up the contract renewal option.



Figure 8: Facsimile of the Wailers' 1959 Golden Crest LP cover, used for a Norton CD reissue.

- 23 In a quiet moment, when the Beatles were overrunning America, Galehouse postulated that the Wailers could have been the American equivalent. He did capitalize on the Beatles unprecedented triumph by reissuing “The Fabulous Wailers” LP, described by Cash Box magazine as a “Liverpool sound album.” After a Detroit disc jockey started playing “Tall Cool One” from the LP, the single was reissued and became a hit all over again at a respectable No.38, in May 1964. The band’s leader, the late John Greek, recalled that the record sold “200,000 copies,” presumably over its dual chart run.[\[8\]](#)
- 24 Individual members of the Wailers have since admitted that they let slip a glorious career opportunity in 1959 in the wake of “Tall Cool One” hit, now regarded as an all-time instrumental classic. In his book, “Sonic Boom: The History of Northwest Rock,” Peter Blecha wrote: “The Wailers simply had a rock ‘n’ roll sound like nothing else around – and bands in the Northwest, across the country, and even in England loved them.” Blecha quoted the Beatles’ George Harrison as having the LP “since day one.” The Wailers’ influence on the Northwest scene can be traced through the Ventures, the Kingsmen (“Louie Louie”), a young Jimi Hendrix to Nirvana and Kurt Cobain; and on a wider scale their impact on surf music and garage rock.[\[9\]](#)

Shelley Teen Label

- 25 In May 1959, delighted with the Wailers’ initial breakout, Clark Galehouse launched teen label Shelley Records. Here was an indication of the growing influence of teen idols such as Frankie Avalon, Fabian, Ricky Nelson and Bobby Rydell in the wake of Elvis Presley’s astonishing success. The new label was named after the principal Shelley Products business, by now a large independent pressing plant, and in turn Galehouse’s daughter.[\[10\]](#) The Shelley label is little known today due to limited distribution and, crucially, no chart hits; the brewing congressional disc-jockey payola storm did not help promotion, either. Nevertheless, there are several rock ‘n’ roll, R&B, doo wop, instrumental and teen gems to be found within its catalogue.

Golden Crest 1959-60

- 26 With the Wailers' chart run, Golden Crest had a little more substance in the marketplace. The wonderfully named Morty Wax, of Great Neck, was brought in to beef up marketing and promotion. The Three Graces, from New York City, had a radio turntable hit with "Billy Boy's Tune (Billy Boy's Funeral March)" which snuck in at No.100 in Cash Box national chart for two weeks in late summer 1959. Shelley Galehouse Broven recalled deputizing for "Mary" of the Three Graces in prerecorded radio promo spots, as well as cruising the dial for the four main New York radio stations to report the plays of Golden Crest singles to her father.



Figure 9: Three Graces advertisement, 1961.

- 27 During this period, Golden Crest resorted to imaginative marketing of its 45 rpm releases. First, artist photographs were used on the record sleeves on 45 rpm singles (as was being done universally with EPs and LPs). Then photographs were printed on the bright yellow labels, including singles by the Wailers, Donny Lee Moore, the Three Graces, Ricky and Robby, the Rhythm Rockers and the Mad Plaids. With its in-house print shop, which would in time boast top-of-the-range Heidelberg machines, the label was well able to experiment with these innovative marketing ploys.



Figure 10: Record label image, The Wailers "Tall Cool One," 1959.

- 28 By 1960 Golden Crest had a network of about 20 national distributors, covering all the important markets from New York to California to get its product to the teen buyers, but lacking a regular stream of hits, the label was never a promotional priority for these distributors. [11]

Recording Studio

- 29 Galehouse, always interested in the recording process as well as the manufacture of records, built a small studio within the main building at 220 Broadway, Huntington Station, where he engineered the sessions. In 1959, he moved the studio to a stand-alone property across the road. A contemporary LP release by The New York Brass Quintet, available in both monaural and stereo, described the studio equipment at the time: "The Tru-Hi-Fi sound reproduced on this record was recorded in the new Golden Crest studio. It is the ultimate in full spectrum recording. Both Telefunken and Capps condenser microphones were used. Tape recording was done on Presto and Ampex Studio tape consoles. Master acetates were cut with Grampion feedback cutters and Fairchild Stereo 642 cutter." [12] A full-color marketing booklet published in the early 1970s described the studio "as large enough to accommodate a group of 80 persons." [13]



Figure 11: Golden Crest Recording studio, early 1970s.

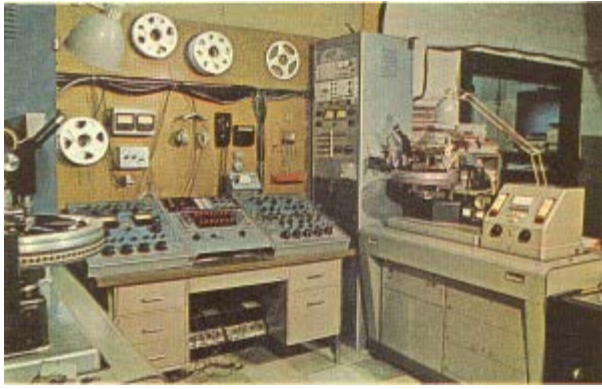


Figure 12: Control room, Golden Crest recording studio, early 1970s.

- 30 At the recording sessions, according to noted tuba virtuoso Harvey Phillips, Galehouse had an infallible ear for detecting wrong notes and was expert at balancing the correct sound levels before a session. Guitarist Paul Hotchkiss of Paul and the Four-Most recalled bringing Galehouse a tape of “Tight Spot,” but Galehouse insisted on getting it right by re-recording it at his studio before releasing the single in 1963.



Figure 13: Paul and the Four-Most, early 1960s.

- 31 The bass player with Paul and the Four-Most, Gil Collins, has vivid memories of the Golden Crest studio in the late 1960s: “Yes I can picture the recording studio at The Broadway, Huntington Station. I see a large room, maybe 30×40, with large speaker cabinets at one end, many portable baffles, and maybe 6 or 7 microphones (Electro-Voice, Telefunken). The floor is linoleum with a black and white square within a square pattern. There are two pianos (baby grand style) in the room. There are poles painted green and white. The lighting is overhead fluorescent lights. Of course there is a large glass window looking into the (studio) room. In the control room is a control board with 28 inputs with 8-track one-inch, 4-track half-inch and 2-track stereo. The equipment is Ampex, Scully, Neumann, Dolby and Electro-Voice. The mixing board permits mixing of 8-tracks down to 4. Gotham Delta delay lines are used, with Electro-Voice 4-channel and Columbia SQ systems.” [14]

Golden Crest/Shelley 1961-64

- 32 In the early 1960s, Golden Crest – now a public corporation – made a

serious push at the national singles market. An office under Cy Levitan's management was opened in the heart of New York's vibrant record scene at 1697 Broadway. Sporting a new rainbow-colored label design, Golden Crest had a flurry of potent doo-wop releases including "Altar Of Dreams" by Gino and the Dells from Huntington, and the Precisions from Brooklyn with "Someone To Watch Over Me," the standard written by George and Ira Gershwin.



Figure 14: Gino (of the Dells) picture sleeve, 1963.

- 33 On Shelley, "Oh Happy Day" by Stephanie and the Gothics was a new version of the left-field Don Howard hit from 1952. The group led by Stephanie Adessa, from Bayside, Queens, was produced by disc jockey Jerry Love. Their plaintive style at the turn of 1961 was reminiscent of fellow Long Islanders the Aquatones and also the then-hit sound of Kathy Young and the Innocents, and Rosie and the Originals. Baby Sticks and the Kingtones, produced by Cy Levitan and Frankie Dee [Frank De Trano, from the South Shore], came up with the gimmick-laden "Pigmy" which made some noise in the Pittsburgh area and has become a perennial favorite for Halloween airplay in that city. Another horror record was "Mr. Werewolf" by the Kact-Ties, leased to Shelley by record dealer Fred Kaplan, a longtime Baldwin resident.



Figure 15: Record label image, Stephanie and The Gothic's "Oh Happy Day," 1961.

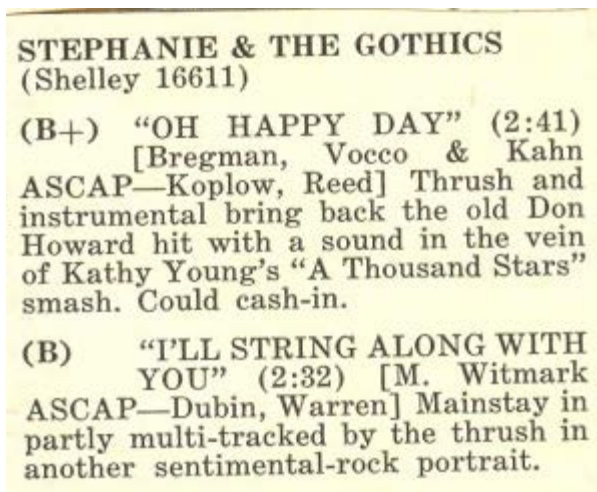


Figure 16: Cash Box review of "Oh Happy Day," 1961.

34 In spring 1962, Golden Crest was on the verge of a hit with the Oxfords' instrumental "Toy Balloons." "The Oxfords" was in fact top 1950s New York session guitarist Billy Mure, who overdubbed the instruments and wrote the catchy tune ("with lots of continental-styled charm," according to Cash Box magazine, which regularly reviewed Golden Crest and Shelley 45s). "Toy Balloons" was a turntable hit on the New York radio stations, notably Radio WMCA, according to Shelley Galehouse Broven, but failed to convert into sufficient store sales to qualify for national chart status. [15] (Mure, now in his mid-90s, is still performing in Florida.)

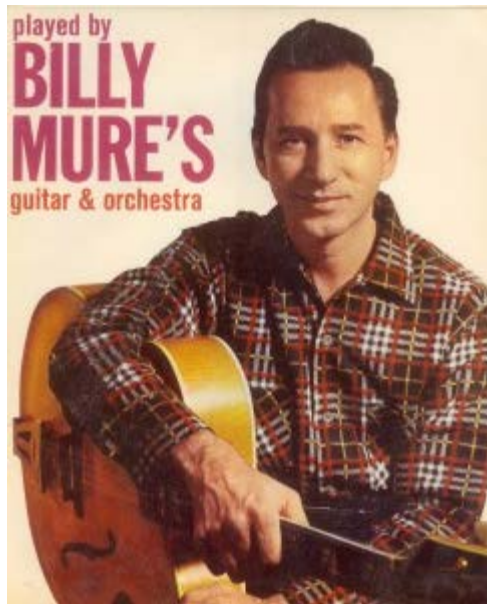


Figure 17: Billy Mure, late 1950s.



Figure 18: Record label image, The Oxfords' "Toy Balloons," 1962.

[Audio: The Oxfords Featuring Billy Mure – "Toy Balloons"](#)

- 35 Other major New York session men who recorded at the Huntington Station studio through the years included Don Arnone (guitar), Phil Kraus (percussion), Paul Griffin (piano) and Panama Francis (drums).
- 36 On the teen front, there was superior girl group the Montells from Roosevelt Jr. and Sr. High School with "A Rang A Lang Lang," produced by Charles Dell in the style of hit Phil Spector acts, the Crystals and the Ronettes. Paul and the Four-Most had a pair of quality instrumentals, the aforementioned "Tight Spot" and "Cut-Out" for Shelley in 1963. The late Paul Hotchkiss, son of a noted summer-resident Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory scientist, and leader of Paul and the Four-Most, had earlier fallen under the spell of the Wailers' "Tall Cool One." But no other Golden Crest or Shelley act could emulate the Northwest group's success.



Figure 19: The Montells, 1963

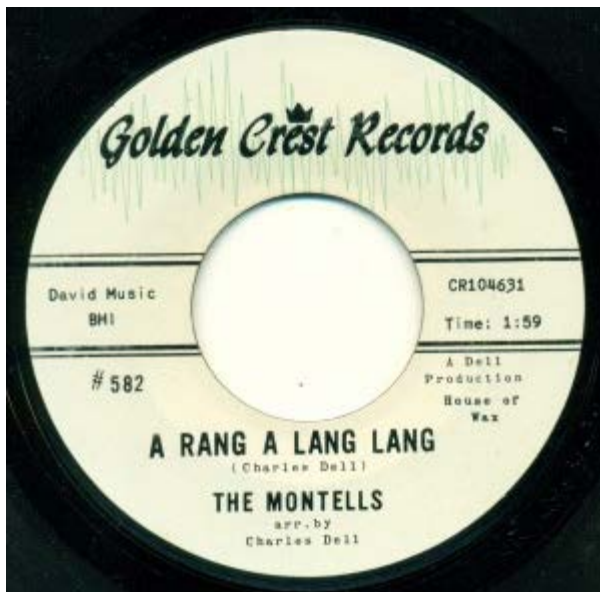


Figure 20: Record label image, The Montells' "A Rang A Lang Lang," 1963.

[Audio: The Montells, "A Rang A Lang Lang"](#)

Changing Times

37 The times were a-changing due to the dramatic Beatles-led British Invasion of the American market leading to a developing rock music scene headed by the Beach Boys, Bob Dylan, the Byrds and Simon & Garfunkel. "The Beatles really knocked us off the perch," admitted Hotchkiss. Cy Levitan had left Golden Crest to be replaced by Mack Wolfson, who had a career in music publishing, record pressing and songwriting (he co-wrote "Flowers Mean Forgiveness" for Frank Sinatra). The appointment of Wolfson coincided with the decision to wind down regular Golden Crest singles releases and concentrate on the more profitable long-playing albums. It was also a time when the old-style independent distributors were starting to fade away. Occasional releases on 45 rpm were made, but served mainly as album promotional items. Meanwhile the Shelley Products pressing plant was working around the clock pressing 45s and LPs for important client companies.



Figure 21: Clark Galehouse (on left), President, Golden Crest Records, with Mack Wolfson, Vice President, early 1970s.

Golden Crest, an Album Label

38 By 1965, Golden Crest was primarily an album label. According to Shelley Galehouse Broven, her father was “known and appreciated for letting artists do what they wanted, unlike many producers or label owners.”

39 The late tuba player Harvey Phillips was a fervent Galehouse admirer:

The first time I recall meeting Clark was through [composer] Alec Wilder in 1958. ... At that time [Clark] had not built the larger studio, so we recorded in the first studio he had which was just a regular part of the building I think. He always delighted in taking me on a tour, and I always delighted in touring the pressing operation. He was pressing records for all the major record labels, working 24 hours a day, three eight-hour shifts ... a remarkable man. I didn't learn about his performance career as a musician until later, and it sort of dribbled in a little information at a time. But I know that he could not have been the discerning recording engineer that he was without having had a very deep knowledge as a performer himself, and I have never known anyone more open to all kinds of music than Clark. With him there was no bad music; there were bad performances and bad attitudes and bad interpretations, but whether it was classical or baroque or romantic or contemporary or ragtime or Dixieland or swing, they were all equal in Clark's eyes. He understood them on an equal basis and was certainly able to communicate with the recording artists regardless of the particular discipline they embraced. All of us embrace one discipline more than we do others; there are very few renaissance musicians who do it all equally well. [16]

40 Galehouse's wide musical tastes were reflected in a Golden Crest LP catalogue that had grown by the early 1980s to include more than 350 classical LPs; 150 “popular” LPs of rock 'n' roll, pop, jazz, folk, dancing, hi-fi sound and comedy; and a collegiate choral series. Besides Golden Crest and Shelley, the Crest, Silver Crest and Jazz Unlimited labels were utilized for these releases.

- 41 The musical education element in many of these albums cannot be overstated. One of Galehouse's favorite sayings, according to his sister Dorothea, was: "Give a kid a horn, and he's going to be a good kid and a good citizen." [17]
- 42 Major album artists included arguably one of the finest classical pianists Grant Johannesen (whose three volume two-LP sets of the works of French composer Fauré were quite revolutionary at the time), tuba players Bill Bell as well as Harvey Phillips, operatic singer Igor Gorin, harpsichordist Igor Kipnis, saxophonist Paul Brodie and Dr. William D. Revelli with the University of Michigan Symphonic Band.
- 43 The Northwest comedy team of Doug Setterberg and Stan Boreson was popular within the tight-knit Scandinavian communities with a string of LP and cassette releases. In 1973, Golden Crest released two albums by former big-selling Mercury pop artist Rusty Draper.
- 44 Golden Crest was largely responsible for giving recognition to the chamber music works of the lauded Alec Wilder, who was already known for his popular songs (especially "I'll Be Around" recorded by Frank Sinatra). Wilder wrote the highly acclaimed book, "American Popular Song: The Great Innovators." Both Clark Galehouse and Harvey Phillips were privileged to be close friends of Wilder. Said Phillips, "Alec was one of the first composers to cross all boundary lines as to classical, jazz, blues; I mean, he embraced it all, and he put it all into his compositions." Another good Galehouse friend was Cold Spring Harbor neighbor, playwright and lyricist Arnold Sundgaard, who wrote liner notes for early Golden Crest albums.



Figure 22: New York Brass Quintet CD reissue with Alec Wilder's "Suite for Brass Quintet in Six Movements: Trumpet Prelude." Harvey Phillips at left, 1959.

[Audio: New York Brass Quintet, "Suite for Brass Quintet"](#)

- 45 With jazz, Galehouse recorded Fletcher Henderson alumnus Don Redman and his Orchestra featuring Coleman Hawkins on "Park Avenue Platter," and pianist Hank Jones "Swings Gigi." Galehouse formed the short-lived specialty Jazz Unlimited label ("we embrace the field of creative jazz") featuring the Carmen Leggio Group, the Sal Salvador Quartet and the John Glassel Brasstet. Dixieland historian Dr. Edmond

Souchon had two New Orleans jazz albums, notably “Dr. Souchon Recalls Songs of Minstrel Days and Blues.”



Figure 23: Record label image, Coleman Hawkins with the Don Redman Orchestra, “Black Velvet,” 1957.

[Audio: Coleman Hawkins With Don Redman Orchestra, “Black Velvet”](#)



Figure 24: Carmen Leggio, 1960.

[Audio: Carmen Leggio, “Newport Riot”](#)

46 Going back to his swing band years, Galehouse was delighted to record two albums by veteran jazz violinist Joe Venuti of music by George Gershwin and Jerome Kern. After Galehouse discovered an original Paul Whiteman score, the results were heard on the “Happy Feet” album in conjunction with Boston composer, conductor and author Gunther Schuller at the time of the Scott Joplin revival in the early 1970s; Venuti made a cameo appearance on this recording.

47 “The flow of professional musicians to [Clark's] studio was

phenomenal,” said the late Clem DeRosa, renowned South Huntington schools educator and bandleader. “They showed him great respect. It was fun to be with him — he had a dedication to what he was doing.” [18]

- 48 A particularly prestigious release was the 1970 lavish 5-LP box set, “A Tribute to Merle Evans: An Anthology of Circus Music,” supervised by Harvey Phillips for the Golden Crest-distributed NEC (New England Conservatory) label; Phillips, who played in Evans’ Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus band, described him as “the greatest circus bandmaster of all time!” An earlier LP featured NBC “Today Show” host Dave Garroway narrating “Names From The War” with music by Alec Wilder, marketed by Golden Crest as “the most important record to be released in connection with the Civil War Centennial, 1861-1961.” Another important LP featured radio’s “Mr. District Attorney” Jay Jostyn reading the poems of Robert W. Service in “Klondike Nights.”
- 49 Strangely, Galehouse never repackaged the Golden Crest and Shelley singles into golden oldies album compilations. As the Baby Boomers attained adulthood, they started buying LPs containing many of their favorite 45 rpm records. This market represented an unforeseen bonus for many original labels, but Galehouse missed out on it probably because he was preoccupied with other areas of his businesses. Lack of hits apart, this lost opportunity may explain why the singles were largely forgotten except by rabid record collectors until the CD reissues of Golden Crest masters in the 1990s and 2000s.

Shelley Products Pressing Plant

- 50 The Shelley Products’ plant had gone from strength to strength under capable foreman the late Joe Dreyhaupt, who joined the business in the mid-1950s. He indicated that Galehouse was one of the pioneers in the use of the plastic molding injection system, which was primarily used for pressing 45 rpm singles. According to Dreyhaupt, injection plastic molding resulted in quicker production and a better sound reproduction as opposed to the standard vinyl compression method. [19]
- 51 Daughter Shelley said her father designed the pressing machines, which were manufactured by IMPCO of Nashua, New Hampshire. She recalled that the Huntington Station enterprise in the 1960s and ’70s was employing at least 70 people in the office, factory, studio, warehouse, shipping department and print division with round-the-clock pressing shifts. In Golden Crest’s company report for the year ended March 31, 1968, Galehouse in his role as president announced a profit of \$76,583 on a turnover of \$1.23 million [20] despite “sales adversely affected by the racial disturbances of the past summer” and “substantial bad debt write-offs.” He continued: “As in the past, the Company’s operations consisted in the main of doing custom pressing work for other record producers. Among the outstanding record companies we were privileged to serve were Liberty Records, United Artists Records, London Records, Atlantic Records, Musicor and Ray Charles’ Tangerine Records.” Much of this work was brought in by vice president Mack Wolfson through his New York connections.
- 52 The plant, apart from doing continuous work for the big independent labels, was being used by the majors as an overspill at periods of peak demand. One memorable occasion occurred in 1977 after Elvis Presley

died. Such was the clamor for the “King of Rock ‘n’ Roll’s” records that mighty RCA Victor was unable to cope, and work was farmed out to indie pressers such as Shelley Products. During this period, pressing plants everywhere, including Shelley, were operating at capacity as record labels piled in to capitalize on the burgeoning disco market following the international success of the “Saturday Night Fever” soundtrack. But the Presley profits were soon wiped out at Shelley by a massive bad debt incurred when the disco market tanked almost overnight.

End of an Era

53 In the 1970s Clark Galehouse, a workaholic, was still engineering most of the sessions at the Golden Crest studios. But he was beginning to suffer health problems: the stress of running Shelley Products and Golden Crest Records was enormous, not helped by being answerable to a board of directors and stockholders. Just around the corner was the technological change to compact disc that would make vinyl a virtually extinct species. Even after his first heart attack, Galehouse was already conducting preliminary technical discussions for CD production with Sony of Japan, according to his secretary Madeleine Pfister, of East Northport.

54 Through it all, the Huntington Station record man was still traveling around the United States recording college bands at conventions. But after a second attack, he died on the road in Jacksonville, Florida, on January 3, 1983, at the age of 71. An obituary in the *Oyster Bay Guardian* described him as “a pioneer in the field of recording and record manufacture.” Golden Crest Records lasted one more year, and Shelley Products was ended in 1985. The most valuable asset was the real estate, not the wealth of recorded masters. Subsequently the operation was moved to Ancora in deepest New Jersey, but was a mere shadow of its former self.

The Golden Crest Legacy

55 Galehouse’s daughter Shelley inherited the publishing company from her mother Aleece in 1992, and was able to reclaim the dormant record company in 1997 with a little help from wily Old Town record man Hy Weiss of Woodbury. She has been able to make her father’s music available again by licensing masters for CD reissue to labels such as Norton, Time-Life and Varese Sarabande; and in Europe, Ace (U.K.), Dee-Jay Jamboree (Germany) and Universal (Holland).



Figure 25: Shelley Galehouse in studio, with recording artist Angela Martin, 1963. (Shelley Galehouse on left.)



Figure 26: “The Best of Golden Crest” double-CD reissue (Ace Records, London), 2010.

56 Further income has accrued from the placement of the Wailers’ “Beat Guitar” in the movie “Great Balls of Fire” (1989), “Tall Cool One” in “Home Alone 3” (1996) and “Dirty Robber” in “The White Stripes: Under Great White Northern Lights” (2009). Then in 2011, Dick Heatherton’s “Hey Travelin’ Man!” was taken up for a Volkswagen TV ad in Holland. Heatherton, from Rockville Centre, is the brother of Joey, another Golden Crest artist, and their father is Ray, of television’s “Merry Mailman” fame. Ironically, these recordings, with attendant publishing, are earning more today than on initial release a half-century ago. All this activity is a credit to Galehouse’s instincts in sound.



Figure 27: Record label image, Dick Heatherton, “Hey Travelin’ Man,” 1963.

Audio: Dick Heatherton, “Hey! Travelin’ Man”

- 57 Nevertheless, the age of Golden Crest and its fellow independents is long gone in today’s era of iPods and internet downloads. But something is surely missing from a time when a budding musician like Paul Hotchkiss could knock on a record company door, be summoned to the studio for a recording session and within a few hours would have a professional demo to hand to disc jockeys for radio airplay. According to Shelley Galehouse Broven, “Daddy would absorb the cost of studio hire of \$50 per hour” if he thought a kid had talent and “a record could fly.”
- 58 That Golden Crest had a niche in the marketplace was recognized by Galehouse himself in a rare quote from him, in the *New York Times*: “Music is an art form that cannot be sold like McDonald [sic] hamburgers. Classical records are not a mass medium and they never will be. It’s up to us little fellows to remind the majors from time to time that a classical record can be very meaningful and a very individual work of art.” [21] Golden Crest was more than classical music, and it was more than rock ‘n’ roll.
- 59 Golden Crest Records and Shelley Products show how a national industry can be viewed through a local lens. Indeed, Clark Galehouse and his businesses were valuable contributors to the stimulating independent record era of the 1950s and 1960s. Galehouse himself was a selfless visionary with a love of music in all its guises, which he was able to promote due to his entrepreneurial instincts as a record man, record presser and recording engineer. At the local level, Golden Crest/Shelley Products was a manufacturer, job creator and artistic center all in one. The enterprise may be long gone but with the gramophone record providing a permanent historical document, Galehouse’s recordings are preserved forever.

Notes

[1] John Broven is married to Shelley, daughter of Golden Crest Records founder and owner, Clark Galehouse. The interviews in this article were conducted by the author in his documentation of the Golden Crest Records history, with special

thanks to Shelley Galehouse Broven, Gil Collins, Madeleine Pfister; and the late Joe Dreyhaupt, John Greek, Paul Hotchkiss, Dorothea Lorenzo, Harvey Phillips. The author would also like to thank Karen Martin of Huntington Historical Society and Teresa Schwind at Huntington Public Library for their interest in this bygone local story.

[2] Alfred V. Sforza, *Portrait of a Small Town III: Huntington Station "A New Perspective"* (Huntington, NY: Huntington Historical Society, 2006).

[3] The owners of these original independent labels are well known by record collectors but are relatively unknown by the mainstream American audience, except for possibly Ahmet Ertegun and Jerry Wexler (Atlantic), Leonard Chess (Chess) and Sam Phillips (Sun).

[4] John Broven, *Record Makers and Breakers: Voices of the Independent Rock 'n' Roll Pioneers* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 13-20.

[5] For full list of inductees, see Long Island Music Hall of Fame website at http://www.limusichalloffame.org/inductees_00.html.

[6] For detailed Golden Crest Records story, see Broven's *Record Makers and Breakers*, chapter 20: "Gold Coast Platters and Stock Matters."

[7] There was another Crest label based in Los Angeles at the time, and it is likely that their objections forced Galehouse to change his label name to Golden Crest.

[8] John Greek died in 2006 at the age of 65 before the sales figures could be confirmed for both chart runs. The 200,000 number is quoted to give an idea of the potential sales volumes involved.

[9] Peter Blecha, *Sonic Boom: The History of Northwest Rock, from "Louie Louie" to "Smells Like Teen Spirit"* (New York: Backbeat Books, 2009).

[10] Shelley Galehouse Broven recalls that one of the Shelley Products pressing plant clients was Chancellor Records, of Philadelphia, the record label of best-selling teen stars Frankie Avalon and Fabian. Another client was hit-maker Lloyd Price's Double-L Records.

[11] The Cash Box magazine with annual listing of U.S. record distributors, July 30, 1960.

[12] "The New York Brass Quintet In Concert," Golden Crest CR 4023, early 1960.

[13] The marketing booklet was titled "Golden Crest-Crest-Shelley takes you on tour of the industry's most modern facility..."

[14] John Broven, "Not Only Rock 'n' Roll!: The Golden Crest Records Story," *American Music Magazine* (Sweden) No. 81, September 1999, 13.

[15] "Toy Balloons" had been picked up, probably through a publisher connection, by British pop pianist Russ Conway, who had a No. 7 U.K. hit in early 1962. Among the 1950s hit records with Billy Mure's guitar accompaniments are "Don't Let The Stars Get In Your Eyes" by Perry Como, "Diana" by Paul Anka, "Splish Splash" by Bobby Darin and "A White Sport Coat" by Marty Robbins.

[16] Interview by John Broven, East Setauket, NY, 10 May 1998.

[17] Broven, *Record Makers and Breakers*, 384.

[18] Broven, "Not Only Rock 'n' Roll!," 13.

[19] Interview by John Broven and Shelley Galehouse, East Setauket, NY, 20 October 2000. A further discussion on the plastic injection molding and the conventional compression pressing systems can be found in *Record Makers and Breakers*, 383-4.

[20] Allow for inflation at 6.5:1 (source Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis website www.minneapolisfed.org).

[21] *New York Times*, 1 June 1980, 19, 22.

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