

And from there, the exhibit took on a life of its own.

The exhibit begins in the museum's first floor Washington Gallery. A chronological story with a timeline of Springsteen's life and career snakes through the room. A looping Springsteen playlist and concert footage complement the timeline, which includes segments on his international fame, his patriotism and politics, and of course, his fans. Other items on display include a host of album covers, including alternate covers with never-before-seen artwork, a number of guitars, and the four-track recorder he used while recording his album, *Nebraska*.

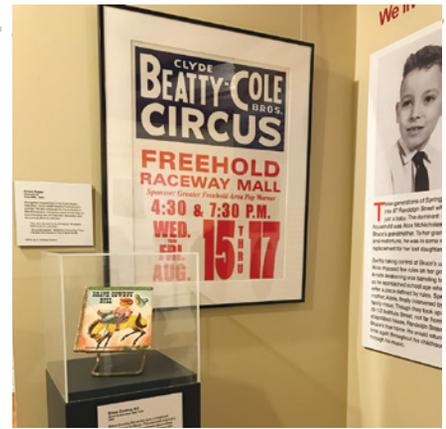
Fans have been such an integral part of Springsteen's success that part of the exhibit along the grand stairway to the second floor features fan art.

In addition to Springsteen memorabilia, Sharp Walton noted there are a number of Freehold artifacts also on exhibition, including an old sign from the Freehold train station and large photographs from a 1950s parade on Freehold's Main Street. "The Freehold Springsteen was born into, the Freehold that he would recognize, makes up part of the second-floor exhibit," she said.

Springsteen's genealogy and ancestry, which dates as far back as the

seventeenth century, is the theme of one of the second-floor rooms. Items on display from Springsteen's family line include a Civil War document that includes direct descendent Alexander Springsteen, a Medal of Honor, and a document signed in 1801 by Revolutionary War patriot and Springsteen direct descendent John Springsteen. Since the MCHA receives a large number of inquiries from people researching their own family histories, Sharp Walton said that a film about the process of researching Springsteen's genealogy will play on a loop at the exhibit. She said, "The film can be used as an example of how to research family history and how to avoid pitfalls and mistakes."

What impacted Springsteen as a child and a teenager influenced his artistry, and exhibit curators took great care to visually and aesthetically illustrate the connection. Fans who are familiar with Springsteen's lyrics will notice links to them threading throughout the displays. One such example is Springsteen's song, "Wild Billy's Circus Song," and the museum's inclusion of a Clyde Beatty-Cole Brother's Circus poster that came to town when Springsteen was a child. "That poster tells a small part of Springsteen's story," said Sharp Walton, "because he remembered it



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and wrote a song about it later in life."

Another example is a children's book about a cowboy that Adele Springsteen read to her son when he was a child. Years later, that same story inspired Springsteen's song, "Outlaw Pete." "So when you see the children's book about a cowboy, remember that it's so much more than a book," Sharp Walton said.

The rich music scene on the segregated west side of Asbury Park during the 1970s and 1980s also features prominently in the exhibit. "That scene included Count Basie and future E Street band members Clarence Clemons and Garry Tallent. Those after-hours jam sessions at The Upstage Club included musicians from the west side and the beach-front bands," said Sharp Walton.

According to Sharp Walton, the MCHA is planning programming to accompany the **Springsteen: His Hometown** exhibit. "We are planning walking tours of both Freehold and Asbury Park, as well as a poetry workshop about Springsteen's lyrics." She explained that future programming will be scheduled at both the museum and in and around Monmouth County as special events and pop-up exhibits. Sharp Walton hopes that the rights will be available next summer for this summer's film "Blinded by the Light," which was inspired by the life of journalist Sarfraz Manzoor and his love of Springsteen's music, so that it can be shown next summer as a part of Freehold's downtown summer movie series. "That would be



The Springsteen: His Hometown exhibit, at the Monmouth County Historical Association, celebrates the life and story of The Boss right in his hometown of Freehold.

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