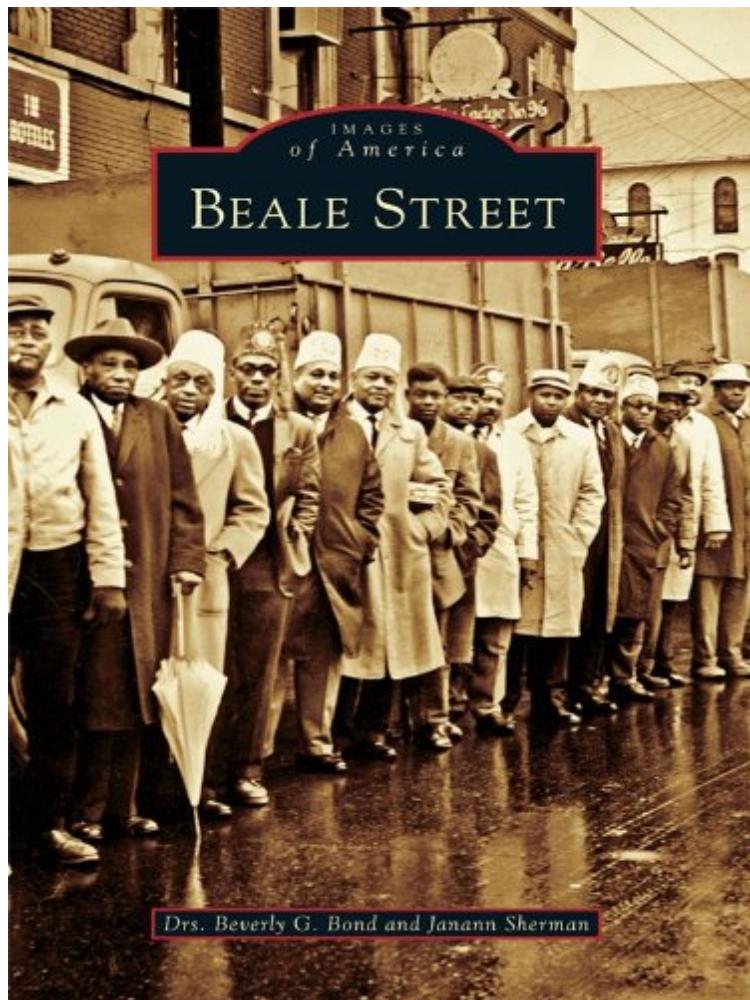


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Dr. Beverly G. Bond, Dr. Janann Sherman
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Dr. Beverly G. Bond, Dr. Janann Sherman : Beale Street (Images of America) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Beale Street (Images of America):

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A Journey to Beale StreetBy Robin FriedmanMemphis Tennessee's fabled Beale Street brings to mind "the home of the blues and the birthplace of rock and roll", as described on the Beale Street website. Beale Street today is indeed a modern, vibrant district filled with music and nightlife with over 25 clubs and shops in the brief space of three city blocks. But the focus on the current tourist-oriented revival of Beale Street overlooks much of its historical character as "the Main Street of Negro America." This short pictorial history captures in text and photographs the music that pervades Beale Street. It also describes the community as a whole and the changes Beale Street has witnessed over the years. It is a remarkable history. The book, "Beale Street," is part of the Images of America series which offers the opportunity to get to know many local communities in the United States. The authors, Beverly Bond and Janann Sherman, are professors of history at the University of Memphis. They

have selected a collection of rare photographs to show the history of Beale Street, and they have accompanied the photographs with good annotations and a particularly insightful introduction. Beale Street began to grow shortly after the Civil War when, as a result of the migration of newly-freed black people, an epidemic, and other factors, African Americans became an increasing large portion of the Memphis population with Beale Street as its heart. Although most of the people were poor and most of the property on Beale Street was owned by white people, a small number of black people became involved in Beale Street real estate and were among the first African American millionaires in the South. Music, entertainment, and black business flourished on Beale Street from roughly 1900 -- 1950 as the Street became known as "the main street of Negro America". In the late 1960s, Beale Street suffered a severe decline with neglect, unrest, and the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., just blocks from Beale Street. Revitalization efforts stuttered and failed until, in the 1980s, Beale Street became known again as the vibrant area it is today. The revived Beale Street is different from the Street in its years of glory. Bond and Sherman offer an eloquent picture of historic Beale Street in their introduction to this book. Beale Street was "the center for business, politics, and social and religious life, a vibrant collection of pool halls, saloons, banks, barbershops, dry goods and clothing stores, theaters, drugstores, gambling dens, jewelers, fraternal clubs, churches, entertainment agencies, beauty salons, hotels, pawn shops, blues halls, and juke joints". Bond and Sherman continue: "As lively at night as it was during the day, Beale Street thrummed with music and revelry....The street teemed with all manner of 'carefree humans' including sporting men, easy riders, street-corner preachers, voodoo doctors, conjure women, snow pushers, river men, cooks and housemaids, showgirls, card sharks, laborers and yard men, guitar players, gamblers, country people in to see the sights, the famous, the infamous, and the unknown." It was a street unlikely to be seen or captured again. In seven chapters of photographs, Bond and Sherman capture the growth of Beale Street, its glory days, decline, and subsequent rebirth. There are wonderfully contrasting photographs of old steamers on the Mississippi (p. 10), the busy, unceasing life of the Street (throughout), churches (p. 15) and mansions and desperately poor areas in close proximity. (pp. 20-21) The book documents the community of black lawyers, doctors, and dentists that flourished on Beale Street as well as the fraternal orders which attempted to improve the economic life and cohesiveness of the Street, and the lively political life that flourished in the black community for many years, including visits by President Theodore Roosevelt, Dwight Eisenhower, and Richard Nixon. During the Depression, a group of cotton manufacturers established an annual parade in Memphis to boost their sagging industry. When African Americans were relegated to menial roles in this parade, the Beale Street community established a festival of its own known as the "Cotton Makers Jubilee." This event flourished during the late 1940s to late 1950s and continues today in a modified form. It is amply recaptured in this book. The music for which Beale Street is famous receives attention in a chapter titled "The Memphis Sound" with photographs and discussions of W.C. Handy, jug bands, Muddy Waters, Bessie Smith, Bukka White, Memphis Minnie, B.B. King, Howling Wolf, Ruby Wilson, and many others. It is a part of America's cultural heritage which is unique and precious. The final two chapters of the book show the death and rebirth of Beale Street. The pivotal moment was the assassination of Dr. King at the Lorraine Motel on April 4, 1968, together with the tension and destruction that both preceded and followed this tragedy. Beale Street was demolished and deserted and withstood repeated attempts at its revitalization until with entrepreneurial interest and civic involvement the Street gained its current identity as a tourist destination. Old Beale Street can never be recaptured, but it can be remembered for its accomplishments and as a source of creativity and joy. Memphis blues singer Rufus Thomas observed that "if you were black for one night on Beale Street, you would never want to be white again." (p. 8) I enjoyed reliving the triumphs and the sorrows of Beale Street in this book. Robin Friedman

Once celebrated as the Main Street of Negro America," Beale Street has a long and vibrant history. In the early 20th century, the 15-block neighborhood supported a collection of hotels, pool halls, saloons, banks, barber shops, pharmacies, dry goods stores, theaters, gambling dens, jewelers, fraternal clubs, churches, entertainment agencies, beauty salons, pawn shops, blues halls, and juke joints. Above the street-level storefronts were offices of African American business and professional men: dentists, doctors, undertakers, photographers, teachers, realtors, and insurance brokers. By mid-century, following the social strife and urban renewal projects of the 1960s and 1970s, little remained of the original neighborhood. Those buildings spared by the bulldozers were boarded up and falling down. In the nick of time, in the 1980s, the city realized the area's potential as a tourist attraction. New bars, restaurants, and entertainment venues opened along the remaining three-block strip, providing a mecca for those seeking to recapture the magic of Beale Street."

About the AuthorDrs. Beverly G. Bond and Janann Sherman are history professors at the University of Memphis. Their previous book collaboration, *Memphis in Black and White*, is a history of the city's transformation from Mississippi cotton port to modern metropolis and the people who made it happen.