

The SACRED HARP PUBLISHING COMPANY Newsletter

VOL. 2, NO. 2 Stories about singers and singings, our music and traditions, and Sacred Harp's present-day growth.

JUL. 2013

Aunt Ruth's Bible

by Michael Hinton | San Antonio, Texas



From left to right: Annie Denson Aaron, Ruth Denson Edwards, and Maggie Frances Denson Cagle, the three daughters of Thomas Jackson and Amanda Burdette Denson.

My aunt Jerusha Henrietta Denson was born on July 5th, 1893 at Carrollton, Georgia. She was called "Rush" by her family. At school her name was changed to Ruth, which stuck for the rest of her life. She was one of eight children born to Thomas Jackson Denson and Amanda Burdette Denson—her brothers were Paine and Howard Denson, and her sisters were Annie Eugenia (Aaron) and Maggie Frances (Cagle). Three other children died as infants. Ruth also had three half-sisters—twenty years younger than her or more—who were born to Thomas and his third wife, Lola Mahalia Akers: Vera Mildred (Nunn), Violet Beatrice (Hinton), and Tommye Mahalia (Mauldin). Interestingly, Tommye was the only child named after their father.

Ruth Denson married a "dashing" young man named Lewis D. "Bud" Edwards in 1917. I only heard her

mention him one time when she said, "He was a sweet ole thing." They were divorced and little else is known about him. She never married again. Ruth spent her working life as a fourth grade teacher in Cullman, Alabama. She used to say that she liked to teach fourth graders because "I could mold them and make something out of them." She refused offers to be promoted into administration. She lived for over forty years in a room on the second floor of a large, stately old home in Cullman that had been converted into a "rooming house."

After retirement, she remained in Cullman until the owner of "The White House" died and the house was sold. Aunt Ruth arranged to move to Jasper, Alabama to live with one of her younger half-sisters and her husband, Earnest and Vera Nunn. Uncle Earnest was a carpenter and he built a large addition

Contents

Read the Old Paths

Aunt Ruth's Bible 1
Michael Hinton

Cullman Courthouse Singings 7
Buell Cobb

National Newsletter

The Pitcher's Role in Sacred Harp Music 10
Raymond C. Hamrick with an introduction by Ian Quinn

To Connecticut and Back: 14
Notes from a Bus Trip to the 1985 New England Convention
Lonnie Rogers and Joyce Walton

News

The Making of *The Shenandoah Harmony* 16
Rachel Wells Hall

Congratulations to David Ivey, 25
2013 National Heritage Fellow
Jesse P. Karlsberg and Nathan Rees

Singing Reports

Take My Staff and Travel On: 20
A Sacred Harp Journey
Justyna Orlikowska

Road Trip to Roberta 24
Jason Stanford

Introducing Vol. 2, No. 2 of the Sacred Harp Publishing Company Newsletter

Jesse P. Karlsberg and Nathan Rees

THE fourth issue of *The Sacred Harp Publishing Company Newsletter* highlights much-loved singers and singings from Sacred Harp's not-so-distant past, and features updates on our music's exciting growth in the present.

Our issue leads off with Sacred Harp Publishing Company President Mike Hinton's story about the items tucked into the Bible of his aunt, beloved Sacred Harp singer Ruth Denson Edwards (1893–1978). Buell Cobb shares memories of singings at the Cullman County Courthouse, and an article reprinted from the January 1986 issue of the *National Sacred Harp Newsletter* features Lonnie Rogers's and Joyce Walton's account of a bus trip to the 1985 New England Convention. Another article reprinted from the same issue of the *National Newsletter* shares Raymond Hamrick's findings on how singers pitch Sacred Harp music. We have paired it with a new introduction by Ian Quinn, who has recently conducted an extensive study on the same subject. Reports on Sacred Harp singing today in this issue of the Newsletter include Justyna Orlikowska's account of a month-long trip that took her to the Ireland, Western Massachusetts, and Georgia State Conventions; an essay by Rachel Hall on the making of *The Shenandoah Harmony*; and an account of the informative and death-defying trip Jason Stanford took to a singing school in South Georgia with Hugh McGraw and Charlene Wallace.

Please leave comments on these new articles and write us with your feedback and suggestions of articles for future issues of the *Newsletter*. ■

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To comment on or suggest future subjects for the *Sacred Harp Publishing Company Newsletter*, please contact the Editor.

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Ruth Denson and Lewis D. "Bud" Edwards. The two married in 1917 but soon divorced.

to their home where Aunt Ruth had a very nice sitting room and desk, along with a large bedroom and bath. She was quick to let us know that "I paid for the materials to build 'my apartment.'" She had several old large book cases that had been in Uncle Paine's law offices, with the glass doors that opened up and then slid over the shelf. She lived in that home until a few months before her death in April, 1978.

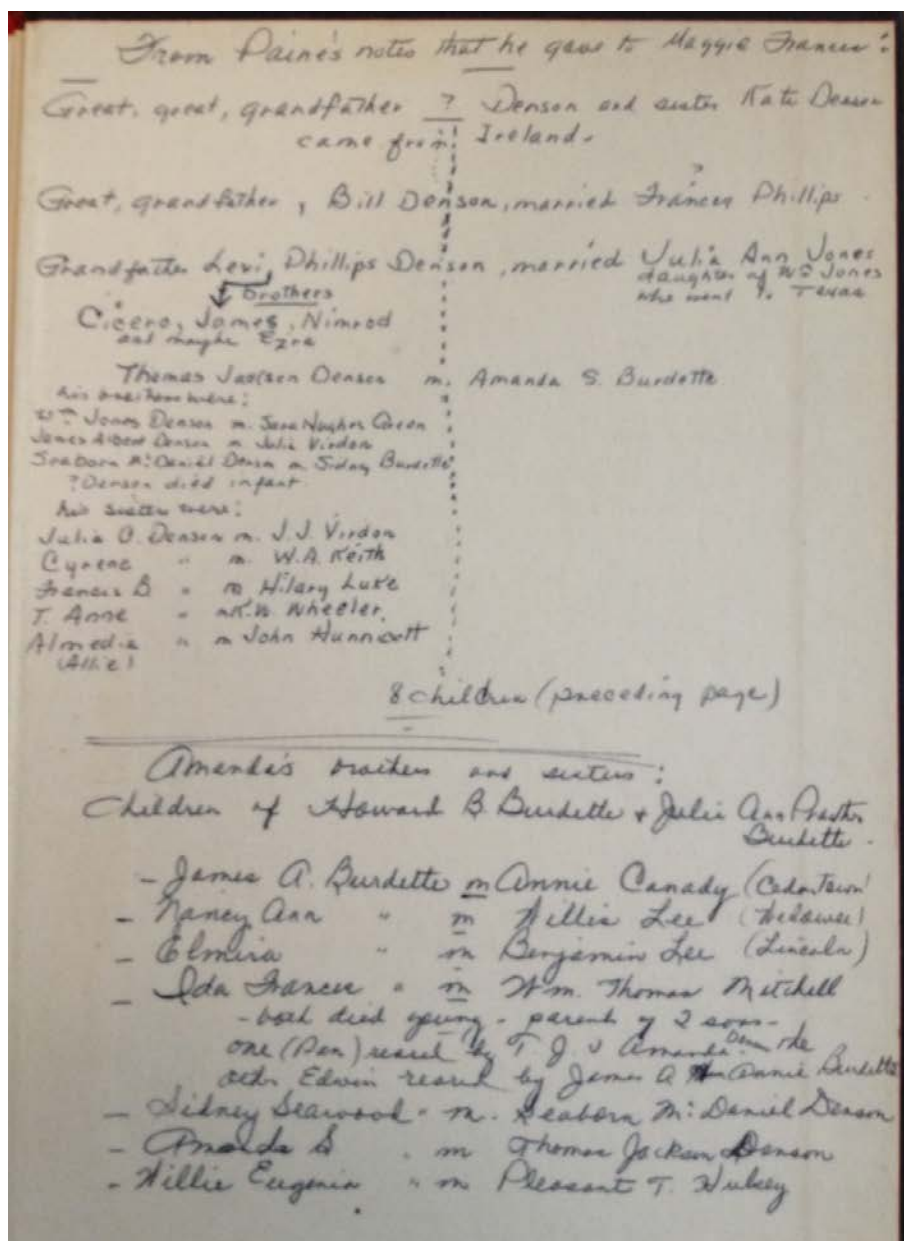
Aunt Ruth had volumes of books, Sacred Harp tunebooks, files, and other memorabilia. She was a devoted correspondent and wrote letters up until the time her eyesight prevented her from seeing well enough to write. Since I was in the Army (beginning in 1965) and away from Alabama, I corresponded with her for many years. I still have several dozen letters that she wrote to me in Texas, Vietnam, Bangkok and other locations. She was cute in responding to a letter—If I sent her a "long letter" with lots of news she would begin her reply with "I was happy to receive your *good* letter." If, on the other hand, I sent her just a short

note, she would simply reply "I received your letter."

Most of her books and furniture stayed in Aunt Vera Nunn's home until Vera died in 1989. At that time, family members were asked to look at things which were still in the house and to take anything that they would like to have. One of the items that I took was a Bible that belonged to Aunt Ruth. I also took a book of poems, *One Hundred and One Famous Poems* published in Chicago in 1920. Inside the cover she wrote "Property of Ruth D. Edwards, Cullman City School, 4th grade." There was a handwritten list of twenty-six poems that were apparently important and meaningful to her. I also have some Sacred Harp books that she had, including a copy of the 1929 printing of the *Original Sacred Harp* (James edition) that belonged to Thomas Jackson Denson. The cover had come loose from the binding, and thread was used to keep it attached to the pages. There were a number of notations in the book that Tom Denson had written, presumably for corrections for the next edition of what was to be known as the 1936 *Original Sacred Harp, Denson Revision*. The Denson relatives agreed to donate the book to the Sacred Harp Museum in Carrollton, Georgia.

The Bible that I inherited from Aunt Ruth is *The Schofield Reference Bible*; there is nothing to indicate when she purchased or received this Bible, though it lists several copyright dates, the latest being 1945. She had written many notes in the front and back pages, as well as on the partially blank pages after certain chapters. Also, there were a number of "things" that Aunt Ruth had in her Bible: letters, notes, articles, poems, place marks. More than just random notes and scraps, these items give an intimate glimpse of Aunt Ruth's character, reflecting the things that were most important to her in her life and her belief.

One theme in the notes in her Bible was the importance of family. On a blank page near the front, she recorded part of the Denson family tree: "The elder Denson Brothers. Levi Phillips—

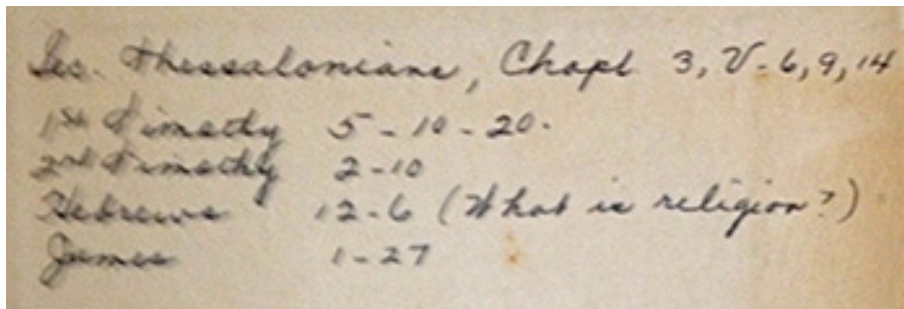


Part of the Denson family tree. Inscribed by Ruth Denson Edwards on a blank page near the front of her Bible.

father of T J Denson. James, Nimrod, Cicero and Ezra." She noted that they were "educated in England in the early 1800s . . . Levi Phillip studied for the ministry. He preached his first sermon in John Wesley's church in England, according to Grandmother Julia Ann Jones Denson, his wife." I am unable to confirm or deny this information. Aunt Ruth told us that Levi Phillip Denson was "a circuit riding Methodist minister" who served churches in the west Georgia and east Alabama area while they lived

in Arbacoochee, Alabama. On the back pages of the Bible Aunt Ruth wrote the names of "My Grandparents" and the names of all the children of Thomas J. Denson. She also wrote some genealogy of the Denson and Burdette families (Amanda Burdette was her mother).

Other notes are more lighthearted in their approach to family, like the cartoon from the *Saturday Evening Post* which shows two little boys sitting on a curb. One is saying to the other: "I know I'm not adopted because if I was they would



Favorite Bible verses, inscribed by Ruth Denson Edwards on the inside front cover of her Bible.

have sent me back by now." Aunt Ruth had a good sense of humor and loved to tell stories for willing listeners.

Another important theme in her notes was her faith. Inside the front cover, she copied out part of Second Thessalonians, Chapter 3:

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received from us. . . . Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us. . . . But ye, brethren, be not weary of doing well.

In the pages of the Bible there is a poem which from a copy of the Sunday *Birmingham News* titled "Poem for the Living," by Theodora Kroeber. A few lines of the poem:

*When I am dead,
Cry for me a little.
Think of me sometimes,
But not too much.
It is not good for you
Or your wife or your children,
To allow your thoughts to dwell
Too long on the dead.
Think of me now and again
As I was in life
At the moment which it is pleasant to
recall,
But not too long.
Leave me in peace
As I shall leave you, too, in peace.
While you live,
Let your thoughts be on the living.*

She was also very proud of her country. One of her notes in the front pages reads, "Inscription on Liberty Bell:

"Proclaim Liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof." Leviticus 25:10." And there was one more quotation: "I can teach you to sing but only God can teach you to sing with the spirit." Thomas Jackson Denson, 1863–1935." Aunt Ruth told us that "Dad Thomas" would tell that to his singing school students.

There was also a copy of a poem, "In Flanders Fields," written by Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae of Canada in 1918. Aunt Ruth would often quote this poem if she happened to pass by a National Cemetery. Here are a few lines:

*In Flanders Fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks still bravely singing fly
Scarce heard among the guns below.
We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and we loved, and now we lie
In Flanders Field.*

Other notes give us insight into Sacred Harp history. There is a two page typewritten letter from Paine Denson written on September 26, 1944, just after the Sacred Harp Centennial Celebration in Double Springs, Alabama from September 18–24, 1944. This event celebrated the one hundred years of Sacred Harp singing since Benjamin Franklin White published the first *Sacred Harp* in 1844. (A copy of the "Report of the Sacred Harp Centennial Celebration" is available online.) In his letter, Uncle Paine wrote the following:

Dear Sister: Well, the ordeal is over and it was an howling success, as far as I could see, from every standpoint. It was

good to see you in your role as Secretary. The poise and dignity that accompanied you at every turn made me feel glad to have a sister who could play such a roll. . . . I guess that is enough, or rather it is about as good as I can do in an effort to communicate to how I felt about it. It won't be done any better in the next century that you did your part that time.

This was high praise from Paine Denson. He was not known to be overly complimentary and in this instance, he was expressing his admiration to his younger sister. I am sure that is why she kept this letter for over forty years in her Bible.

The Centennial Celebration was also the occasion when the monument to Seaborn and Thomas Denson was unveiled in front of the courthouse in Double Springs, Alabama. Paine wrote these words to Ruth: "The monument was beautiful and now that it is up we MUST carry on in keeping the sentiments it represents and never let the family name down."

There is another letter in her Bible that was written in April 1948 after Paine and Ruth had travelled to Detroit, Michigan for a program where Dr. George Pullen Jackson was an active participant. The event was a large music association convention and it is my understanding that Dr. Jackson had a group of singers give a demonstration of Sacred Harp during the meeting. Aunt Ruth also spoke during the Sacred Harp session, and apparently had to bring the audience to order. Uncle Paine wrote,

I'm still thinking over and enjoying our trip to Detroit. Your method of quieting that audience down was strictly up to the minute. It worked and worked well too. I liked the way you did that. Of course, I did not know what it would be. You have a way of keeping me guessing. It is no use trying to prime you for you will and always do the right thing when your time to act comes.

On a small piece of paper is a penciled list of numbers with "words only" written at the top of the list. The numbers are: 27, 457, 111, 68, 349, and 329. There is a note written in different handwriting that

says, "Cousin Paine's own selections for his funeral in his own handwriting."

Another page, handwritten by Aunt Ruth, appears to be a rough draft of comments. The name at the end of the page is R. E. "Bob" Denson, but the writing is Aunt Ruth's (Ruth and Bob were double first cousins). It is undated, but there is a reference to the 1966 edition of the tunebook.

Is the Sacred Harp Dragging Its Feet? Recently I heard some pessimistic people prophesy that in fifteen or twenty years Sacred Harp singing would become extinct. When asked why they thought so, the reply was, "Because people have lost interest in Sacred Harp music and do not support the singing as they did in past years. Therefore the life is being dragged out of the singings."

I cannot and will not accept that idea. The Sacred Harp is not dragging its feet. For the past twelve years, I have attended a singing almost every Sunday somewhere in Georgia, Mississippi or Alabama, and every singing has been well attended. Local singers give visitors a warm welcome and each time the day is too short for all the leaders to be used. At the social hour the singers enjoy the delicious food prepared by the ladies of the community and the delightful fellowship of friends. No, the Sacred Harp is not dragging its feet. In fact, it is more popular today than ever before and with the advent of the 1966 Edition, it will enter a new era of popularity and prosperity.

On a small piece of paper, Aunt Ruth wrote a quotation by Richmond Flowers, a political figure in Alabama: "The mantle of leadership is not the cloak of comfort, but the robe of responsibility." Aunt Ruth would often say that the mantle of Sacred Harp leadership passed from the Densons to Hugh McGraw during the 1960s. He and Aunt Ruth talked weekly for many years. She loved him and was a constant source of encouragement to him. He was very good and kind to her and would drive from Georgia to Cullman, Alabama to pick her up to go to singings. In many ways she looked to Hugh as the "son she never had."



Top: Dr. George Pullen Jackson speaks at the unveiling of a monument honoring T. J. and S. M. Denson during the 1944 Centennial Celebration of *The Sacred Harp*. Winston County Courthouse, Double Springs, Alabama.

Bottom: Siblings Paine Denson and Ruth Denson Edwards (ca. 1945–1950).



Ruth Denson Edwards with her nephew Mike Hinton, on a trip to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania (ca. 1950–1951).

Reminding us of her long career as a primary school teacher, she also placed a poem in her Bible about teaching. It was clipped from what appears to be a National Retired Teachers Association magazine. The title is “After Fifty Years in the Classroom” by Miss Clare Audrey Sission, Warsaw, KY:

*I've finished my work and laid aside
My paper, my pencil, and my pen,
As I look about I see my boys,
Who have all become worthwhile men.
The little girls that I taught to read,
To cipher, to count and to spell,
Have now become grown, and I see,
Them serve their homes and their country well.
“What’s my reward?” you’re eager to ask,
“And now what will I do today?”
I’ll find my gift in the lives of those
I have guided along the way.
And when at last the shadows shall fall,
And I am looking up to pray,
I can say, “Dear God, I did my best,
I pine not for my yesterday.”*

This was a very appropriate poem for Aunt Ruth to keep and cherish. She truly took delight in the hundreds of children that she taught. She received dozens of cards from former students at Christmas and other times during the year. She taught the children and even grandchildren of some of her early students. She would often talk about her students and was very proud of so many of them.

Finally, I will quote the words that I used as part of the memorial lesson at the United Kingdom Sacred Harp Convention in September, 2012. These words have no title, date, or any other indication of their intended purpose. It is my belief that she wrote these words to use at a memorial lesson where she would be a participant. She was often asked to be a participant well into her later years and she was honored to be asked to participate. She was eloquent and much the teacher and would not speak until everyone in the room stopped talking. These are the words she wrote

*You know, when death comes to each old
and well-loved friend, we die a little too.
Something goes out of us – Something
that is missing to the end of our lives.
Somehow though the long days pass on
into line — — the Loom of Life goes on
and on weaving a beautiful pattern even
though one, two or three lovely strands
are gone.*

Ruth Denson Edwards was a “one of a kind” person. She loved her family, she was very proud of her heritage; she lived and loved Sacred Harp music and devoted much of her life to the Sacred Harp Publishing Company. She served as the recording secretary for many years and wrote the poignant and eloquent section titled “Music” that is still featured at the front of *The Sacred Harp* songbook. She was happiest sitting in the alto section in the last seat on the front row next to the treble section. She had an almost “regal” bearing and formality about her when she was at singings; she enjoyed a good laugh, but she reveled in the singing. Minutes of singings where she was present show that she led a great variety of tunes. She was the “matriarch” of our family for many years. She would tell marvelous stories of her Dad and Mother and other family members, and about growing up and attending singings with her father. She was very much a “presence” in family gatherings and she relished that role. She was our primary “link” to her “set” of children and to our grandfather. Here we are, thirty-five years after her death and her legacy of promoting Sacred Harp singing has not faded. As she wrote, “Music . . . is the sweet union which keeps men in close relation with the hearts of men while they live in the world and which will strike the sweet chords in that spirit land where mortality does not enter and where spiritual songs are sung throughout Eternal Ages.” A fitting tribute, the epitaph that Hugh McGraw composed for her tombstone in the Denson family plot at Fairview Cemetery in Double Springs, Alabama reads, “Here lies a queen of the Sacred Harp.” ■

...the Loom of
Life goes on
and on weaving
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or three lovely
strands are gone.

Read the Old Paths

Cullman Courthouse Singings

by Buell Cobb | Birmingham, Alabama



The old Cullman County Courthouse.

Editor's Note: This essay on Sacred Harp singing in the Cullman County Courthouse is excerpted from Buell Cobb's forthcoming Sacred Harp memoir. Thanks to Buell for permission to include it in this issue of the Newsletter.

IT is no longer—as it may once have been—the biggest and best convention in all the land. But well into the twenty-first century, it carries a distinction nonetheless: it's the last of its kind. An annual courthouse singing—and one dating back over a hundred years.

The start-up date for the Cullman County Sacred Harp Convention is difficult to pinpoint. Various sources say 1880s, 1891, 1898, 1900, 1901. . . . At some point, the printed minutes failed to record what was so evident, and so the train of time was lost.

The convention wasn't, to start with, that remarkable. County seats up and down the state sported such a courthouse event: Huntsville, Fayette, Tuscaloosa, Russellville, Moulton, Decatur, Jasper, Double Springs,

Guntersville, Ft. Payne, Gadsden, Ashville, Ashland, Dadeville, Alexander City, Andalusia, Greenville, Elba, Dothan and more (in total, as many as twenty-seven of Alabama's sixty-seven counties). Other Southern states boasted a courthouse singing here or there for some period, but nothing like the flourishing in Alabama, the state which, for the twentieth century and beyond, has represented the heartland of Sacred Harp singing. Even an urban center like Birmingham, seat of Jefferson County, held an annual courthouse singing as late as the 1950s.

When Sacred Harpers could take over the local courthouse for a one-, two-, or three-day sit-in, sing-in, pray-and-eat-in, you had to know that four-shaped music still ruled!—tenor, bass, treble and alto settling into those uptown surroundings as assumptively as a summer robin flouncing about in a courtyard bird bath. Over time, though, every other annual courthouse singing disappeared, as in each case the broader community that bolstered it lost interest and the class of local singers slimmed

down or withered entirely.

In its heyday, the Cullman Convention, always the second Sunday in July and Saturday before, drew wonder—and hot and thirsty crowds. Longtime convention-goer Velton Chafin once told a story that brought specificity to the picture. At the courthouse event some years before, he said, he had come out of the singing chamber during one of the session's breaks and nodded to an older gentleman seated on a bench in the hallway. "Having a good singing, aren't we?" "Yeah," the old fellow had grudged, "but it's not like it used to be. . . ."

That line might be every old-timer's refrain, but Velton, tarrying there for a bit, was repaid with a neat little narrative from someone who had first experienced the convention decades before.

It was in the '30s, the old gentleman said, and he was driving from Tennessee to Birmingham down U.S. 31. Cullman was a spot along that journey. Approaching the township, he said, he came upon "a traffic jam." Velton later surmised that this was not so much automobile traffic—though some of that, for sure—but mainly crowds of people, maybe some wagons, a few horses and mules, crossing the roadway. As the man drew closer, he saw a policeman directing the traffic. Edging forward to the intersection, he asked the officer what in the world was going on. . . .

"Oh, there's a fasola singin' at the courthouse." The terminology piqued the traveler's curiosity. He was soon able to park and make his way over to the big building.

"You couldn't get in the courtroom at all," the old fellow told Velton. Even the hallways were jammed. And outside pulsed this great throng of people—country folk come to town for the biggest two days of the year. And out the open windows, soaring sounds that captured the Tennessean's imagination.

A *Cullman Tribune* report of one year's



A youthful Mary Kitchens (now Gardner) starting a lesson at the 1943 Cullman Courthouse Convention, with a class that shows Marcus Cagle, Paine and Bob Denson, Raymond Sutton, Ted Knight, Millard McWhorter, Joe Akers, and Elsie Myers McCullar, among others. George Pullen Jackson, from whose collection this photograph is taken, stands in the bass section with his right arm raised. Even during war-time, the convention attracted a packed crowd, with the basses stretched all the way around behind the leader (what do you think those bass entrances must have sounded like?), and the ever-long-suffering altos, squeezed between the bass and the trebles. Digitized by Matt Hinton.

singing from that decade confirms the hubbub: it estimated the 1937 crowd at 5,000.

Five thousand. Well might the food committee from any of today's conventions read that figure and gulp. There likely wouldn't have been a food committee at all in that era, though—nor any responsibility for feeding the multitude. Families and individuals generally provided their own repast, although a commonly heard line might have been something like, "Come over here and eat with us—I've got ham, cornbread and a mess of turnip greens. . . ."

Nor, of course, would all those folk have been singers—or even intentional listeners. Some doubtless would have been there out of mere crowd-envy,

maybe a bit of restless-leg twitching. Many more would have come to mix with either town or country friends and relatives they rarely got to see, to swap farming stories or speculation about prospects for rain. But singing was the core and cause of it all. And there likely wouldn't have been anyone there—including now a late passer-through from Tennessee, or Birmingham, Montgomery or Mobile—who wouldn't have understood that.

For several years in the '30s, a blaring full-page *Tribune* ad greeted the event: "Cullman Hangs Out the Welcome Sign to the Annual Court House Singers." The ad's twenty-one listed merchant-sponsors "look forward," it said, "to the great crowds that will fill our streets on these two great days."

The lead article on the front page of the *Tribune* the week following the 1935 convention mentioned the "record breaking attendance" both days. "The weather was ideal except the heat," the article stated, "and the farmers being well up with farm work gave an excellent opportunity for all who wished to visit Cullman, take part in the singing and listen to the old songs so dearly loved by thousands of old and young people." And in possible reference to the traffic jams the convention often created: "So far as we have been able to learn not a single accident occurred to mar the pleasure of any one."

Among the "beloved leaders" there for the event, the article stated, was "Hon. Thomas Denson of Jasper, and one of his brothers from Winston County

who organized the Cullman courthouse singing years ago.” Tom Denson would die two months to the day from the convention’s closing session, and his older brother, Seaborn, would die two months before the following year’s session. The mid- to late-’30s, though, would have been an exciting time in the central Sacred Harp world with the publication of the Denson brothers’ 1936 revision of *The Sacred Harp*, especially in this area where Tom and Seab had taught so many hundreds to sing. Songbooks, probably for the first time in years, would have been plentiful—and highly prized. It must have been a joyful time, even in the Great Depression era, to sing or listen to singing.

Although the new songbooks were not yet off the press, the 1936 convention would surely have been abuzz about the prospects. But it was not to be. A week before the convention, a huge front-page headline in the *Tribune* warned, “Sacred Harp Singing Called Off.” An outbreak of polio in the state—infantile paralysis it was called at the time—had resulted in the Board of Health urging that all gatherings be suspended until the epidemic passed.

Two songs in the new revision sure to have been celebrated in those years were additions, and eventual classics, “Soar Away” (p. 455 in *The Sacred Harp*) and “Sacred Mount” (p. 456) by A. M. (Marcus) Cagle, who had grown up in western Cullman County and who lived in the area until 1937. A handsome figure and dynamic (and volatile) personality, Cagle may have been the territory’s preeminent singer, leader, and keyer of music—though he would be better known today for having contributed, over a period of five decades, eleven tunes to the songbook’s several editions, more than the total number of pieces by all but a handful of composers.

For three years in the 1960s I attended the Cullman convention when Marcus Cagle was present, and each time got to see him lead a lesson of two songs, as was the custom then—though not in either case one of his own compositions. In 1968, five months before his death at eighty-four, he and I sat together on

the long front bench of the tenor. That scene, as best I can summon it now, represents to me of one of Sacred Harp’s finest features: a bringing together of people from different generations, different backgrounds, different ways of life. There we were, sitting side by side, blending voices and chatting, the young man and the much older man—he in fact three and a half times my age—a newbie with one of the great Sacred Harp composers of the songbook’s two centuries. Looking back now from a vantage point well within the twenty-first century, I realize I was singing that day with someone who had composed the durable tunes “Present Joys” (p. 318 in *The Sacred Harp*), “New Hope” (p. 316), and “Jordan” (p. 439) in 1908! He in his turn had sung with men and women who had sung with B. F. White. Thus do the generations overlap in this tradition, which so casually, gracefully fosters such a sharing.

Other names in Sacred Harp lore passed through the Cullman courthouse chamber in those years. Among the most popular of the 1936 book’s new “class songs” was “Odem” (p. 340), whose lead-off phrase in the chorus, “Give me the roses while I live,” would become one of the favorite sentiments in the book. That song by Tom Denson was named for a near-legendary figure from the era: Lonnie P. Odem, the financial sponsor of the book and the estate owner of Odem’s Chapel, the convention-worthy structure built near his home in St. Joseph, Tennessee, for the sole purpose of Sacred Harp singing. Odem was cited in the book’s first pages, under his photograph (though his name was spelled there as Odom), as “a good singer, the Sacred Harp’s best friend and the man who made this book possible. His love for T. J. Denson has known no bounds.” By the 1960s, the Odem-and-Denson-family relationship had strained, with Odem attempting and then losing a legal struggle with the then-stewards of the Sacred Harp Publishing Company over ownership of the songbook rights.

Sitting in the courthouse in 1967, I heard the arranging committee summon “Lon Odem.” Out of the class then

“Cullman Hangs Out the Welcome Sign to the Annual Court House Singers.”

emerged this short, slightly pear-shaped (by then) figure, who called for and led “World Unknown” (p. 428) and “Sweet Morning,” (p. 421) both without the aid of a book. If I could relive that day, I would certainly swap what was probably idle chatter with others for a meeting and conversation with this (for me) mysterious figure, who could have told so much about one of the most bustling periods in Sacred Harp history.

I always enjoyed the sessions I attended, the earliest ones especially. But I confess to feeling a greater draw, an altogether unfair attraction in fact, to thoughts of the singings *before* my time: those colorful early convention years and the tapestry of life surrounding a ritual so central to the community’s interest. It sets my imagination a-runnin’. I could fantasize, for example, about having the lemonade or Co-Cola concession the day of, or the hat and bonnet business beginning a few weeks out from, the big event. But even more—for just one time!—to enter the forbidding past and mill about in that hustling host, hear the bursts of music from out the high windows, push my way inside the hallways and into the courtroom itself, with all those old men crowding the bass, standing against the walls—most of them surely thankful on a hot July day for the big ceiling fans that labored above them, further sweetening the harmonies they made. Ah yes, to be there just once. . . . ■

National Newsletter

The Pitcher's Role in Sacred Harp Music

by Raymond C. Hamrick | Macon, Georgia

Introduction by Ian Quinn | Guilford, Connecticut

Editor's Note: Raymond C. Hamrick's "The Pitcher's Role in Sacred Harp Music" was originally published in the National Sacred Harp Newsletter's January 1986 issue (vol. 1, no. 8). Based on data Hamrick collected at Georgia Sacred Harp singings in 1985, the article was the first comprehensive study of keying Sacred Harp music. It appears here as it was originally published, with a few typos corrected and the occasional comma added. Ian Quinn, who has recently conducted an extensive study of keying Sacred Harp music, has contributed an introduction to Hamrick's essay. Thanks to both for sharing their insights into this critical yet underexamined aspect of our music.

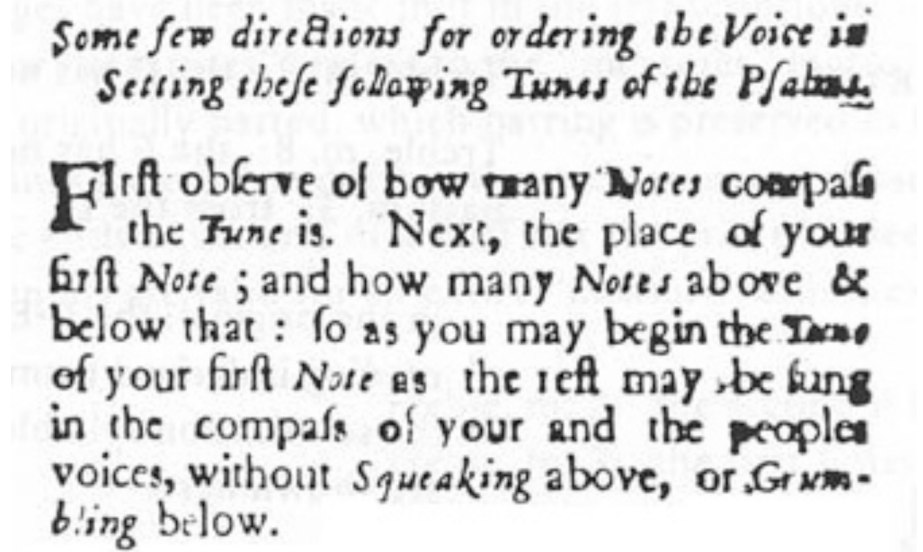
Introduction

KEYING is a mysterious art, even for its practitioners. Just about all anybody can agree on is that Sacred Harp singers don't sing the songs at the written pitch, and that in this singing community perfect pitch is more of a hindrance than a help. You may have heard phrases like "keys of convenience" and "relative pitch" to explain the difference between what's written and what's sung. Perhaps you've heard a paraphrase of the famous quote from the 1698 edition of the *Bay Psalm Book*:

Some few directions for ordering the Voice in Setting these following Tunes of the Psalms.

First observe of how many Notes compass the Tune is. Next, the place of your first Note; and how many Notes above & below that: so as you may begin the Tune of your first Note as the rest may be sung in the compass of your and the peoples voices, without Squeaking above, or Grumbling below.

Finding the right place to pitch a tune is about more than avoiding squeaking



"Some few directions for ordering the Voice in Setting these following Tunes of the Psalms," from the *Bay Psalm Book* (1698).

and grumbling, though. A song keyed too low will lack energy, dragging and drooping like a wilted flower. Too high, and you'll quickly wear out your tenors and (heaven help you!) your altos. But when your songs are keyed just right, with the high notes sitting right in the trebles' sweet spot—that's when the singing really gets hot, and everybody can feel it.

So how does the keyer find that note? Ask four different keyers and you'll get four different answers. That's just what happened to Raymond Hamrick in 1986 when he asked the four main keyers in Georgia (including himself) how they found their keys.

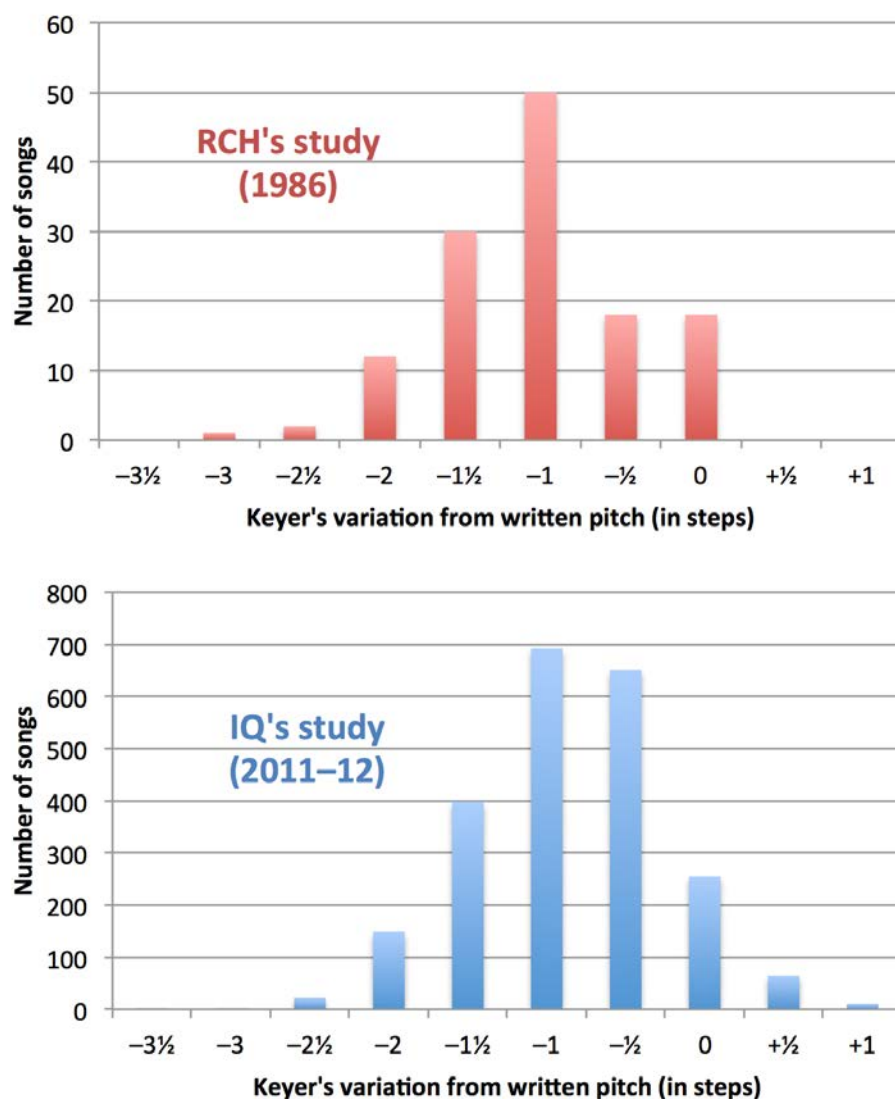
Mr. Hamrick is a watchmaker by trade, and he likes to take a hands-on approach to figuring things out. After getting so many different answers to his question, he decided to make a systematic study of 131 songs sung at Georgia singings. For each song, he compared the written pitch (as it would

be played on a piano) with the sung pitch, and worked out the difference between them. He found that the vast majority of tunes were sung somewhere between the written key and 1-1/2 steps below, with most lying a step below piano pitch. When I made a similar study on a larger scale (about 2250 songs), I got just about the same results as Mr. Hamrick. Data from both of our studies are shown in the charts on the following page.

Will data like this help people learn to be good keyers? I don't necessarily think so. Keying is as much art as science. A good keyer listens to the class and puts the songs where the class needs them to be. Usually that's around a step beneath where the song is written, but some classes can take a higher key or need a lower key. And some songs need special treatment regardless of the class, as anybody who's keyed "Victoria" (p. 290 in *The Sacred Harp*) too high knows well!

Mr. Hamrick asked his fellow keyers

how they learned to key, and none of them answered the question, not even Mr. Hamrick. When I asked keyers a similar question, many of them told me their local singing had nobody to key, so they just figured it out their own way. The best way to learn how to key, it seems, is to practice, practice, practice, and to think and listen while you're doing it! ■ —Ian Quinn



Comparison of the results of Raymond C. Hamrick's and Ian Quinn's studies of keying Sacred Harp music.

The Pitcher's Role in Sacred Harp Music

RESEARCHERS in the field of Early American shape-note music are familiar with the description of the singing master—complete with blackboard, string pendulums, and tuning fork. Dr. Jackson mentions having seen Singing Billy Walker's tuning fork, and it may have been (although I haven't seen it documented) that all music was thus keyed in early days. Somewhere along the way Sacred Harp singers grew into the habit of pitching without the aid of a fork and in my forty years of attending singings I have yet to see any pitching aid used other than the occasional consultation with another keyer.

These "keyers" are individuals who have a particular ability to place music within the range of a singing class. They do not, as some think, have perfect pitch and they do not pitch to the indicated letter. For one reason or another the pitch as set down by the composer is generally too high. Marcus Cagle surmised that this was because the writer in composing endeavored to keep the melody within the staff lines so as to avoid ledger lines. Research in the old books backs this up. The preface to the *Social Harp* of John McCurry specifically states that the melody should be placed on the staff so the highest and lowest notes are contained within the staff. (One exception to this is the music in the back of the 1911 White edition. A good bit of it was written by professional musicians and it should be performed where written.)

The practice mentioned above leads to a situation where the treble and tenor singers are frequently faced with high "As and B flats" beyond the ranges of most of the singers—adjustments must be made. The pitcher, when learning a reference tone, will learn it a tone to a tone and a half lower than it should be. His C is more likely to be B flat or A.

Recently, on a singing trip to Atlanta to sing with the B. F. White group, I idly asked their pitcher, Hermon Wilkinson, how he arrived at his F major. The question was caused by my feeling that

he was pitching consistently higher than other individuals I was accustomed to. His answer intrigued me. "F is number four," he said. "I sound number one in my mind and run up to four."

The more I thought about this answer the more curious I became. What variety of methods were in use by other pitchers and how did they arrive at them? To find out, I addressed letters to the three most active and prominent pitchers in Georgia: Loyd Redding of Bremen; Hugh McGraw of the same area; and Hermon Wilkinson of Oxford, Georgia. Redding is very active in the Denson singings in West Georgia and Alabama, McGraw is the executive secretary of the Sacred Harp Publishing Company and widely known as a singer, composer, and singing school teacher.

He is the conductor of the various recordings made during the last few years. Wilkinson is the mainstay of the B. F. White group around Atlanta. I do most of the pitching in South Georgia, so between the four of us we pitch practically all the singings in Georgia.

My letter asked "How did you learn to pitch Sacred Harp music and what method do you use in arriving at the proper pitch?"

The first answer was from Loyd Redding.

You asked me how I pitch music. I guess it is more or less by knowing the sound when you hear it. You know you can't pitch all the songs in the Sacred Harp on the key they are written. I try to take the highest note and the lowest note and balance to where both parts can be reached without straining the voice. I hope this makes some sense to you.

Next was Hugh McGraw:

I don't know the proper way to pitch Sacred Harp nor do I know that there is a correct way to use. The method I use is as follows:

1. *I try to remember the pitches that a song can be sung by. I try to remember the sound of page 77, Child of Grace, when I have a song to pitch in A major or minor. This sound will work.*

2. *Any song that is written in any key can be sung sometimes a half step higher to a step or step and a half lower so you will have [a] range [of] to two and a half steps to get a sound that will sing that song.*
3. *We try to pitch songs, no matter what the written key, so the treble can sing the highest note without squealing and the bass the lowest note without grunting.¹*
4. *In pitching you are sometimes tired and hoarse. When the first sound, which is always the keynote, comes out you have another chan[c]e at it if it is too high or too low. You can change the pitch then if necessary. Try to avoid changing pitches after the song has been started.*

Third was Hermon Wilkinson:

I will try the best I can to answer your request. I feel too unlearned to say anything. I learned to sing Sacred Harp when I was nine years old. At least that was when I became interested and began to learn. Elder Elmer Kitchens taught me most of what I know. He was the man who taught me to pitch. I lived in Alabama up to 1950 and learned to pitch music in 1948.

I try to pitch my music to the letter the music is written in. I don't by any means come up with the right pitch, as you well know, in many cases. In later years I do more adjusting of the pitch to fit the song than I once did. This below is the formula I try to use.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
c	d	e	f	g	a	b	c

I take a song that is written in the key of C. Then I think in my mind how the number five sounds in my natural tone of voice. Then just say the number and the note is adopted to that sound. Fa in major music, La in minor. Anyone can learn to pitch music with this formula. There's a sound in each one of the numbers 1 through 8 that will fit the keys as they come from middle C through the keys up to C at the top. I try to sound the keynote then sound the other parts from there.

I don't know if I've said enough or too much but if this is not your answer let me know.

To which I add my approach:

My reference tone is A. With the built-in correction this is F or F sharp. Thus I am actually placing an F major tune in E flat approximately. I find though, that in common with the above writers, I too tend to pitch by familiarity with the music, referring to the reference tone only occasionally. Other adjustments are made at the start of a singing by pitching a little lower until the voices are "up" at which time the pitch level can gradually be raised.

At this point we can draw some fairly obvious conclusions:

First, it is agreed that the pitch is not to the indicated letter but to a lower tone that will afford ease and singing comfort to the outside voices.

Second, reference is made when necessary to a basic tone such as A, C, F or whatever. This is not the true tone but one that is learned with some degree of accuracy and used with music that is not overly familiar to the pitcher.

Third, the main ingredient for a successful pitcher is familiarity with the music. This enables him to instinctively reach a singable pitch with very little backing and filling. It seems obvious also that in such a person as a Sacred Harp pitcher equal parts of humility and confidence must be blended.

The question that seems logical at this point is "how accurate are these people in providing a singable pitch?" To flesh out this study I decided to go about measuring the pitching patterns of the four people involved and try to come up with a reasonably accurate profile as a means of authenticating some of the conclusions drawn above.

We try to pitch songs, no matter what the written key, so the treble can sing the highest note without squealing and the bass the lowest note without grunting.

Singings used as reference were as follows:

Church or Singing	Location	Pitcher
Cedar Creek Church	Crisp County	Lloyd Redding
Agrirama singing	Tifton, Ga.	Hugh McGraw
Georgia State Convention	Holly Springs Church	Redding
Sandy Creek Church	Flovilla, Ga.	Raymond Hamrick
Pleasant Hill Church	Warner Robbins, Ga.	Hermon Wilkinson
Holly Springs Annual Singing	Bremen, Ga.	several pitchers
Chattahoochee Convention	Holly Springs	Redding and McGraw

One hundred and thirty-one tunes were examined.

Quantity of Tunes	Variation from Written Key	Percentage of all Songs
18	no variation	13.7%
18	½ tone lower	13.7%
50	1 tone lower	38.1%
30	1 ½ tones lower	22.9%
12	2 tones lower	9.2%
2	2 ½ tones lower	1.5%
1	3 tones lower	0.8%

The few tunes pitched 2 ½ or 3 tones low had high trebles or tenors and relatively high basses. It can be seen that approximately 87% of the pitching was within the 0 to 1 ½ tone range. By contrast, the figures for the B. F. White singers showed the following:

Variation from Written Key	Percentage of all Songs
no variation	44%
½ lower	22%
1 lower	22%
1 ½ lower	11%

or 88% in the range from 0 to 1 tone lower. Also, the “o” variation in the Denson singers was 13.7% as contrasted with the 44% of the White group. This substantiates my feeling that the pitching was higher. The remarkable thing to me was the regularity with which these pitchers produced tones within the 0 to 1 ½ range. It is quite rare to have a tune re-pitched during a typical singing which will involve three to four hours and encompass from sixty to over a hundred pieces of music, some major, some minor, some simple, some complex. Another remarkable thing is that the pitch begun with was the same as the pitch at the end—a great sense of pitch retention. In conclusion, I would point out that to attempt to come up with highly accurate figures on a subject with so many variables is obviously impossible. The sole purpose of this brief study is to gain some insight into the performance characteristics of this fascinating survival of a tradition that goes back to our cultural roots musically. It is a way of life for thousands of Southerners—now joined by ever increasing numbers of Northerners and Westerners who are experiencing a joyful reunion with a truly American folkway.

■ —Raymond C. Hamrick

Footnote

1. McGraw's remark is a 300 year old repeat, as witness [the quote] from the *Bay Psalm Book* of 1698, [referenced in Ian Quinn's introduction].

National Newsletter

To Connecticut and Back: Notes from a Bus Trip to the 1985 New England Convention

by Lonnie Rogers | Ephesus, Georgia and Joyce Walton | Pisgah, Alabama

Editor's note: The article below is one of two in this issue reprinted from the vol. 1, no. 8 issue of the National Sacred Harp Newsletter (January 1986). This piece originally appeared on pages 6–7. It has been edited to correct typos, but otherwise I have left it just as it appeared.

PAGE 6

TO CONNECTICUT AND BACK...ON A BUS...WITH THIRTY-NINE
FRIENDLY, HAPPY PEOPLE...WITH PLENTY OF FUN, FELLOWSHIP, FOOD
AND SINGING ALONG THE WAY!!

Excerpts taken from journals kept by Lonnie Rogers and Joyce Walton

The article's title, as it appeared in the *National Sacred Harp Newsletter*, vol. 1, no. 8.

SACRED Harp Singers boarded the Oxford Band Bus on September 30th at Oxford, Bremen, and Atlanta. We headed north and made our first stop at the famous Tallulah Gorge. We ate our bag lunches as we traveled through the mountains to Cherokee, NC. After browsing around in the gift shops we went across the Smokies to a red carpet welcome at the Glenstone Lodge in Gatlinburg.

On Tuesday we loaded the bus and as we tried to maneuver the bus out of the parking lot with a bell boy directing us, a run-down, decrepit building popped up in our path. We put a small dent in the bus and took three shingles off the building. After the police made his duty call we went on our merry way in the fog and rain. We had a beautiful drive through Virginia and the Shenandoah Valley and stopped for lunch at Durham's Family Restaurant for a great lunch at a reasonable price. We traveled on to New Market, Virginia where the Quality Inn marquee read, "WELCOME SACRED HARP SINGERS." We were invited into the lobby for apple cider and fried apple

fritters. The hotel sales rep came on the bus and drew three names from a basket. Lois Green, Charlene Wallace, and Joyce Walton won nice mementos of the hotel.

Wednesday morning we left early in the rain. The atmosphere inside the bus was warm and friendly. We traveled through a corner of West Virginia and a very small part of Maryland, crossed the Potomac River and entered Pennsylvania. As we came off the interstate in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania the bus gasped and died. With the help of the State Police, two mechanics, and the diligent work of Don we were on our way to Lancaster after a two-hour "rest stop." We sat on the bus and sang and visited a restaurant near-by to get coffee and visit the "Necessary Rooms." We picked up a sandwich and ate as we rode through some of the battlefields at Gettysburg. At Lancaster our guide joined us and we went directly to the Pretzel Factory for a tour, then to the Amish Homestead and Amish farmlands. Our guide did an excellent job on her commentary about the customs and lives of the Amish. We visited a market and went

in a driving rain to Bird-in-Hand to the Family Farm Restaurant where we had a delicious meal. We then checked into the Brunswick Motor Inn for two nights. In spite of bus trouble and rain everyone remained calm, patient, and happy.

On Thursday we set out in the rain with our guide to go into the state of Delaware to visit Hagley Museum and Longwood Gardens. Both attractions were built with the DuPont money. Black powder was a source of much of the DuPont wealth. The old black powder plant, the DuPont mansion, and other buildings were part of the outdoor museum. Our guides had never heard of Sacred Harp singing so at the end of the tour they came on our bus and we sang No. 63 for them. We went to Longwood Gardens for lunch and a tour of the Conservatory. The beauty of the flowers (especially the orchids) defy description. A few brave souls braved the weather and toured a portion of the acres open to the public. We stopped at the Mushroom Museum. There we saw how mushrooms are grown and we browsed in the gift shop before returning to Lancaster. That night we went to Plain

and Fancy Restaurant for an “out of this world” meal. We helped Joyce celebrate her birthday.

On Friday we left early and drove through Reading, Allentown, and Bethlehem. We saw a lot of fall color as we drove through the Pocono Mountains. On our way to Port Jervis, N.Y. we suddenly became the Oxford High School Band when we were traveling a non-commercial route. We crossed the Delaware River and went into New York. We ate at McDonald’s at Newburg, N.Y. and then headed toward Connecticut. We crossed the Hudson River and enjoyed the scenery and snoozed a little before we reached our motel in Middletown about 4:30 pm. On Friday night we went to Wesleyan University to sing. Hester Edwards was asked to serve on the arranging committee. It was good to join our New England friends again for a marvelous singing.

On Saturday we went back to the chapel at Wesleyan University to spend another day singing. It is a delightful experience to join with the New England singers to sing. They are so young, vivacious, and seem to enjoy singing so much that the joy rubs off on everybody. The rains came in torrents at lunch time.

On Sunday we had a beautiful, sunny, cool day. We took a very scenic route through Connecticut and then went into New York and on to New Jersey. We had our devotional period on the bus and Jap and Joyce sang some duets. We noted the restoration going on in the Bronx and glimpsed the skyline of New York City. We had our usual rest stop at the Vince Lombardi. We were cruising along in New Jersey when the State Police pulled us over and presented us with a little token because we drove in the left lane too long. We arrived in Washington in the early afternoon. We checked into the Twin Bridges Marriott and had a while to rest before we went on our illuminated tour of Washington. We were impressed with the quiet simplicity and dignified appearance of the Vietnam Memorial. Several of our group found names of relatives and friends on the wall. We had an excellent

We decided that it was a wonderful trip with a fine bunch of people.....

guide who took us to the Jefferson, Lincoln, and Washington Memorials. We drove by the Capitol, government buildings, the White House, Kennedy Center, Watergate Complex, and last the very touching Iwo Jima Memorial.

On Monday the hotel sales rep came aboard the bus and gave three gifts to members of the group. We went for a very interesting and informative tour of Mount Vernon. A king and queen for the day were selected. Catherine Griffith was the queen and Jeff Sheppard was the king. Their rules and decrees created a lot of fun as we traveled along. After lunch at Morrison’s in Richmond we headed toward Burlington and the Outlet Stores. We had a red carpet greeting and a welcome sign on the marquee. Most of the ladies hurried off to shop at the Outlet Mall.

Tuesday morning we were ready to head toward home but the bus failed to cooperate. We had to wait until a new battery was delivered and installed. The people at the hotel were very considerate and helpful. They opened doors to our rooms and let us wait inside while the bus was being fixed. They brought out a box of apples for us to nibble on while we waited. We left about two hours late. We stopped at a neat place in Gastonia, N.C. for lunch. After lunch we had our final singing session. Those who wanted to got on the microphone and gave their impressions about the trip. Ruth thanked the group for their cooperation and patience. We thanked the Craigs for coming from Texas to join us. We said our good-byes as each group left us. We decided that it was a wonderful trip with a fine bunch of people.....

Those Who Went on the Bus to Connecticut

Hester Edwards, Daisy Roberts, Evelyn Harris, Alice Edwards, Catherine Griffith, Myrtle Howard, Lovella McKay, Charlene Wallace, Revy Williamson, Carlene Griffin, Gladys McGraw, Mozelle Smith, Lois Green, Jo Laminack, Ruth McCormick, Berta Woods, Evelyn Dillashaw, Hoyt and Mary Lou Cagle, E. C. Bowen, Don Bowen, Jap and Joyce Walton, Everett and Moena Denney, Lonnie and Vivian Rogers, Homer and Katherine Benefield, Jeff and Shelbie Sheppard, Ed and Alicie Craig, Lois Dothard, Ophelia Thompson, Inez Moncrief, Ruth and Leman Brown, Tour Directors, and Don Blackwell, Bus Driver.

Some Observations Made by Lonnie Rogers

“It is amazing how much difference it makes in the sound of the songs when sung by all southern voices and when it is sung by the New England singers. The singing sounded real good. When one of the New England group led and did a pretty good job, everyone really clapped their hands.”

“The New England singers have improved a lot in their singing since the bus has been taking southern singers up there. There are some beautiful voices in the group of New England singers.”

“It is hard to comprehend how they (New England singers) can have so much interest and meet as often as they do when they do not have the heritage and tradition that we have down our way.”

“It is amusing how much difference there is in our lives and backgrounds and food and how it is all forgotten when we get together to sing.” ■

News

The Making of *The Shenandoah Harmony*

by Rachel Wells Hall | Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



The Shenandoah Harmony.

AT 469 songs on 480 pages, *The Shenandoah Harmony* is the largest new four-shape tunebook published for more than 150 years. The music committee includes John del Re, Kelly Macklin, and their daughter Leyland del Re of Virginia; Nora Miller of Maryland; Daniel Hunter and me, Rachel Hall, of Pennsylvania; and Myles Louis Dakan and Robert Stoddard of Boston¹. The book is now in its second printing since its release in mid-February this year. We held our first all-day singing on June 2nd in the Harrisonburg, Virginia area, near Ananias Davisson's grave. Over one hundred singers from at least sixteen states attended. Recordings, photographs, and videos of the singing are on our web page www.shenandoahharmony.com.

The original inspiration for *The Shenandoah Harmony* was to create a collection of songs compiled, printed, and published by Ananias Davisson

from 1816 to 1826 in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. These works include five editions of the *Kentucky Harmony* and three editions of *A Supplement to the Kentucky Harmony*. Davisson's innovative books, which combined European congregational hymns and New England class songs and anthems with the frontier sound of arranged folk hymns and camp meeting songs, had a profound influence on later tunebooks. Although Davisson did compose and arrange music himself—"Idumea" (p. 47b in *The Sacred Harp*), for example—his greatest talent lay as a tunebook compiler, and, in particular, in his selections of Mid-Atlantic folk hymns and composed songs. Many popular songs, including "Pisgah" (p. 58), "New Topia" (p. 215), and "Exit" (p. 181), came into the Southern shape-note repertoire through his publications. *The Kentucky Harmony* and its *Supplement*, in addition to two other early nineteenth

century Mid-Atlantic sources, the two-part *Wyeth's Repository* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania) and the multiple editions of *The Easy Instructor* (Philadelphia and Albany, New York), were critical in determining which of the vast number of New England compositions were eventually sung in the South.

In addition to being avid Sacred Harp singers, the del Re family has been singing from Davisson's books for over twenty-five years. Inspired by Judy Hauff and Ted Mercer's recordings of songs from *Wyeth's Repository* and *Kentucky Harmony*, they sought out songs associated with their own region. Through these recordings, they also became aware of the wealth of shape-note music found in out-of-print and inaccessible tunebooks. The Shenandoah music committee formed in late 2010 to early 2011 and continued to meet for a full weekend once a month for two years. Although the initial plan was for a more modest book, by summer 2011, we had decided to make a book suitable for all-day singing. The group has considered about 1500 songs together; thousands more were reviewed by individual committee members but not brought to the group.

In all, we used seventy-five tunebooks as sources (see our source list). In addition to Davisson's books, in which we found over a quarter of our songs, the principal sources of *The Shenandoah Harmony* are Hauser's *Hesperian Harp* (1848); McCurry's *Social Harp* (1855); Walker's *Southern Harmony* (1835-54), *Southern and Western Pocket Harmonist* (1846), and *Christian Harmony* (1866); the two parts of *Wyeth's Repository* (1810, 1813); Ingalls's *Christian Harmony* (1805); Mansfield's *American Vocalist* (1848-9); and Stone and Wood's *Columbian Harmony* (1793). Other books such as *The Virginia Harmony* (1831) were chosen because of their association with the Shenandoah Valley. Moreover, several scholars—chiefly, Nikos Pappas—generously helped us locate obscure tunebooks, such as George Miller's *Methodist Camp-Meeting Song Book*, published in Dayton, Ohio in 1841. We also sought different versions of the

same song in several sources, finding that sometimes an original song had interesting features that were lost or confused in later editions, but other times later versions were improvements.

Our experience singing from *The Sacred Harp* has profoundly influenced every aspect of *The Shenandoah Harmony*. In order to make our book suitable for all-day singing, we sought a variety of sentiments, levels of difficulty, and compositional techniques, while still maintaining the distinctive style of part writing and mix of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century texts typical of four-shape tunebooks. Despite our focus on Davisson, only 130 of the songs we selected are found in his publications in some form. We added sixty-one songs originating in other tunebooks of the Mid-Atlantic and its western frontier, mostly from the period 1800–1850; 109 songs from New England, 1770–1810; eighty-two Southern songs from 1835–1911; and nineteen British Isles or European songs, mostly pre-1800. The Shenandoah also includes sixty-eight songs written since 1950, with an emphasis on Mid-Atlantic and Midwestern composers, including thirty-six compositions never before published in a book. Seven songs derive from oral traditions, including those of Hoboken, Georgia, Sand Mountain, Alabama, and Glen Rock, Pennsylvania. We did not include any of our own compositions.

Not wanting to overwhelm singers with too many unfamiliar songs, we chose some pieces appearing in other modern tunebooks such as *The Northern Harmony* and *An American Christmas Harp*. However, *The Shenandoah Harmony* does not duplicate songs in *The Sacred Harp*, 1991 Edition, although there are a handful of familiar Sacred Harp songs that have different texts or arrangements. Some songs appeared in previous revisions of *The Sacred Harp*. In comparison with *The Sacred Harp*, the Shenandoah has fewer twentieth century compositions, a higher proportion of minor songs, a different geographical emphasis, more songs with fewer than four parts, more secular songs, and some alternate texts in other languages (German and Polish).

ZION'S WALLS. Set piece.

G major. McCurry's *Social Harp*, 1853. John G. McCurry, 1853.

Original version in *The Social Harp*, 1855.

ZION'S WALLS. Set piece.

G major. McCurry's *Social Harp*, 1853. John G. McCurry, 1853.

As edited in *The Shenandoah Harmony*, © 2012.

"Zion's Walls" original setting from *The Social Harp* (top) and as edited for *The Shenandoah Harmony* (bottom).

Next to song selection, editing was the music committee's most time-consuming and delicate job. *The Sacred Harp*, which has shaped our expectations as singers, is very much an edited collection, not a historical sourcebook. Its editors have not only added and subtracted songs over the years, but also, as tastes changed, revised older songs to suit the singing style of the day. Adding alto parts in the early twentieth century is the most obvious example of revision, but there

are other situations in which old songs were changed—to relieve dissonance, for example. In compiling *The Shenandoah Harmony*, our motivation was more to contribute to the living tradition of shape-note publishing than to preserve the past. If we found a song that clearly had compelling features but seemed awkward or incomplete or had fewer than four parts, we first sought different versions in the old sources. Although the decision to change a song was a



Top: Editing, with the committee and friends. In time, the book grew too big to print.

Bottom: Singers at Christ Church, Philadelphia.

difficult one that we did not take lightly, we did edit songs, add parts, substitute texts, and arrange songs. All added parts and substantial rearrangements are indicated. Singers may omit the added parts if desired. Scholars and anyone interested in the history of shape-note music are encouraged to use the source abbreviation and page number on each song to find its original version.

The song “Zion’s Walls” (p. 109 in *The Shenandoah Harmony*) from *The Social Harp*, which may be familiar from Hugh McGraw’s recording *The Social Harp: Early American Shape-Note Songs* (Rounder, 1994) or the classical composer Aaron Copeland’s 1952 setting, is a good example of the committee’s editorial process. The original version has clear errors—the text doesn’t fit the

music, the bass part has an incomplete measure, and the repeat is ambiguous.

In addition to correcting these errors, the committee made some subjective decisions. We decided that 6/4 would be a more appropriate time signature for the song, according with common practice of how songs are paced. We also omitted the fermatas, resolved the repeat by rebarring the beginning portion of the song, and added a second verse. As the original text has only one verse, we added a verse with a similar sentiment and meter from another text. One change we did not make, but considered, was adding an alto part. All four of the women on the committee sing alto, at least occasionally. However, our general policy was to add an alto only if the bass part felt awkward for an

alto to sing, which was not the case here. The reception of the edited version has been positive—according to our current minutes, it is one of the more frequently called songs in the book.

Researching the songs and texts was an important part of the project—not only because we wanted to credit the composers, but also because knowing a song’s history helped us to locate different versions and make more informed decisions. Many of the old tunebooks have incorrect composer, text, or source information, or none at all. Attributions are a moving target as better information becomes available—for example, I recently traced “Vienna” (321b in *The Shenandoah Harmony*) from Wyeth’s *Repository, Part II* (1813) to a 1727 German publication. We are particularly fortunate to have had the assistance of many scholars, in particular, Nikos Pappas, Warren Steel, and John Martin, and numerous online resources, such as the Hymn Tune Index, IMSLP, and hymnary.org.

The physical construction of the book was a massive project in itself. After years of singing from *The Sacred Harp*, we all found the typography and layout of it and other older books most effective for singing and leading. In particular, we preferred a compact format, in which up to four songs can be displayed on one opening, even if the occasional misalignment between text and notes makes sight-reading more difficult. Compact formatting also reduces page turns and allows for the inclusion of more songs without making the book too heavy to hold. I led the typesetting team, which also included Robert Stoddard, Peter Golden, and Adrian Mariano. We typeset the music in Lilypond 2.14, with some modifications: we made the shapes bigger and the staff lines thinner, to reflect the fact that most singers look at the shape of the notes more than their placement on the staff. I used LaTeX, a scientific typesetting program, to compile and design the entire book with input from the committee. We used fonts inspired by early twentieth century typefaces. Dan took particular care in setting the order

of songs. Although not strictly divided into three parts, as the 1844 *Sacred Harp* was, *The Shenandoah Harmony* is roughly ordered like an old tunebook, with more straightforward and accessible songs at the beginning. The committee decided on a cover design and color. John and Kelly found a printer, Bookmasters of Ashland, Ohio, and formed the Shenandoah Harmony Publishing Company to handle the business of publishing and distribution.

In response to requests from singers, the entire *Shenandoah Harmony* is now also available for sale as a hyperlinked PDF. LaTeX, which is more like a computer programming language than a word processor, allowed me to create and update multiple indices and add hyperlinks. Without the size and weight restrictions of a print book, the electronic edition has thirty-five additional pages, including, in addition to the standard title and first line indices, fuller composer and source indices, a metrical index, an index of texts organized by author, a chronological index of songs, indices of fuge entrances and choruses, an index of songs with fewer than four parts, and a bibliography with web links. All page numbers in the indices are hyperlinked to the songs.

Although this article mainly details the music committee's contributions to producing *The Shenandoah Harmony*, the book would not have been possible without the support of our singing community, who contributed countless hours helping us select, edit, proofread, typeset, and research the songs and texts, who gave financial assistance to the project, and who lent their voices and hearts in singing. Please see our web site for details on upcoming singings. We hope to sing with you all, and soon! www.shenandoahharmony.com ■

Footnote

1. Myles moved from Washington, D.C., during the course of the project and Robert served as an adjunct member.

Singing Reports

Take My Staff and Travel On: A Sacred Harp Journey

by Justyna Orlikowska | Warsaw, Poland



Kama Dembińska and Justyna Orlikowska lead at the Western Massachusetts Sacred Harp Convention, one of many stops on a month-long trip to Sacred Harp singings across two continents and six U.S. states. Photograph by Kelly Taylor.

HAVE you ever wondered how many people sing Sacred Harp? Even though I have no idea what the exact number is, I am amazed by how many people around the world share the experience of this music. Each of these singers has his or her own unique story—every one has followed a different road toward Sacred Harp, arriving at the tradition from a different background and viewpoint.

We may come from different directions, but we are fortunate that our paths cross so often as we gather to sing. Sometimes we travel in the same direction—sometimes we head different ways. There are wide roads with many, busy lanes, and small, side roads. But every time that we cross paths, we make time to stop, rest, and sing. Sacred Harp travelers always sing! I love how contagious it is! And then when the singing is over, again we go our different ways ...

This is a story about a few stops and crossings—recollections of a road followed by two Polish singers for whom

Sacred Harp has become an important component of their lives. Our individual roads had crossed so many times that one day we decided to travel together on a thirty-day journey across two continents, meeting people in the Sacred Harp tradition everywhere we went. If you saw my friend Kama Dembińska and me at a singing this March, then you crossed paths with us during one of the stops on our big journey. We were so happy to meet all of you! If I haven't met you yet, I take comfort knowing that there will be still many beautiful stories from other roads.

It is not easy to write about what we experienced during our month-long journey—there are just too many important memories. The first thing I wrote after I came back home was a short post on Facebook summing up our journey as a travel itinerary:

27.02.2013—Warszawa, PL > Cork, IRL > Shushan, NY > Bennington, VT > Northampton, MA > Old Chatham, NY > Amherst, MA > New York, NY > Englewood, NJ > Philadelphia,



Left: P. Dan Brittain leads a singing school the evening before the 3rd Ireland Sacred Harp Convention. Photograph by Michael Walker.

Top right: Thom Fahrbach, of Portland Oregon, gives the memorial lesson at the third Ireland Sacred Harp Convention.

Photograph by Marcin Lewandowski, soundofphotography.com.

Bottom right: Nora Miller, Becky Wright, and Rachel Hall lead "The Ark" (p. 506) at the Western Massachusetts Sacred Harp Convention. Photograph by Kelly Taylor.

*PA > Easton, PA > Bethlehem, PA
> Carrollton, GA > Atlanta, GA >
Warszawa, PL—27.03.2013 ... so many
great places and beautiful people to sing
with! Thank you all for your wonderful
care, moving moments, and fun! And for
everything else!*

That was all I could write immediately after I returned. I felt overwhelmed after such a crazy and unforgettable experience. Two countries and six U.S. states, places full of singing, laughing, love, friendship, beauty, power, lessons, experience, fulfillment, charm... And it wouldn't have meant anywhere near as much without the wonderful, kind, and generous people who cared about us and helped in many ways before and during the trip! Thank you!

Our journey included many different occasions for singing. The biggest were the third Ireland Sacred Harp Convention in Cork, the fifteenth Western Massachusetts Sacred Harp Convention in Northampton, and the fifty-second Georgia State Convention

in Carrollton. There were many smaller singings, as well, but all were full of the same great spirit as the bigger ones.

Our first stop was Cork, Ireland, where the singing and fellowship began the Thursday before the convention weekend, and didn't end until Monday. Cork's Camden Palace hosts a weekly singing on Thursday night, a great opportunity to warm up our voices before the convention. A large group, including most of the travelers who were attending the convention, joined the Cork singers. The singing marked the first moments of welcoming, greetings, hugs, conversation, and laughter, with plenty of excitement thinking of how this is just the beginning of several wonderful days together. Sinéad Hanrahan, the chair of the convention, led the opening song, "Liverpool" (p. 37b in *The Sacred Harp*), and it was incredibly powerful. The energy and joy were almost visible! I was really crushed by the sound! Even though Ireland isn't the warmest place in the world in March, it

doesn't matter, because you feel so much warmth from this fellowship.

In between singing opportunities, Friday was a good day for a little sightseeing in Cork and the surrounding area. On Friday evening, we attended a workshop led by P. Dan Brittain, who taught about the rudiments of music, discussing the major and minor scales, modes of time and beating time, types of songs, and accent. I particularly enjoyed his discussion of Sacred Harp etiquette and unwritten traditions. We concluded with a humorous singing exercise, the song "Call John" a difficult yet silly tune from the rudiments of the 1911 *Original Sacred Harp*, known as the "James book."

This year the convention was held in a different place than previous two, which were at an old University College Cork library, a beautiful, spacious room. This time it was in Saint Fin Barre's Cathedral Hall, also very historic place. The hall was a bit smaller, but that gave it even better acoustics for Sacred Harp singing, which was the main purpose



Left: Kama Dembińska leads the class at the convention in Cork. Photograph by Marcin Lewandowski, soundofphotography.com.
Right: Justyna Orlikowska leads at the Georgia State Convention. Photograph by Matt Hinton.

of the change. The Corkians did a great job making the place unforgettable. There were embroidered shape notes on the walls, posters, and candles with shape notes at the front directing us to the singing, and many other details which made the room a bit cozier. But most importantly, the sound was very satisfying.

Every year, our European singings enjoy more and more popularity. This time in Cork we had the largest contingent of American singers yet. Every time we meet new people, we have a chance to encounter new traditions, new songs, and even new books; after the Saturday singing, we had an official *Shenandoah Harmony* book launch and singing. It was exciting to sing from this collection, a mix of the familiar and the very new, and to see what an undertaking it was to create a songbook from scratch. Our Polish contingent led the song, “Freta,” composed by Allison Blake Steel when she was in Poland in 2009 teaching a singing school. Writing

the song was beautiful gesture in and of itself, but the song is even more meaningful because it includes Polish verses. It was very moving to sing for the class in our native language. On Saturday night (frankly, every night), we socialized in the traditional Irish fashion—in pubs. Our evenings were full of people, Irish beers, laughter, and occasionally even some singing.

Sunday was a powerful contrast, rich in beautiful and significant words. The memorial lesson, led by Thom Fahrback of Portland, Oregon, was an experience that I will never forget. It was actually the first memorial which I heard that actually took the form of a *lesson*. Thom was very interactive, asking questions, forcing us to think, and showing us many ways of understanding the concept of “Sabbath.” Thom demonstrated that our singings feature diversity of thoughts, beliefs, backgrounds, but also showed us that it’s important to realize when we see this crowd singing that despite our endless variety, we are

all one together, and we all “belong to this band.” As a complement to the memorial lesson, Harald Grundner from Bremen, Germany, gave the closing prayer on Sunday, presenting an honest and beautiful account of his experiences with and motivations for singing Sacred Harp, how this has affected his understanding of life, values, and faith, and led him to a better understanding of what many kinds of people take from this music, including those that are not necessarily religious. And yet still, we sing religious music together. Tolerance and understanding are central to our tradition. As we recognize the beauty in the variety of life paths that intersect with our own, we see that in spite of all our differences, this music and the values that it represents enrich us all in so many different ways.

After all these wonderful events in Ireland, we bade Europe farewell and prepared to continue our trip across the ocean. We said goodbye to our Polish friends who couldn’t come with us, but



The singing at Northampton is a place where many singers' paths cross. Cora Wareh leads the class. Photograph by Kelly Taylor.

we took with us loads of hugs, kisses, and greetings for our American friends on behalf of the Polish singers. Going to the Western Massachusetts convention was actually a sort of homecoming for us. Several New England singers helped start a tradition of Sacred Harp singing in Poland. The last time we were there was three years ago, on our very first trip to the United States, and our very first Sacred Harp convention, when six Polish girls and a monk came to the Northeast. So being here again, even as a contingent of two, was a meaningful experience for us.

The singing at Northampton is a big singing where many singers' paths cross. This time around, the European contingent included two Irish girls, two Polish girls, and one German girl. It was funny to see each other just a week after the Cork convention, but in different country and even a different continent. My experience there three

years ago of a massive crowd that sounded like one powerful voice still echoed in my mind. This time was equally satisfying. I especially enjoyed the opportunity to switch between sections, since in Northampton there are plenty of singers on every part. Even if you choose a difficult or seldom used song, it is always well sung, since there are so many good singers all around the square. A particularly powerful song this time was "The Ark" (p. 506), led by Becky Wright, Rachel Hall, and Nora Miller. The air was so thick with sound it seemed to embrace me. And one of my favorites, "The Child of Grace" (p. 77t), led by Cheri Hardy, was alive with the feeling of encompassing happiness and fellowship. It was my own personal pleasure to lead "Newburgh" (p. 182), with Tim Eriksen. It was also very exciting to see how many children led in Northampton on both days. One song

was also led by group of students from Bennington College where Allison Blake Steel, Dan Hertzler, and Ben Bath are leading a weekly Sacred Harp singing school (before his move to Atlanta, Jesse Pearlman Karlsberg led these sessions). It shows that this tradition is continuing to grow, reaching new generations.

The Saturday social is traditionally held at the home of John and Greta Holbrook. Thanks to their great hospitality we had a wonderful party, occupying their entire house and the barn with a variety of musical and social activities; you could sing more from the *Sacred Harp*, *Shenandoah Harmony*, or *Lloyd's Hymnal*. You could listen to a band playing traditional melodies, including ballads from New England and other regions. Or, you could even train your brain by playing shape note "SET," a card game invented by Lauren Bock. If you preferred, you could also just rest, eat, and talk with friends.

After two weeks, I had already had so many amazing experiences, and the beginning of my journey seemed like it was ages ago. I was chatting one day with a friend whom I met in Ireland: "I feel like Ireland was ages ago!" He replied, "Ha. It was just two weeks ago that we sat next to each other in the treble section at Camden Palace." It seemed crazy, but I realized that he was right. It's a funny thing how after a month of absence, the people who you left at home either forget about you or start getting concerned, asking questions like, "So really! WHEN are you coming back?" or even "ARE you coming back?!" At some point I realized that I felt completely outside of time. As I contemplated my journey and all its richness, I had an overwhelming and thrilling feeling that wherever we go, people care about us. Even on a foreign continent, we found our family, this great band all around us.

Our last big stop was the fifty-second session of the Georgia State Convention in Carrollton. It was a smaller singing than the one in Northampton, but full of great voices. It was less formal and more familiar and intimate. It was possible to talk with practically everyone

in attendance. Our hosts were cordial and happy to entertain travelers. They showed us their hospitality and caring in many ways, reminding me once again of what a great community we are.

Adding to all of this was the unique feeling of singing somewhere in the southern U.S., touching this tradition close to its heart, a sense that filled me with such joy that at the beginning of the first session on Saturday as I sat and listened to the sound, I laughed to myself just to realize that we were truly here. Attending the Georgia State Convention was also a great opportunity to meet life-long singers and others who have contributed so much to the tradition of Sacred Harp, people like Hugh McGraw, Charlene Wallace, Reba Dell Windom, Buell Cobb, and so many others. It was also remarkable to meet people who were related to the composers of some of the best-loved Sacred Harp songs—or even the composers themselves. It is also wonderful to experience an unwritten part of the tradition that you have to encounter in person to understand; the things you can learn only by singing with others. For example, I enjoyed singing “Weeping Mary” (p. 408) and hearing how at the end of the song when each part takes turn singing the final phase, the altos in Georgia stayed silent until their part came in—different from what I had heard at singings in Alabama where the altos had held their note until their entrance. It would be a shame not to mention the dinner on the grounds, which was extraordinary, delicious, and overwhelming—vegetables, salads, meats, and desserts... my taste buds were in delight. After the convention, we went to the Sacred Harp museum at the Sacred Harp Publishing Company headquarters in Carrollton. Here, beautiful memories are saved in photos, articles, videos, books, and recordings. I recommend that everyone go there. You will feel even closer to our wonderful Sacred Harp heritage.

On our entire thirty-day trip, we only had two days without any singing! I am counting conventions, regular weekly or monthly singings, workshops, meetings



Though spare, the new convention hall had been festooned by the Cork singers with posters, crocheted shape notes spelling out “3rd Ireland Sacred Harp Convention,” and other decorations. Photograph by Marcin Lewandowski, soundofphotography.com.

at someone’s house, singing in the car, or whatever other surprising places that turned out to be perfect for singing. Just two days, with our twenty-eight other days beautifully accented with the sounds of music. And I still can’t believe it! The closest I can come to expressing my feelings is to quote the text from “River of Jordan” (from *The Social Harp*): “My soul is happy while I sing, happy, oh happy, I feel that I am on the wing...”

Many people, many paths, and many singings. I am so moved by the often unexpected but always fulfilling crossings that I experienced. I was also grateful when people from the U.S. and elsewhere who had come to sing in Europe were encouraging others to visit and sing with us back home. You are all invited to join our road, maybe at the second Poland Sacred Harp Convention in September!

It is beautiful when we can say that

we like singing with each other, but maybe it’s even better when we can say that we simply cherish the time that we have spent with each other. We met so many wonderful people during this trip about whom we can say both things without hesitation. What could be more precious? ■

Singing Reports

Road Trip to Roberta

by Jason Stanford | Bremen, Georgia

I recently was invited to ride with the world-renowned duo of Hugh McGraw and Charlene Wallace to Oscar McGuire's monthly singing school down in Roberta, Georgia. No Sacred Harp singer in their right mind would pass up such an opportunity, so of course I said yes. How I, a mere babe when it comes to shape-note singing, became associated with these two pantheons of the singing community is another article in itself. For now, I hope to share with you some things I learned on our crusade.

I'll begin with a shameless plug for Oscar by saying if you haven't been to one of his schools I highly recommend it. I learned more about the principles of the music and found why the music is written and sung the way it is quite fascinating and ingenious. I was also reminded of music theory involving chords and scales that I had forgotten over the years. Altogether the music began to make a little more sense to me. Try to make it to one of his schools if you can, you will be glad you did.

My trip began promptly at 8:30 am with Mr. McGraw arriving at my house, about one mile from his own. From there we would pick Ms. Wallace up in Carrollton and drive another hour and a half south to Roberta. What an adventure it was. Little did we know that the "Peaches to Beaches" yard sale was occurring simultaneously. This is a statewide yard sale that stretches from somewhere around Newnan all the way down to Brunswick. Every few miles folks were stopping to find roadside bargains. Mr. McGraw repeatedly tried to tempt Charlene into stopping, but each time she reminded him she did not go "Yard Sailing" like some others they might know. I entreated him to stop at one with a Go-Kart I wanted to buy for my seven-year-old son, but he didn't like the idea of strapping it to the roof of his Buick so alas we continued on our journey unimpeded.

Of course no road trip is complete without a moment when, as a passenger, you begin to wonder if this might be the last road trip you ever take. Make no mistake Mr. Hugh is a good driver, especially considering his age, and I would not hesitate to ride with him again. However, there was one particular incident where he thought it best to pass a semi-truck just before the four lane highway turned into two. At which point he became firmly embattled in a game of chicken with an oncoming car. Mr. Hugh refused to yield and both the approaching car and semi-truck were forced to the roadside. Thus, Hugh McGraw arrived on the two-lane victorious with no party suffering damages, and Charlene and I were assured and grateful that God does answer prayer. I have recently observed that Mr. McGraw is frequently on the go, and does not dilly dally. I don't know if Hugh has ever even heard of Tom Petty, but it is clear he abides by Mr. Petty's words, "... you never slow down you never grow old ..." and is living proof that they are true. He does however know of Bruce Springsteen and is grateful for his recent use of "The Last Words of Copernicus" (p. 112 in *The Sacred Harp*).

Once we arrived safely in Roberta we were pleased to find that Oscar had gone through the trouble of preparing his famous store bought cinnamon rolls, which really hit the spot after a near death experience. After the morning class we also enjoyed a "Dutch Treat" lunch at Hudson's BBQ in downtown Roberta (they were too poor to build a town square, so it's more of a "T"). I offered to buy lunch to pay for my ride, but I was informed that "Dutch Treat" means each person pays for their own meal. Anyway, if you like barbecue it is pretty good, and if you like taxidermy the atmosphere is a little on the wild side too. We then cruised the town, which

was in full array due to the community wide yard sale, before returning to sing. In the afternoon we each chose a song and did the best we could with the small group in attendance. At around 2 pm or so, we began our drive home.

A year ago or so I began compiling a list of questions to ask Hugh. At singings he is usually surrounded by others and there is not enough time to talk to him as much as I would like. I thought this trip would be an excellent time to ask my questions. The three of us talked virtually the whole way there and back on a myriad of topics. I was going from memory and didn't remember all my questions, but I did get a few answered. The interviews I have seen and heard with Hugh have mainly focused on Sacred Harp and his personal involvement. My questions are more on his musical compositions and writing shape-note music in general. This is what he told me that you may or may not already know.

Hugh began writing songs about seven or eight years after he started singing Sacred Harp. This would be somewhere around 1958. He would hum a lot as he went about his day and write down a melody first. Then he would give it to other accomplished singers and composers to get their input. He would keep refining it until he got the finished product we sing today. Prior to singing Sacred Harp he learned to play the guitar and sing, and learned a little piano too. He wrote songs up until 1992 at which point he felt like he should "retire" from song writing. Even so, composers still give him songs today to improve. If you look at the previous edition of *The Sacred Harp*, you'll see that Mr. Hugh also wrote alto parts to some of the older songs which are not attributed to him in the 1991 edition. The first song he wrote was "Living Hope" (p. 500), and the song he enjoys singing the most that he wrote is "Phillips Farewell" (p. 549). That

HUGH WINFRED MCGRAW (born February 20, 1931 in Centralhatchee, Georgia) served as executive secretary of the Sacred Harp Publishing Company from 1958–2002 and is currently the company's executive secretary emeritus. He was general chairman of the music committees that revised *The Sacred Harp* in 1966, 1971, 1987, and 1991, and was a member of the committee that edited the *1960 Supplement*. McGraw played an important role in promoting the spread of Sacred Harp by singing, speaking, and teaching singing schools at countless church meetings, folk festivals, and scholarly conferences, and helping to found and support new singings across the United States in the 1970s–1990s. McGraw was an inaugural National Heritage Fellow, selected as a member of the first class of fellows by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in 1982.

Though not an active singer as a young man, McGraw was acquainted with the style. In an interview with the NEA, he remarked:

The McGraw family has been involved in Sacred Harp music for well over a hundred years, but I didn't get involved until I was 25 years old. I'd go to a singing with my mother and father, but I thought it was more important to stay outside and play in the spring and run around the house than it was to learn this tradition.

McGraw became more engaged after attending a singing school taught by a second cousin, Henry Newton "Uncle Bud" McGraw (1883–1969) who remarked that Hugh probably "had enough McGraw in him" to learn to sing. Uncle Bud assisted Hugh in composing his first songs, which were included in the *1960 Supplement to Original Sacred Harp: Denson Revision*. McGraw continued to compose. *The Sacred Harp, 1991 Edition* includes eight of his tunes.

Now retired, McGraw worked as a manufacturer for Bremen clothing maker Sewell. His business acumen and enthusiasm made him a powerful advocate for Sacred Harp, contributing greatly to the current worldwide interest in the style. McGraw sang a song from *The Social Harp* in the 1980 film *The Long Riders*, bringing the style a measure of national attention. He co-founded the New England Convention, the first convention held outside the US South, in 1976, and founded the National Sacred Harp Convention in 1980. Retired from composing and leading, McGraw remains a constant presence at Sacred Harp singings in West Georgia and East Alabama. —Jesse P. Karlsberg

Sources: David Warren Steel, The Makers of the Sacred Harp (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 136–137; "Hugh McGraw," NEA National Heritage Fellows, <http://arts.gov/honors/heritage/fellows/hugh-mcgraw>; Hugh McGraw, personal communication.

is really all I remember that I had not already learned.

Together Hugh and Charlene explained a lot about Sacred Harp in general and shared some stories from years gone by. They obviously care deeply about the music and all the traditions that go along with it, and have a great concern for the future of Sacred Harp. We all had a good time, and I hope to travel with them again soon. So whether you've been singing Sacred Harp for decades or are a beginner, head to one of Oscar McGuire's singing schools. You will learn a lot, maybe more from the trip there and back, and hopefully I will see you there. ■

News

Congratulations to David Ivey, 2013 National Heritage Fellow

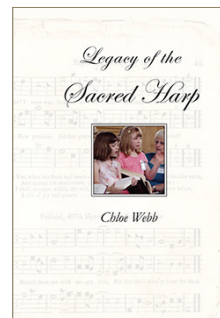
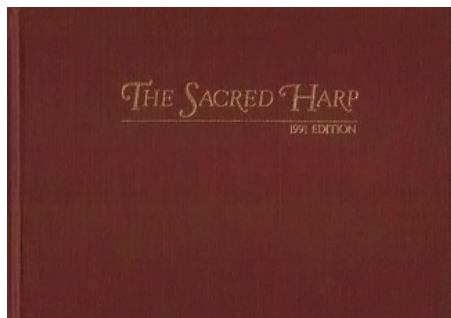
by Jesse P. Karlsberg | Atlanta, Georgia and Nathan Rees | Knoxville, Tennessee

THE Sacred Harp Publishing Company congratulates David Ivey, who has been recognized by the National Endowment for the Arts as a 2013 National Heritage Fellow. David, who co-founded Camp Fasola in 2003 with Jeff Sheppard and served as one of seven members of the Music Committee that revised *The Sacred Harp*, 1991 Edition, is the secretary of the Sacred Harp Musical Heritage Association.

As one of nine 2013 fellows, David is the third Sacred Harp singer to be honored as a National Heritage Fellow. He joins Hugh McGraw, Executive Secretary Emeritus of the Publishing Company, who was recognized by the NEA in 1982, and Dewey Williams, singing master and leader of the Wiregrass Sacred Harp Singers, who received the honor in 1983.

The Sacred Harp Publishing Company is a non-profit organization that promotes traditional Sacred Harp singing, community, and culture across the United States and around the world. SHPC publishes *The Sacred Harp, 1991 Edition* and other books, recordings, and resources that support Sacred Harp singing.

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For ordering information visit originalsacredharp.com, email ordering@originalsacredharp.com, or write to Sacred Harp Publishing Company, c/o Jesse P. Karlsberg, 318 Arizona Avenue NE, Atlanta, GA 30307.



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For additional issues of the Sacred Harp Publishing Company Newsletter plus audio and video extras. Visit originalsacredharp.com/newsletter/.

Find a singing in your area and learn more about Sacred Harp singing. Annual singings are held almost every weekend of the year, and there are monthly or weekly practice singings in most US states and several other countries. All welcome beginners! Visit fasola.org/singings for a singing directory.

Consider attending Camp Fasola, a weeklong all-ages summer camp teaching Sacred Harp singing and traditions. Visit campfasola.org for more information.