

The SACRED HARP PUBLISHING COMPANY Newsletter

VOL. 4, NO. 1 Stories about singers and singings, our music and traditions, and Sacred Harp's present-day growth.

MAY 2015

Singing Report

Old Strings on a New Harp

Jesse P. Karlsberg | Atlanta, Georgia



Front cover of the early twentieth-century second printing (left, courtesy of Wade Kotter) and 2015 *Centennial Edition* (right) of Joseph Stephen James's *Original Sacred Harp*.

On Valentine's Day, 2015, over one hundred people gathered at Cannon Chapel on the Emory University campus in Atlanta, Georgia, to celebrate the publication of the new *Centennial Edition* of Joseph Stephen James's *Original Sacred Harp*, the 1911 precursor of our own *1991 Edition*.¹ The event brought together singers from Georgia, Alabama, and further afield, with an international group of scholars in Atlanta for the annual meeting of the Society for Christian Scholarship in Music. A fine singing, and an engaging first look at the new *Centennial Edition*, the day also gave a number of musicologists their first exposure to Sacred Harp singing, and provided an opportunity to reflect on how singers from generations past articulated the relevance of our tradition to their own times and places as we do so today in a rapidly changing Sacred Harp landscape.

The *Original Sacred Harp* was published in Atlanta in the summer of 1911. The book was the third attempt at revising *The Sacred Harp* in the early

twentieth century, following Wilson Marion Cooper's and James Landrum White's revisions (today commonly known as the "Cooper book" and "White book"). Rather than remove songs, as his competitors had, James retained all of the songs in the 1870 fourth edition of *The Sacred Harp*, the last edition co-compiler Benjamin Franklin White edited, and restored two thirds of the songs removed in the nineteenth century.² James also added historical notes beneath every song (of dubious reliability and occasional humor), scriptural citations below each song's title, and adopted the page layout familiar to singers today.³ The book's "musical editor," Seaborn McDaniel Denson, collaborated with his brother, Thomas Jackson Denson, and their children to establish the Sacred Harp Publishing Company in 1933 and begin the work of revising James's book. Their *Original Sacred Harp: Denson Revision* went through additional enlargements and revisions in the 1960s and 1970s, and was finally revised once more in 1991

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Introducing Vol. 4, No. 1 of the Sacred Harp Publishing Company Newsletter

Jesse P. Karlsberg and Nathan Rees

The eighth issue of the *Sacred Harp Publishing Company Newsletter* features the experiences of singing school teachers and students (young and old, on both sides of the Atlantic), shares a new documentary on Sacred Harp in Ireland, and commemorates the contributions of William J. Reynolds to our songbook.

The issue opens with Jesse P. Karlsberg's account of the debut singing from the *Centennial Edition* of the 1911 *Original Sacred Harp*, precursor of our own *1991 Edition*. The next three articles feature a variety of perspectives on singing schools. The Wareh family—kids Cora and Faiz and parents Pattie and Tarik—share their observations on learning to sing as a family at Camp Fasola in Anniston, Alabama. Kathy Williams, who herself attended singing schools as a child, reports on a trip she and a dozen other American singers took to Camp Fasola Europe and the UK and Poland Conventions. German singers Andreas Manz, Yotin Tiewtrakul, and Philip Jacobs, recount two Sacred Harp workshops in the south of Germany, and present some suggestions for others promoting Sacred Harp.

Turning from singing schools, the second half of our issue focuses on those who contribute to Sacred Harp singing as documentarians, scholars, and advocates. Ciarán Ryan, a newcomer to Sacred Harp from Wexford, Ireland, presents his new fifty-minute documentary on Sacred Harp in Cork, and describes how he came to make it. Michael Hinton and the appropriately named David W. Music honor the legacy of William J. Reynolds, recipient of a posthumous citation from the Publishing Company, who researched attributions for the *1991 Edition*, founded and chaired singings, and popularized arrangements of Sacred Harp tunes. Jonathon Smith explains just why devoted Sacred Harp singer Amanda Denson led “You Are My Sunshine” at his first singing, and in an essay from the Sacred Harp Museum's archives, Amanda's aunt, “Queen of the Sacred Harp” Ruth Denson Edwards, makes an impassioned case for the historical, aesthetic, and religious significance of Sacred Harp singing.

Along with this web version of the *Newsletter*, we're thrilled to present a printable PDF version, along with PDF versions of our seven back issues. We encourage you to print out copies to bring to singings in your area. We're also initiating a program to send print copies, free of charge, to singers who are shut-in, or otherwise unable to access the Internet, but who might like to read the *Newsletter's* stories about Sacred Harp around the world and through history. If you know of someone who might like to receive a copy, let us know.

This new format would not be possible without the work of three new members of the *Newsletter* team. Elaena Gardner, a new singer from Australia, designed the PDF version of the *Newsletter*, and laid out its issues, with help from Jason Stanford, of Bremen, Georgia, and Leigh Cooper, of San Francisco, California, who also took on the enormous task of laying out the web version of this issue. All three will continue to help with the layout of future issues.

As always, we invite your comments on these articles, and your suggestions of topics for future issues of the *Newsletter*. ■

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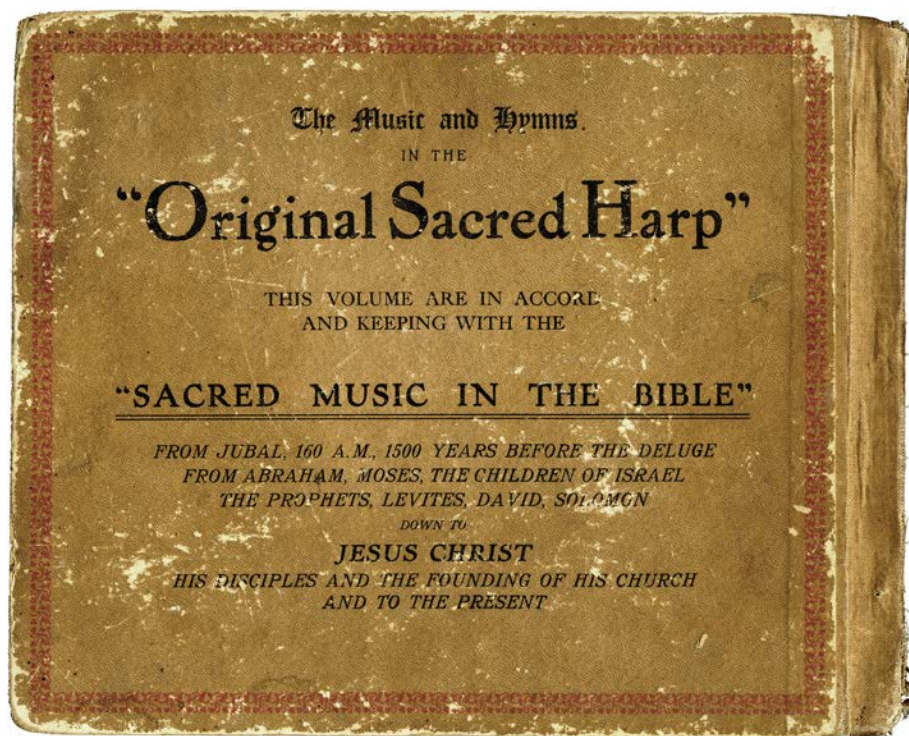
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To comment on or suggest future subjects for the *Sacred Harp Publishing Company Newsletter*, please contact the Editor.

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This newsletter is first published on the Sacred Harp Publishing Company website.

The online edition includes videos, audio recordings, additional images and allows readers to post comments on articles. originalsacredharp.com/newsletter



Left: Back cover of *Original Sacred Harp*, second printing. Courtesy of Wade Kotter.

Right: Jesse P. Karlsberg speaks about the history and design of *Original Sacred Harp* at the joint session of the Society for Christian Scholarship in Music and the Emory singing. Photograph by Mark Karlsberg.

by a committee led by Hugh McGraw (now secretary emeritus of the Sacred Harp Publishing Company), resulting in the publication of *The Sacred Harp: 1991 Edition*.

The occasion in 2011 of the book's centennial prompted the Sacred Harp Publishing Company and Pitts Theology Library of Emory University to collaboratively publish a facsimile reprint of *Original Sacred Harp*. I edited the book and contributed a new introduction describing its publication history, social context, and reception.⁴ As I wrote in the introduction, the new *Centennial Edition* "seeks to make available the many otherwise relatively inaccessible songs included in the 'James book,' to grant access to the body of significant research James's historical notes represent ..., and to make accessible the important artifact that is the 'James book' itself."⁵

Plans for the launch of the *Centennial Edition* began to form when M. Patrick Graham, director of Emory's Pitts Theology Library and long-time

supporter of the Emory singing, informed me that Emory's Candler School of Theology, in which the library is located, would be hosting the 2015 meeting of the Society for Christian Scholarship in Music (SCSM) at the university around the time of the *Centennial Edition's* planned launch. The Atlanta singers decided to move our singing a week later than our ordinary date to coincide with the conference in the hopes of encouraging the scholars to join us. With this in mind, the conference's organizers and the singing's officers agreed to hold a special joint session of the SCSM and the Emory singing, mixing academic talks with singing from the new edition.⁶

The joint session began at 9:00 am, an hour before the singing's scheduled start time to avoid cutting into time for singing, with the two planned scholarly talks. A healthy contingent of conference-goers attended, joined by a number of Sacred Harp singers who had made the trek early to hear the speakers. My own talk on the history

and design of James's *Original Sacred Harp* followed a talk by musicologist and Sacred Harp singer Joanna Smolko on the contemporary Sacred Harp singing community in Athens, Georgia, and the early history of shape-note singing in the area. Joshua Waggener, Assistant Professor of Music and Christian Worship at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, ably chaired the session.

My talk drew on physical features and design elements of the "James book" to illustrate the history, social context, and reception of the volume. We examined the book's front cover, which proclaimed, "ALL PLATES AND EVERYTHING NEW"; its statistical yet dubious "summary statement,"⁷ reminiscent of then-popular factbooks; and its new regularized page layout, all of which evince how James and his collaborators sought to present *Original Sacred Harp* as a relevant and modern object through the book's material features. We also noted the book's inconsistent typography, frequent typos, and



Phillip Denney leads from the new *Centennial Edition of Original Sacred Harp*. Photograph by Mark Karlsberg.

unusually tall page dimensions: evidence that a rush to print and limited financing undermined James's quest to modernize the tunebook. We turned to the book's back cover, scriptural citations, and the historical notes under the songs' pages to examine how the book's editors sought to present its contents as historically and religiously grounded, inheritors of a tradition of "SACRED MUSIC IN THE BIBLE," as the book's back cover reads, extending "from Jubal [on] to the present."

After the talks, it was time to sing. Lauren Bock, the singing's outgoing chair, brought the class to order, and the next forty-five minutes served as a chance to explore the aims of *Original Sacred Harp's* contributors and editors through the book's music. We sang songs that appeared in *Original Sacred Harp* with newly added alto parts, songs restored by James after having been removed in 1870, and new songs introduced to the book written in hybrid styles that nonetheless remained within the stylistic boundaries of *The Sacred Harp's* nineteenth-century editions. In between singing songs, I drew on these musical examples to describe how the revisers of *Original Sacred Harp* retained

"standard melodies" associated with the antebellum past and added songs old and new they saw as in keeping with the music already contained in the tunebook, yet made some changes aimed at asserting the book's twentieth-century relevance.

At 10:45 the joint session of the singing and conference came to a close, but the Emory singing continued. The class decided to continue singing out of *Original Sacred Harp* until all those who wanted to lead from the new edition had a chance to do so. During this session Mary Brownlee, a veteran treble singer from the South Georgia Convention elegantly led "Smyrna," a challenging song by William Billings in *Original Sacred Harp* on the unlikely page number "238A Continued" (another example of a mishap resulting from the book's rush to print). As Mary told the class, the song was a longtime favorite of her singing teacher Raymond Hamrick, famously a fan of Billings's music. Hamrick, Brownlee, and many other South Georgia singers primarily sang out of *Original Sacred Harp* into the 1970s, their community having rejected the 1936 *Denson Revision* because its editors removed a favorite song of

leading area singer Plez Hardin. [*Learn the story of this song and its composer, Elphrey Heritage, in the previous issue of the Newsletter.—Ed.*] At around 11:30 am the class turned to our tried and true copies of *The Sacred Harp: 1991 Edition*, from which we sang for the remainder of the day.

For a class that primarily sings from the 1991 Edition, singing from the James book was less of an exercise in sight-reading than many had expected. "Smyrna," "The Great Roll Call" (pp. 25–26 in *Original Sacred Harp*) and "Jordan's Shore" (p. 486), among other songs not in the 1991 Edition were new to many singers. Yet many other songs not only overlap with our book, the descendant of *Original Sacred Harp*, but are musically identical, featuring the same early-twentieth century added alto parts and the same legacy of editorial changes to certain notes. This renders singing from *Original Sacred Harp* a distinct experience for a 1991 Edition singer than singing from the Cooper and White books, where alto parts, and occasional notes, may stray from the familiar. Singers did find the book's unusual size to be an impediment to use. With its eight by ten inch page dimensions and



Left: Mary Brownlee and J. R. Hardman lead “Smyrna” from the new *Centennial Edition* of *Original Sacred Harp*. **Right top:** Lauren Bock leads at the Emory singing with reporter Amy Kiley, whose story on the singing and the new *Centennial Edition* aired on WABE 90.1, Atlanta’s NPR affiliate. **Right bottom:** Singers peruse the Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs exhibit at Pitts Theology Library after the Emory singing. Photographs by Mark Karlsberg.

609 songs, *Original Sacred Harp* clocks in at three and a half pounds, ten ounces more than the 1991 *Edition*. We marveled at the arm strength early twentieth-century Sacred Harp singers must have attained after regularly leading from the edition.

After a bountiful dinner on the grounds, at which singers were joined by a handful of conference attendees lured by the promise of southern cooking, the singing resumed. The impact of the larger than usual cohort of out-of-town singers present for the James book launch was evident in the volume and quality of the singing. A reporter from Atlanta’s NPR affiliate, WABE 90.1, periodically snagged singers in ones and twos during lunch and the after-dinner hour to speak with her about the event and their love of Sacred Harp singing while a photographer from the station snapped photos of the class. [Read the WABE story at <http://bit.ly/shpc4-1-wabe>] The resulting story placed the new edition in context and offered a picture of the singers, young and old, who make up the Atlanta Sacred Harp community.⁸

After the singing, a number of singers headed across the way to view an exhibit of hymn and tune books from the Pitts

Theology Library’s Special Collections. Cases displayed first editions of many of the books containing hymns in *The Sacred Harp* as well as shape-note tunebooks and early New England tunebooks featuring the music of Billings and others.

Although the new *Centennial Edition* of *Original Sacred Harp* is primarily intended for research and as a collectible, it was satisfying for me, as editor of the volume, to see the book in singers’ hands and laps around the hollow square. Since the debut singing, a small number of local practice singings have devoted an evening to trying out some of the little-known songs in the book. No all-day singings are currently planning to feature the *Original Sacred Harp*, but those interested should keep an eye out for an announcement about this year’s United Sacred Harp Musical Association, to be held in Atlanta on September 12–13, 2015. The United convention passed a resolution authorizing the publication of the *Original Sacred Harp* when it met in Atlanta at only its third session in 1906 and we may use the new *Centennial Edition*, in honor of James, who co-founded the convention and then served as its president, for a portion of the singing this fall.

In the meantime, singers can purchase a copy of *Original Sacred Harp* from the Sacred Harp Publishing Company website <http://bit.ly/shpc4-1-centennial>. At a moment when Sacred Harp singing is resurgent, spreading each year to new countries around the globe, we’re proud to make accessible once more a material representation of how Sacred Harp singing was remade in early twentieth-century Atlanta for a forward-looking populace in a new century. ■

Footnotes

1. This singing report’s title is a play on a John Bealle’s 1994 article on the publication of *The Sacred Harp: 1991 Edition*, “New Strings on the ‘Old Harp’: The 1991 Revision of *The Sacred Harp*,” *Tributaries: Journal of the Alabama Folklife Association* 1 (1994): 5–23. *Original Sacred Harp: Centennial Edition* was co-published by Pitts Theology Library and the Sacred Harp Publishing Company as the eighth book in Pitts’s series Emory Texts and Studies in Ecclesial Life. I am deeply grateful to M. Patrick Graham, director of Pitts, Allen Tullos, co-director of the Emory Center for Digital Scholarship (ECDS), and my colleagues on the board of directors of the Sacred Harp Publishing Company, especially Karen Rollins, John Plunkett, Hugh McGraw, Charlene Wallace, and Nathan

Rees, for their support of this project from its inception.

2. Aldo Thomas Ceresa, "1859 Sacred Harp Songs Not Restored in 1911," 2011.
3. For a taste of the humor in James's historical notes, look to page 82. Read more at Jesse P. Karlsberg, "Original Sacred Harp Historical Notes, Volume 1," *JPKarlsberg.com*, November 17, 2014, <http://bit.ly/shpc4-1-jpk1>; Jesse P. Karlsberg, "John Leland and the Mammoth Cheese: Original Sacred Harp Historical Notes, Volume 2, Cheese Notes Edition," *JPKarlsberg.com*, November 19, 2014, <http://bit.ly/shpc4-1-jpk2>.
4. Fidelity to the 1911 *Original Sacred Harp* guided my editorial decisions. The new book retains all the design quirks and typographical errors of the original, but features meticulously retouched pages clean of any blemishes due to wear, the passage of time, or the digitization process. Danielle Pitrone, my assistant at ECDS for the project, deserves enormous credit for the result, having devoted hundreds of hours to the exacting work of preparing the book's many pages for publication.
5. Jesse P. Karlsberg, "Joseph Stephen James's *Original Sacred Harp*: Introduction to the Centennial Edition," in *Original Sacred Harp: Centennial Edition*, ed. Joseph Stephen James and Jesse P. Karlsberg (Atlanta, GA: Pitts Theology Library, 2015), xiv.
6. Thanks in particular to Lauren Bock and Megan Friddle, officers of the Emory singing, and to SCSM president Stephen A. Crist and program committee chair Jenny Bloxam for making this session possible.
7. This unusual page features a table of statistics ranging from the "Number of Tunes, Odes, and Anthems added [to the book in] 1911" (101) to rather more curious figures such as the "Total number of words and parts of words in [the book's scriptural] citations" (18,857), the "Total number of repeats in the book" (662), and "Total number of notes used in entire book," ("about ... 115,000"). The task of fact-checking these figures was thankfully not a part of preparing the new *Centennial Edition*. See J. S. James et al., eds., *Original Sacred Harp* (Atlanta, GA, 1911), ii.
8. A few WABE listeners have even showed up at Atlanta singings in the months since the story aired.

Singing Report

Fasola Kids: Camp for a Recently Forged Singing Family

Cora, Faiz, Pattie, and Tarik Wareh | Niskayuna, New York



Nathan Rees's rudiments class. Photograph by Jonathon Smith.

We begin below with a little bit of what the Youth Emphasis session of Camp Fasola 2014 meant to our kids, Faiz (9) and Cora (7), in their own words. After their account, we offer some thoughts on our experience of camp and how we've come to be a fasola family over the past few years. It's well known that camp is a blast for older kids and young adults who come from around the country and around the world for the unbeatable fellowship, and for oldsters like us. We hope that our account of camp speaks to the place of the younger singers in this loving community

Camp Fasola 2014 in the Words of Faiz (9) and Cora (7)

What were your favorite parts of Camp Fasola?

Faiz: One of my favorite parts of Camp Fasola was the teachers, because they found good ways to communicate useful information about music and other things, and gave an occasional laugh. I also liked the evening singings because they gave you a chance to exercise your new skills that you learned that day. I also liked camp recreation because it allowed variety. The food at camp was also pretty good. There are lots more things I liked about camp, and these were only the basics.

Cora: Zipline. Hayride. On the hayride I sang,

*A hayride is just like a sandbox.
As long as you don't have chickenpox.
And you are eating lox.
And you have a companion fox.*



Left: Rudiments class. **Top right:** The hayride. **Bottom right:** The zipline. Photographs by Jonathon Smith.

We have a tour. I ask Lauren, my teacher (and a good friend) to make a crown out of hay. She tries and succeeds. We all play in the hay like it was a sandbox. Again I sing... (I won't write it again; it takes too much trouble.)

Zipline: I grew less confident by the minute. A scary zipline. When I got there at my turn I refused. On my way back I met Pattie (mother). I went back up thinking, "I want to do that." I went up the hill when it was my turn. I calmed myself, held, and sat—wheweeeee! I zoomed towards the water. I could almost feel the cold water. Then, before I knew what was happening, I landed gently on my back in the water. I backstroked to shore where they were clapping.

What did you learn about music at Camp Fasola?

Faiz: I mostly learned new songs at camp such as "Sacred Mount" (p.456), "Stafford" (p. 78), "Youth Will Soon Be Gone" (p. 404) and others.

Cora: I learned why notes have nothing inside and a stem (half notes), filling and a stem (quarter notes), no filling and no stems (whole notes), one flag, one stem (with sound, heheheee), and one with two flags filled head and stem (like flowers).

What did you learn about yourself?

Faiz: I didn't really learn anything about myself this year, mostly music.

Cora: I am very good at accent. I learned even more at Nathan's class. I realized it when Daddy looked at my pink music journal I was making at camp. After that I asked a lot of people to talk without accent, if they could. Here I'd show off. The truth is, I learned it all in Nathan's class.

What did you learn about the other campers?

Faiz: I mainly learned the personalities of campers, such as their tastes in music, like what songs they like.

Cora: Nathan is good at accent. Lauren loves hayrides. A lot of campers in my class (including me) can make faces out of notes, rests, and bird's eyes. (If you are a student you might try.)

What else is important to know about camp?

Faiz: The day is divided up into classes. You will almost always have a choice to make, the only exception being lemonade making, so you will get to choose what to do. Also, you should know that camp only lasts a little less than a week, but the days always seem longer than a normal day.

Cora: You will make many new friends. This is important because if everyone was always yelling, everything would be so frustrating. You could not even do the hayride in peace. It is also important to learn new things and build knowledge.

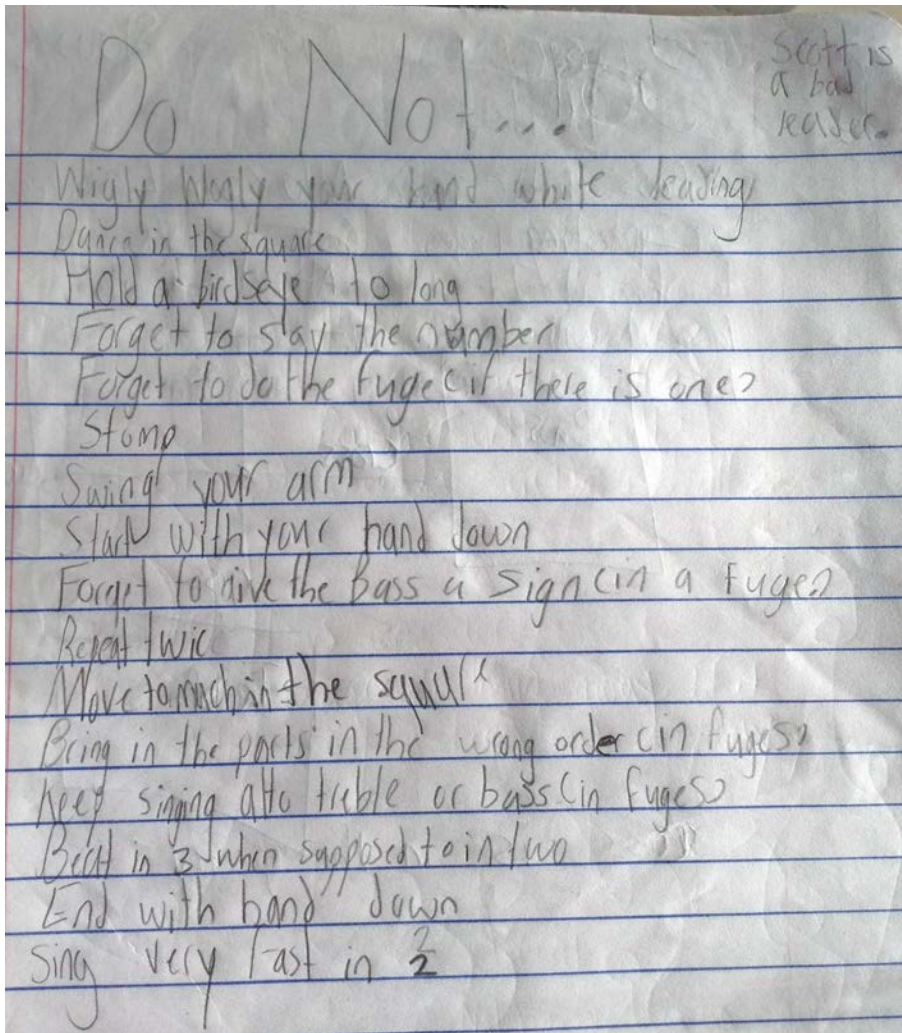
What would you tell people who are thinking about bringing their families to camp?

Faiz: I would tell them a lot of what I have said already. But I would also tell them about what the classes are like, and what my favorite classes were, but I would mainly encourage them to go.

Cora: I would tell them that their children will have a long opportunity to learn music and they might become composers (like Faiz). I would tell them that they could learn in a fun way. I would tell them the excited, scared, and happy feeling of camp.

Mom's Camp Report

For me, Camp Fasola offered an immersive several days in the shape-note culture of coming together in camaraderie and equality. Away from the stresses of my day-to-day life, I felt immediately at home among my fellow campers, who were there not only to teach and learn, but to sympathize and share.



Left: Cora's notebook: Things not to do, learned from Scott the "bad leader." Photograph by Tarik Wareh.

Right: The girls in charge of the evening singing. Photograph by Jonathon Smith.

Before I came to camp, I had my mind mostly on the musical lessons ahead and didn't give much thought to how soul-feeding it would be to give up a few days to everything that a summer camp experience could be. By the end of the three days, I had won a toenail painting contest (albeit uncontested in my category), gone down the zipline (albeit after an extreme amount of hemming and hawing), and killed a scorpion (albeit a rather tiny one). I hadn't anticipated how much I would enjoy the camp aspects of camp—a row around the lake, having my choice of fifty friends or friends-in-the-making to sit with at breakfast, a pick-up game of ping-pong, a crowd making lemonade.

Musically, my experience involved mostly but not exclusively following the class schedule of the younger campers,

as I was chaperoning my seven-year-old daughter throughout. I am also a teacher, and I constantly found myself impressed by the great variety of ways that camp teachers helped us learn. I loved watching the pedagogical flair of Lauren Bock and Scott DePoy as they drew in their young students, making learning fun with their special techniques, from the basics of working through the scale and mapping it onto well-known songs, to the great anticipation of the final day's performance by Scotty the Bad Leader, which involved Scott leading a song as ineptly as possible so that the young ones could show off their knowledge by finding his mistakes.

This was just one of many times at camp that young ones got to speak with authority—other times included the opportunities on Tuesday and Wednesday night for the girls and boys groups to

organize and lead the powerful evening singing for all the campers and teachers. A young man from England who had benefitted from a travel scholarship aroused friendly laughter as he told about navigating customs with an unusual travel agenda, and he spoke movingly in a post-singing devotional about what learning Sacred Harp singing had meant to him in his own life.

Cora and I did check out a few of the classes aimed primarily at adults, and no one ever made her feel anything less than perfectly welcome. She made certain to sign up for a favored instructor's class on accent, and she made copious notes about the different metrical possibilities. Nathan Rees's class emphasized that accent might seem like one more thing to keep track of, but in fact is something that the voice does naturally.

In Lela Crowder's class on poetry, we were offered new perspectives for understanding literature in general and in the Sacred Harp in particular, as Lela spoke about the universal archetypes that make the poetry of the Sacred Harp accessible to many. As Lela made clear, it's not a code to be cracked by a chosen few, but rather a language that speaks with meaning about universal life experiences that can also be universally understood. Lela emphasized in particular how often the idea of life as a journey appears in the Sacred Harp, illustrating this with reference to "Wayfaring Stranger" (p. 457). While the class was mostly attended by adults, she made a point of including the younger students too (Anna and Cora). Here, as throughout the camp, the democratic spirit of Sacred Harp was much in evidence, as the voices of young people were invited into the conversation and treated with respect. And Lela also reminded us that a function of the Sacred Harp songs is to connect us to others who have experienced the feelings we now have. This was reinforced by having the class share their personal association with the poetry of different songs. It turns out that I am not the only one who has uncharitable thoughts when singing "Greenwich" (p. 183)!

Buell Cobb's "can't miss" class on the etiquette of the Sacred Harp tradition offered the perfect blend of good storytelling and practical suggestions as he shared with us his thoughts about what it means to be a good leader. Buell emphasized the importance of gaining a sense of the main stream within which traditional singers have carried on singing, while resisting the attraction of the extremes—"staying well within their good example" as a new singer, as well as being responsible to the class in picking songs that they are ready and willing to sing.

Many campers did not want to miss either the leading workshop with Bridget Kennedy and Judy Caudle or the celebration of Shelbie Sheppard and her love of shoes, and so these two events were combined into an extravaganza of fun. The critiques from the teachers took place in a supportive atmosphere, staying true to the policy that Pam Nunn

established at the session's outset: "If anyone gets their feelings hurt, we'll just have to tickle you." Indeed, as the session progressed, more and more hilarity ensued. If Faiz has ever had more fun than seeing Judy Caudle lead "Rose of Sharon" (p. 254), *notes only*, on the fly, I really don't need to know about it. At the Henagar-Union Convention the following week, Miss Shelbie's shoes were a must-have accessory for singers honored to help carry on her memory in some small way.

I felt especially inspired by a session on Leading Songs for Girls on the last day of camp. Here all three teachers—Rachel Rudi, Lela Crowder, and Lauren Bock—involved the (mostly) young women in a discussion of how being part of the Sacred Harp community means that you have an important and empowering role to play. The teachers both shared their experiences and got many students to speak about how they had come to feel more confident as leaders. This open discussion made explicit for the girls a point that had been implicit throughout camp: that each and every voice matters. It was impressive and moving to consider how these girls' experience of shape-note singing—together with the strong examples of their teachers—might lay a firm foundation for confidence in other areas of their lives as well.

Being at camp means hearing bits of music around you all the time. For that week at least, everyone was willing to be led by Cora in yet another rendition of "Africa" (p. 178) at more or less the drop of a hat. Lying in my bunk the final night of camp, I was surrounded by music—Cora in the bed to my right singing a medley of "Africa" and "Wayfaring Stranger," and Spencer, a new singer, singing "Holy Manna" (p. 59).

Becoming a Fasola Family (by Dad)

I realized something both basically human and truly divine was missing from my life when I harmonized on some old hymns during a visit to the Coopertown, New York, Farmers' Museum in August 2011. The space would have been perfect for a Sacred

Harp singing—a 1795 wooden church that had originally served worshippers in East Durham and Cornwallville (Greene County, New York)—but it was only a welcoming museum volunteer and I whose voices were trying to fill it. A month later, I had found my way to my local Sacred Harp singing.

I had been interested in beautiful old Anglo-American and Scotch-Irish songs since I was a teenager, and I was slowly starting to perceive the charming world of old-time fiddle tunes. Despite a couple very close calls, the fasola tradition, which would prove to be the giant missing piece at the center of my personal musical puzzle, had eluded my discovery until this moment and I was driven to think practically about community singing opportunities near me in upstate New York.

I found an out-of-date listing for the monthly Albany Sacred Harp singing. One of the top Google results offering to explain this vaguely familiar phrase, "Sacred Harp"—the Awake, My Soul website with its glorious recording of "Idumea" (p. 47b)—blew my mind instantly and completely. There were people who not only came together to sing for pure joy without prerequisites or performances, but they sang like this, they sang music like this, they sang poetry like this? This was a concentrated distillation of everything I'd loved getting little glimpses of in my previous affection for American song traditions. A month later, in September 2011, I was at our Jonesville monthly singing. I had learned the shapes, and I had my own copy of the book in hand (it had arrived with a kind but unnecessary note from Jesse P. Karlsberg making sure I knew about the existence of my local singing community). Quickly the folk songs and ballads I had sung with my children at bedtime gave way to "Return Again" (p. 335) and "The Golden Harp" (p. 274t). (It may have been better for the kids to know and love this singing first as something to share in the intimacy of our family life at home, rather than first meeting it as a public event—there was no mistaking the fact that it was for us to do together.)

In November and January, I brought



Singing at the Sand Mountain Potato Festival after camp. Photograph by Tarik Wareh.

the whole family to the monthly singing in Lenox, Massachusetts. I met a Massachusetts singer, Christine, whose daughter had been singing from the age of ten, and I heard my children's voices sing "Old Hundred" (p. 49t) and "The Golden Harp" with the class. By February, I had attended singing schools taught by Tom Malone and Tim Eriksen and was teaching some of the rudiments to my children at home.

I never looked back, and my family's musical, social, and spiritual world has been thoroughly changed. I am sometimes asked how it is that Faiz and Cora should come to have such a love and or deep involvement in Sacred Harp singing. I know that in a basic sense we are not the authors of this good and important thing in our family life. And I know that experiences will differ greatly from one family to another. But I believe that a crucial part of it for us was adopting into our lives a larger singing culture. Camp Fasola has been a joyous experience for us as much because it gathers and strengthens the representatives of that culture as for any other reason. What do I mean by saying that adopting a "culture" rather than merely a pastime has been important to this journey of ours? If Sacred Harp had been a mere activity among others,

something to partake of in only its most approachable aspects, something we granted a defined place in our lives intended to meet our preexisting needs and desires, without letting it redefine us in important ways, then I doubt it could have held our children's interest enough for them to become rooted in the singing as they have. In part this meant becoming part of the singing community, its fellowship and its ways. In part it meant appreciating, on their own terms, the sacred lyrics that expressed truths so dear to previous families of singers that they preserved the tunes which served that poetry, maintained the skills to sing them together in harmony, and kept the singings going strong.

In this way we have found a special kind of being alive that is worth sacrificing for. No doubt there are many other ways to find this in life; we have been content to allow this one, accepted in all its specificity, to serve our children as a type of transcendence. Sacred Harp singing could only serve our family as our musical culture because it was so much more—a coherent tradition that reaches deep into life, more than the sum of its parts, nurtured and taught with purpose by those who carried the culture forward. It has all the uniqueness and energy of something alive, and many

of us who drift into it late and clueless soon find ourselves attached to its roots, committed to its purposes, and growing in its paths. None of this makes it the same or predictable for everyone under its seal; we have certainly seen in our family how Sacred Harp leads our very different natures by diverse routes to joy and knowledge. How much truer this is across the incredible diversity of the worldwide community of singers today.

Any new singer soon begins to realize that Sacred Harp singers are not simply using ordinary musical principles to render notes from the page so as to please the tastes that they or any audience may have acquired in some other milieu. There is a great tradition that informs what we do, and the singing school is undeniably a foundation of it. Camp Fasola affords to many the opportunity to drink in some of this tradition and let the life of the music breathe more fully within us. I arrived at camp for the first time with a commitment to singing as part of who I was, but this did not mean that I had figured out everything I needed to understand about what we do when we sing—quite the opposite! The connections we keep making to the people, ways, and feelings that constitute the tradition and its history can (mysteriously) even make us better known to ourselves.

In Sacred Harp, we do not take up for our own use artefacts from an age-old musical culture; we become participants in it. Otherwise, how would a family, after discovering they might love to sing, actually end up receiving the rewards promised by that first feeling of love? The surprising educative power of the shapes and of the tradition has proved itself in my family. Sacred Harp singing rekindled my only-ever-shaky amateur musical literacy, made my wife a musician for the first time, and gave my children a better foundation in music (not just singing but all music) than I could ever have hoped to impart without the singing culture's resources of knowledge, practice, and community. Sacred Harp, unlike most cultural experiences ("for kids" or for adults), faces us with all the complications and obstacles that come from encountering another culture and



Top: Faiz leading at the Henagar-Union Convention after camp. **Bottom:** (left) Visiting the grave of a famous singing-school teacher at Henagar after camp and (right) Fasola kids together for the Henagar-Union social. Photos by Tarik Wareh.

making its unique values and special realities our own. Together with this, it offers all the benefits of having an entire language at our disposal; as citizens of a new world, we can begin to speak its language and in the process learn about ourselves by walking in its “old paths.”

Sacred Harp singing is a way of being with each other. It does the good work of bringing our hearts and voices together, whether or not we have any particular background or any instruction in the rudiments. Camp Fasola, with all its fun and fellowship and nightly tides of powerful song, proves this abundantly. Such communion in song has changed me and proclaimed loudly in my soul the great commandments of love for God and neighbor. But camp also shows us how and why, in our history, singers’ great

concern for such higher goods has led them to be singing-school students and teachers as well. On the one hand, singers of all stripes learn songs and musical principles, how better to be together and to sing together. On the other hand, they feel the comfort and joy that comes from “finding their tribe” at Camp Lee. I think this is particularly valuable to singing children and families who may go through most of their year without enough evidence that their strangest and most wonderful pursuit is one whose creative power is at work in so many other children and families from all over. ■

Singing Report Camp Fasola Europe

Kathy Williams | Cullman, Alabama

Fourteen eager travelers met at the Atlanta Airport on Thursday, September 18, 2014, to begin a thirteen-day adventure that included the nineteenth annual UK Sacred Harp Convention, the second Camp Fasola Europe, and the third annual Poland Sacred Harp Convention. The travelers included David and Karen Ivey, trip hosts and camp instructors from Huntsville, Alabama, and camp instructors Jesse P. Karlsberg from Atlanta, Georgia, Bridgett Kennedy and Buell Cobb from Birmingham, Alabama, and Dan Brittain, from Harrison, Arkansas. Our group was rounded out with lovers of Sacred Harp (and travel) from Alabama, Tennessee, North Carolina, and beyond: Gail Doss from Nashville, Tennessee; Eddie Mash from Knoxville, Tennessee; Linda Thomas from Oneonta, Alabama, me (Kathy Williams), from Cullman, Alabama, Jo Dell Albi from New Lenox, Illinois, Susan Cheronos from Cloudland, Georgia, and Henagar, Alabama, and Gill and Pam Minor from Wilmington, North Carolina. An interesting thing about that flight is that we flew right over the British Isles to a layover in Frankfurt, Germany, then hopped right back west to Manchester. Our layover in Frankfurt was long enough to have a wonderful breakfast together before meeting our connecting flight.

Upon our arrival in Manchester on Friday morning, we met our first glitch: Linda Thomas’s luggage didn’t arrive! After the first jolt of panic, the loss was reported, and the luggage was found to still be in Atlanta. Given the time difference, we hoped it would be put on a flight from Atlanta that day, and that it would arrive soon! We met our coach outside the airport and traveled about an hour to Sheffield in South Yorkshire, where we checked into our hotel and had the rest of the day to explore, rest, shop, and find restaurants.



The tour group in Warsaw. All photographs by Kathy Williams and Linda Thomas except where otherwise noted.

Early Saturday morning, after a full English breakfast at our hotel, we made our way to the singing venue, where an astonishing crowd was gathering! What followed was a wonderful day of singing, food, fellowship, and fun. Among the most energetic and heartfelt tunes we sang were some of the slower plain tunes in the first hundred pages of our tunebook. It was a wonderful day of reunion, meeting new singers, and bringing our hearts together to sing.

When we returned to our hotel that afternoon, Linda's mysteriously delayed luggage had arrived (celebration time!). The social that followed on Saturday night was highlighted by fish and chips dinners we had ordered during the day, followed by volunteer entertainment by singers who displayed their musical talents in genres outside of Sacred Harp. One memorable performance was Steven Levine's rendition of an Australian song called "Bill and the Bear," which recounts the true story of a Glaswegian emigrant to Australia,

William Sinclair. Bill became famous for defeating a bear when a circus visited nearby, hence six verses and the chorus after each:

*And were you there in the cold night air
when William Sinclair he fought the
bear?*

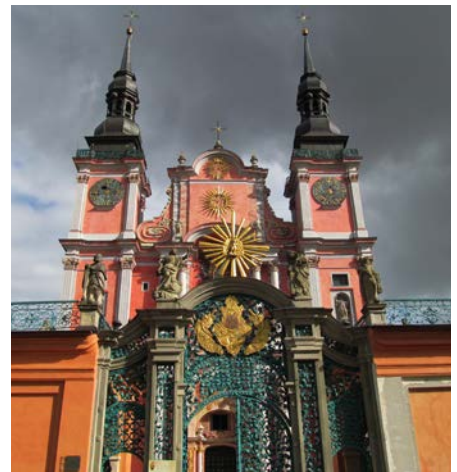
*Were you there to see William Sinclair
When he wrestled the bear to the ground?*

Sunday's singing was just as robust and memorable as Saturday's, and as always on the final day of a convention, poignant and bittersweet. Some memories of that day: beautiful Memorial Lesson, amazing lunch, an array of exotic cheeses, sweet goodbyes, the Parting Hand, promises to sing together again soon, and the common language of Sacred Harp music binding us together.

Monday brought an early flight from Manchester to Gdansk, Poland, where we were met by our guide and coach for the hour's drive to Chmielno for the official beginning of Camp Fasola Europe. After

checking in, receiving our black, white, and orange tee shirts and room assignments, we had time to do some visiting in the town of Chmielno. My favorite stop of that afternoon was at a local family pottery business, which has been operated by the same family for several generations. They have a series of designs for their work, which no one else is permitted to use. We had a tour of the building, a demonstration of the potter's wheel, the painting and glazing, and ended in a small showroom where it was not possible to leave without buying some beautiful mugs. It is also impossible not to describe this picturesque area of Poland, with high, rolling hills and beautiful lakes. The resort in Chmielno is in a lovely setting on the shore of one of those lakes. The buildings and grounds are gorgeous, one of the buildings sporting a thatched roof.

The rest of the week was filled with a flurry of classes, singing, visiting, teaching, learning, and helping each other. Campers were divided into groups, with each group responsible for camp duties for a day:



Left: UK Convention. Photo by Jesse P. Karlsberg. **Right:** (top) Kashubian Folk Dancer with Linda Thomas (bottom) Swieta Lipka.

taking notes in classes, making sure chairs were set up and put away, taking charge of the one-hour singing each evening after dinner. The first night's singing, after many of us had been singing all weekend, was a bit ragged around the edges. But we improved each night, after also singing in most of our classes. There was a delightful mix of classes from which to choose, from basic to advanced rudiments, leading, organizing conventions, arranging committee, memoirs of the Densons and Creels by Buell Cobb, and readings by Buell from his own book of Sacred Harp memories. He's an amazing storyteller! The instructors included David and Karen Ivey, Jesse P. Karlsberg, Chris Brown, Dan Brittain, Bridgett Kennedy, and Buell Cobb.

One of my favorite and most touching memories was the Memorial Lesson, following the class taught by Bridgett Kennedy. Bridgett had spent hours on her computer writing and rewriting what she wanted to say to introduce the lesson. Somehow, the next day when she went to

review her notes, they were gone; even the backups she had made sure to perform had disappeared into the ether! As she said, God had a plan for that lesson, and she was forced to speak directly from her heart. She did so eloquently, tears streaming as she shared her own experiences of loss, leading into a tender and meaningful memorial lesson.

Meals at camp were quite a memorable delight of Polish dishes. Breakfast and supper were buffets with breads, cheeses, meats, vegetables, and fruits. There was a selection of teas and instant coffee as well. Thanks to Dan Brittain for discovering a hidden treasure in the kitchen: thick, sludgy brewed coffee one had to know to ask for! The large meal was served at lunch time, beginning with a soup course served family style on the table. Our plentiful plates were then served by the staff dressed in local traditional costumes. One of the most interesting dishes I remember was dill pickle soup! Of course there were pierogies of different

sorts as well, savory and sweet. One of our lunchtime desserts was punchbowl cake prepared in Karen Ivey's "dinner on the ground" class using ingredients from the local market—the art of improvisation!

A highlight of our week was an amazing performance of Kashubian folk music and dance, the dancers dressed in colorful Kashubian costumes. The performance was part dance, part history lesson, part comedy routine. We learned that the people in that region of Poland had been severely persecuted during the Communist regime, not allowed to speak their language or teach it to their children. Of course, they devised ways around that, and their culture and language survived. The music was provided by three instruments, clarinet, accordion, and a percussion instrument wielded by the leader of the group. It consisted of a wooden pole about as tall as its player, on which was a box at about knee level, which was hit with a drumstick he held in his right hand. At



Left: The marvelous singing room for the third Poland Convention. **Right:** (top) Camp instructors leading (bottom) camp classes.

the top was (his description) a devil's face modeled after his mother-in-law, with a hat on its head with a rim he used like a cymbal. So, he hit the pole on the floor, struck the box and the hat rim with his drumstick, and also rattled attachments that made a sound like a tambourine. At one point, the Kashubian leader chided a member of our group who was sitting on the front row, "the professor," as he called him, for napping during their performance, causing an explosion of laughter. It was quite an entertaining evening!

The last night's singing at Camp Fasola was extraordinary, a truly wonderful singing, showing the incredible growth experienced by the group during the week. The class, which brought together people from eleven countries, was probably among the most diverse ever to sing from *The Sacred Harp*, but in just a few days our voices had come together! That night sixty campers from those eleven countries led in that hollow square. It's exciting to think of all the great work those campers were poised to do as they fanned out from our home for the week

in northern Poland to the corners of the globe, multiplying the joy, comfort, spirit, and fellowship that we experienced together.

Our group of fourteen left early on Friday morning for the long drive to Warsaw, with a side trip to the resort village of Swieta Lipka, known for the Pilgrimage Church of Our Dear Lady of Swieta Lipka. Our "coach" for the day was so small that it had no room for our luggage, so they attached a luggage trailer on the back. We had one especially nervous moment when the driver stopped, got out to check the trailer, then proceeded to drive. Were they afraid we had lost the whole thing? It was a bit spooky. The drive across the countryside was beautiful, the rolling hills, farmhouses with flower boxes in every window, forests of birch trees, just breathtaking views. On the roofs of many houses and the tops of power poles were huge nests that our guide identified as stork nests—the storks had already migrated to Africa for the winter.

We arrived in Swieta Lipka at lunchtime, where we had reservations at a

small, traditional restaurant. We each had variations of pierogis (some with meat, some with vegetables), stuffed potatoes, and salads (more like slaw in the United States). And of course, there were shared bites to taste what everyone had ordered. We're an adventurous lot! After lunch, we visited the Pilgrimage Church of Our Dear Lady of Swieta Lipka, one of the most important examples of Baroque architecture in Poland. We were there in time for a concert on the pipe organ, built in 1791. We were told it has 2,235 pipes. It is built on the entire west wall and is richly decorated in Baroque style. On the towers are placed sculptures depicting angels playing different instruments. These figures, together with stars and bells, are set in motion in time with the playing of the instrument. It was fascinating to watch the movement as the organist played!

After having time to shop in Swieta Lipka, we resumed our journey to Warsaw. Our guide was interested in our Sacred Harp story, asked many questions, and we sang for her. She was visibly moved and accepted our invitation to

come to the convention in Warsaw. She came on Sunday and stood in the square with tears in her eyes! What an influence we can have as we travel and share our music and our stories!

The Third Poland Convention began on Saturday, September 27, and was held in a stunning room with art deco touches, stylized light fixtures touched with gold edging. It proved to be a marvelous singing room as well. The class was an entirely different mix than the previous week's singers, with some having to return home after camp, and others joining us for the first time. It was an outstanding group nevertheless! The amazing efforts by the Polish singers in hosting their third convention are to be commended. It had to be a colossal undertaking! From the venue to the food (which was a mouthwatering array of Polish delicacies) to the Memorial Lesson to the bittersweet Parting Hand—it was a sensational convention!

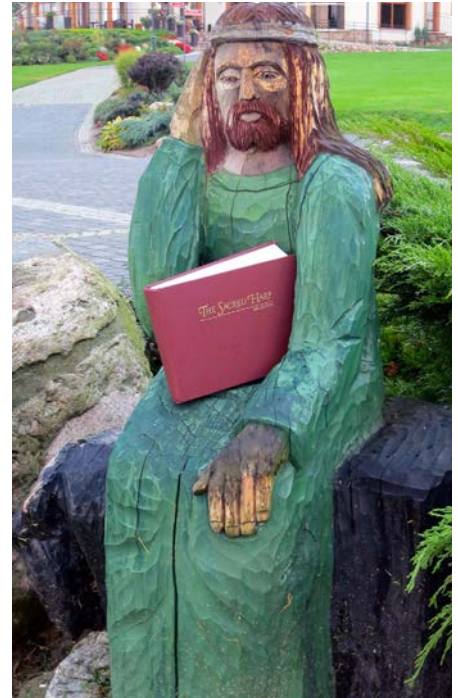
This story cannot be told without weaving in the creeping upper-respiratory illness (the dreaded lurgy) that began to take us one by one as the days progressed. It began at camp, insinuated its presence by slyly felling one after the other of my fellow campers. By the time we arrived stateside, Linda Thomas and I were the only ones of our group who had not fallen ill. I understand some of our UK friends also came down with it after they arrived home. It was an adventure to find out every morning which of us was still standing!

On Monday, September 29, we had an all-day tour of Warsaw, with another wonderful tour guide. Warsaw is almost a new city since the end of World War II, when it was destroyed, leveled by the Nazis. A few elegant residences remain because they were used by the Nazi regime during that war. One such building is the Wilanow Palace Art Museum, a Baroque royal residence and testimony to Poland's past splendor. Other sites included the moving monument to the Holocaust near the site of the old Jewish Quarter, and the museum there, which has opened but is not fully operational yet. We finished our day with free time in the Old Town

Market for shopping and visiting.

Food must be mentioned yet again! Our hotel restaurant served a version of goulash which was very much like a beef and vegetable soup, served in a soup bowl and accompanied with crusty rolls and bread. Our lunch restaurant on Monday served a very thick goulash on a plate with kasha, a cooked grain served like rice as a side dish. I'm sure there are many more versions we could have sampled if we had the time!

Late Monday afternoon our group gathered in the hotel restaurant with some others who were joining us for dinner. We learned at about 5:00 that our flight from Frankfurt to Atlanta had been cancelled, and further that Lufthansa pilots were striking on all long haul flights! After visions of sleeping late the next morning, the reality began to sink in that we still needed to get to the Warsaw Airport early the next morning to try to get out on other airlines. After a 2:30 a.m. wakeup call, we arrived at Frederic Chopin airport about 4:30 a.m. to begin making other arrangements. It took some finagling on our fearless leaders' part and help (however grumpily) of Lufthansa agents to get all of us on one flight on LOT Polish Airlines to Chicago O'Hare, to be leaving Warsaw about noon. We had plenty of time to walk around the airport, shop, go through the duty-free shops, eat, and say goodbye to several people who passed us by on their way to earlier departures, notably Karen Willard and Błażej Matusiak, who visited with us for a while before departing. We finally boarded for the long trip to Chicago, where we switched to an American Airlines flight to Atlanta. We said goodbye to Jo Dell Albi in Chicago, a relief for her since she was to be on call the next day. It was so late when we arrived in Atlanta that connecting flights were impossible. A few of our number stayed overnight in Atlanta. Eddie Mash said he was spending the night at the airport. Buell, Bridgett, Linda and I drove to Birmingham in Bridgett's car, thanks to Buell for driving, where Linda's car was parked at the airport. Linda and



Polish statue, with tunebook, ready to sing.

I then drove to her house, where my truck was parked. It's a bit more than an hour's drive to my house at Smith Lake in Cullman, and I arrived home about 4:00 a.m. on Wednesday, October 1. As close as my brain could figure with the changes in time, I had been up at least 36 hours, and I know others were longer than that before arriving home.

It was a fabulous trip that I think any of us would be ready to do again after a good rest! As Bridgett said, one of the best parts was having the time to visit with each other and to really get to know each other in a closer setting! Highlights of the two weeks included sharing our knowledge (and learning, always) about the Sacred Harp tradition; learning and reviewing the rudiments of the music; watching the blossoming of newcomers; and seeing, in the following weeks, their success in establishing Sacred Harp communities in their home cities around Europe. It is an amazing narrative. As a sixth generation Sacred Harp singer, I can say that my ancestors, and especially my grandparents whom I knew, would be amazed at the worldwide burst and spread of their beloved tradition. have confidence that it will continue to grow and flourish worldwide. ■

Singing Report

Sacred Harp Workshops in the South of Germany

Yotin Tiewtrakul, Andreas Manz, and Philip Jacobs | Hamburg and Frankfurt, Germany



First regular Munich singing.

Although singers in Germany have been traveling between Frankfurt, Bremen, and Hamburg for some time now, the first opportunity to venture further south was presented to us in the autumn of 2014, when Andreas Ebert, director of the St. Martin Christian Spiritual Center in Munich, invited us to give the first Sacred Harp workshop in Bavaria. Having a reputation for more introverted spiritual practices, such as meditation and contemplation, St. Martin was looking for a contrast to its “traditional” program.

Initially, singers from Bremen, Hamburg, Gießen, and Frankfurt traveled to meet up with Tobias Saalmann in Mainz on Friday, October 3, which is “Reunification Day” (a public holiday) in Germany. Mr. Saalmann had organized an afternoon Sacred Harp workshop

in a modern church building, the New Apostolic Church, in Mainz. The church space covered the logistical demands of the thirty or so workshop participants and offered excellent acoustic properties for a group of that size. The compact, coherent, and energetic lessons created a convivial atmosphere, which seemed to inspire the class to sing very well together towards the end of the workshop.

After the Mainz workshop, ten singers from various existing German Sacred Harp groups traveled further south to set up a mini camp (we slept on mattresses in the church) at St. Martin in Munich.

After breakfast the next day, we quickly set up a hollow square in the church and proceeded to follow the “introductory one-day workshop plan” that Andreas Manz of Frankfurt had drafted. Approximately twenty people

had registered for the workshop, so the class in Munich was comprised of a similar number of singers (thirty) as that of the Mainz group.

Singers from different age groups and professions attended the workshop in Munich. Most notable, perhaps, were the three friends who had discovered Sacred Harp through their hobby of reenacting the American Civil War. It was hardly surprisingly, therefore, to hear them call “Idumea” (p. 47b in *The Sacred Harp*) and “Going Home” (p. 282). [For more on the effect of the film *Cold Mountain* on Sacred Harp songs and singings, read “The Cold Mountain Bump” in our December, 2013 issue—Ed.] Another couple traveled all the way from Linz, in Austria, to attend the workshop, and we are hopeful that they will make a concerted effort to raise the profile of Sacred Harp singing



Left: (top) The Munich workshop team and (bottom) Tobias Saalmann leads the workshop in Mainz. Photograph by Tobias Saalmann.

Right: Tobias Saalmann's "shape-note sheets" in action. Photograph by Yotin Tiewtrakul.

in that particular corner of the world. The Munich workshop lasted from 10 am to 4:30 pm and was followed by an informal singing until 5:30 pm. The closing songs, "Bridgewater" (p. 276) and "Primrose" (p. 47t), were led by singers from Gießen (who only started to meet after the German Convention in June 2014) and Frankfurt respectively.

After the workshop in Munich, some of the participants attended an informal social at a Bavarian tavern, while others braved the "Wies'n" or meadow, the large outdoor venue where Oktoberfest is held, on the last day of the famous Munich Beer Festival.

Since the workshop was held in October, Munich singers have established a monthly singing in the city. The new singing is organized by Naomi Kaye Honova, an American singer currently living in Munich, and Peter Kocher, a German minister of the Lutheran Church in Bavaria.

We would like to share Andreas Manz's workshop plan with you as we feel it provides a good reference point for planning a one-day Sacred Harp workshop. We also feel that the structure of the schedule allowed us to strike a good balance between information and singing sections. It was possible to offer the "newbies" some respite from their struggle with the shapes by breaking up the program with information sections on the history of Sacred Harp and details about its contemporary practice. The information sections started with an explanation but nearly always ended with an animated period of questions and answers.

Another excellent feature of the workshop plan was that it encouraged more established singers to take responsibility for sections of the workshop. This provided a learning experience for the more experienced participants as well as for the newcomers. Responsibility for

the various sections and assignments were shared so that people could try their hand at keying, for example. Tobias Saalmann's "shape-note sheets" constituted yet another useful tool. The sheets of paper were printed with short musical phrases represented by shape-notes—without staves or indications of rhythm. The shape-note sheets seemed to offer the class easier access to the concept of shape-notes and their corresponding intervals.

Perhaps this short report will inspire other smaller singing communities to put together and share their workshop ideas. We could also consider the provision of a Sacred Harp workshop "cloud drive," where we could store and share workshop material. ■

Feature

Documenting Cork's Sacred Harp Community

Ciarán Ryan | Limerick, Ireland

I first heard of Sacred Harp singing in Cork about four years ago. I'm not sure how or where. I had a very vague awareness of shape-note singing, but more how the shape-notes worked than what it sounded like. I remember around late 2011 or early 2012 a group of Cork singers came to Limerick (the city I live in, about sixty miles from Cork) to sing in a pub one Sunday afternoon but I missed the opportunity to actually see them sing. I did take a note of it, and I'm almost sure my friend Albert who lives in Cork (and is a flatmate of Sinéad Hanrahan from the Cork singers) mentioned bits and pieces about Sacred Harp to me.

As a documentary maker, I am constantly filling pages of notebooks with ideas for potential programs. Many of these never get past a scribble. Others go a little further, but as a freelance producer, quite a lot never make it to the commissioning stages. Anything and everything takes my interest, and I've made documentaries on a wide range of topics from barber shops to football supporters to historical pieces. It's frequently things I have very little prior knowledge about; sometimes it is better to be an "outsider" in that you ask the very stupid and basic questions—although I subsequently discovered that there's no such thing as an "outsider" in the Sacred Harp international community, such is the inclusiveness central to its ethos.

Over a year ago I approached RTÉ Lyric FM, a national classical and arts station that is part of our national broadcaster in Ireland, RTÉ. Once funding was secured, I started working on a documentary in March 2014 at the fourth annual Ireland Sacred Harp Convention in Cork. I had never actually heard Sacred Harp singing live—all my research had been based on YouTube footage—so it was very much jumping in at the deep end. I was blown away



Ciarán Ryan interviewing Minnesota singer Steven Levine at the 2014 Ireland Sacred Harp Convention. Photograph courtesy of Ciarán Ryan.

that weekend, by the musicality to an extent, but more so by the positive energy that was bouncing around the room. Everyone—Corkonian and international—was incredibly welcoming to me, which made the recording experience a lot easier. As a documentary producer I do try and be as unobtrusive as possible, but at times it was difficult to be inconspicuous when waving a big microphone around. By the Sunday of the weekend, I had been generously invited into the center of the hollow square by a singer I met, Aaron Kahn, who is originally from the United States but is now based in Hong Kong.

The production continued through 2014; I probably made another four or five trips to Cork to record with various singers and at different events. I found that people were very open to talking about their own personal experiences with singing, and were enthused about the documentary. Perhaps the biggest challenge was trying to replicate the sound of the singing, especially when it's a larger group. I'm not a sound engineer, so this did require some particular care. Of course, it's next to impossible to actually capture what happens at a Sacred Harp singing unless you attend one, but I hope some of my recordings help to give an idea!

The documentary has received some nice feedback from both Sacred Harp singers and non-singers both at home and internationally. I hope to meet some more singers at this year's convention in Cork. This time I will be coming without my microphone! ■

*Listen to the complete
documentary at*

<http://bit.ly/shpc4-1-cork>



News

Honoring William J. Reynolds, A Behind the Scenes Contributor to the 1991 Edition

Michael Hinton, San Antonio, Texas | David W. Music, Waco, Texas

The Sacred Harp Publishing Company presented a citation award honoring the contributions of William J. Reynolds to Sacred Harp singing on January 31, 2015 at the William J. Reynolds Sacred Harp Singing in Fort Worth, Texas. Bill Reynolds became the eighty-seventh recipient of the citation, given since 1969 to “honor and express appreciation to loyal supporters and dedicated singers for outstanding work in the company and untiring support of and dedicated service to the cause of Sacred Harp music.”

We share tributes from the presentation in honor of Bill Reynolds by Michael Hinton, president of the Sacred Harp Publishing Company, and David W. Music, professor of church music at Baylor University and author of *William J. Reynolds: Church Musician*.

At the last meeting of the Board of Directors, the board voted unanimously to present a citation award for Bill Reynolds. Bill was a loyal Sacred Harp singer for many years. He also made significant and lasting contributions to the Sacred Harp Publishing Company over many years.

Bill Reynolds was church musician, composer, arranger, editor, educator and hymnologist. He was also Professor Emeritus of Church Music from the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Bill consulted on the revision of *The Sacred Harp* in 1971. He was also a “behind the scenes” contributor to the 1991 Edition. Mary Lou Reynolds, Bill’s wife, was not a Sacred Harp singer, but she was an editor. She “volunteered” to read every word in the 1991 revision and made necessary corrections—what a tremendous labor of love!

I first met Bill Reynolds in 1977

at a weeklong celebration marking the introduction of the new *Baptist Hymnal* for the Southern Baptist Convention. Bill served as General Editor for the hymnal and he was the primary planner for the week’s events. The new hymnal included six tunes from *The Sacred Harp*, and one from *The Christian Harmony*. Appropriately, the week’s festivities included a half-day Sacred Harp singing. I attended many of the sessions and evening music programs with Hugh McGraw and my aunt, Ruth Denson Edwards.

Donald Ross, Retired Justice of the Texas Sixth Court of Civil Appeals, was asked to make remarks about the long friendship he and Bill enjoyed. Don talked about Bill’s love of the music, his deep resonant bass voice, and the great enjoyment Bill found in singing the music and meeting Sacred Harp singers. In 1992, Donald asked Bill to participate in a special anniversary of the East Texas Sacred Harp Convention.

The Sacred Harp Publishing Company citation was presented to Tim Reynolds of Nashville, Tennessee, a son of Bill and Mary Lou Reynolds. Tim is an active Sacred Harp singer and sings in two Nashville church choirs. He is also involved with Tennessee singings. Tim told us that Bill was given a copy of a draft of the 1971 *Original Sacred Harp: Denson Revision*. Hugh McGraw told Bill that the Publishing Company needed a little help with corrections to the new tunebook. Bill told Hugh that it “would cost a fortune to have someone do all the work that was needed.” Bill had surgery scheduled soon after that conversation and he told Hugh that while he was recuperating he would look at the rough copy. Tim said that as Bill felt well enough to look at the revision he would bring a bedside table loaded with the 1971 draft and several other tune



William J. Reynolds

Watch Bill Reynolds
talking about *The
Sacred Harp*

<http://bit.ly/shpc4-r-reynolds>

books. As Bill found a note or word that needed to be corrected, he would locate the correct note or word in one of the other books and would then cut it out by hand and paste the correction into the revision copy. It must have taken hundreds of hours to complete that task.

The Sacred Harp, 1991 Edition is greatly indebted to Bill Reynolds and his selfless dedication to the music that he so dearly loved. The Sacred Harp Publishing Company is honored to recognize Dr. William J. Reynolds as a tireless supporter and true friend of Sacred Harp. ■ —Michael Hinton



Michael Hinton presenting the plaque to Bill's son Tim Reynolds.



David W. Music speaking at the presentation.



Donald Ross speaking at the presentation.

I am grateful to have the opportunity to say a few words about Bill Reynolds, for it was he who gave me my first exposure to Sacred Harp singing. Oh sure, I had read about Sacred Harp singing and even done research on some of its tunes, but it was Bill Reynolds who first introduced me to it as a singer, for which I shall ever be grateful.

For those who may not have known him or his many contributions to sacred music, let me note that Bill was a graduate of Missouri State University, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, the University of North Texas, and George Peabody College for Teachers in Nashville, Tennessee. He served as the second full-time minister of music in Oklahoma (at First Baptist Church, Ardmore, and First Baptist Church, Oklahoma City), then as an editor and later director of the Church Music Department of the Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville, and finally as Professor of Church Music at Southwestern Seminary. He was a renowned hymn leader and scholar, and a widely published composer.

Bill's contributions to Sacred Harp were many and varied, and read almost like a "what's what" of Sacred Harp singing. He was the driving force behind

the facsimile of *The Sacred Harp*, 1860 Edition, published by Broadman Press in 1968. He served as a consultant for the 1971 Edition, and for the 1991 Edition he compiled the information on the authors of the texts. As a composer, he made arrangements of a number of Sacred Harp tunes for choral ensembles. In 1975 he introduced Sacred Harp singing—together with Hugh McGraw and Irving Wolfe—to members of the national American Choral Directors Association. He was also a featured speaker at the dedication of the B. F. White Historical Marker in Hamilton, Georgia, in 1984. [Read about Irving Wolfe and the B. F. White Historical Marker in previous editions of the Newsletter.—Ed.]

Bill's leadership abilities were obvious to Sacred Harpers during his days in Nashville. In 1969 he became chairman of the Harpeth Valley Singing (now the Priestly Miller Memorial Singing), and in 1977 he also took over the duties of directing the Peabody Singing in Nashville. He continued as chair of these two singings until his removal to Fort Worth in 1980.

Five years after Bill joined the Southwestern Seminary faculty he founded the campus Sacred Harp Singing, the name of which was changed

in 2004 to the William J. Reynolds Sacred Harp Singing. We are all debtors to him for the thirty years of singing that have happened annually in that place, and for the many other contributions he made to the spread of the music that we all love. ■

—David W. Music

Just a Minute

You Are My Sunshine

Jonathon Smith | Urbana, Illinois



Warren Steel and Amanda Denson at the monument to the Densons at the Winston County Courthouse in Double Springs, Alabama in 1994. Photograph courtesy of Warren Steel.

I was recently reflecting (as many of us have) on my ten-year singing anniversary. The first all-day singing I attended was the William Walker Memorial at Wofford College in Spartanburg, South Carolina. The singing uses two books: *The Sacred Harp* and Walker's *Christian Harmony*. Not knowing what to expect, I guess I should have been more surprised by one of the selections that we sang that day. You'll find a rather unusual two song lesson if you turn to the South Carolina State Singing in Memory of William Walker in your 2005 minutes book: "New Britain" and "You Are My Sunshine."¹

I had previously met folks from South Carolina, western North Carolina, and Georgia at local singings, but at this first all-day singing there were many unfamiliar faces. I remember meeting such luminaries as Hugh McGraw and Harry Eskew, but one particular introduction stands out in my memory: a very sweet woman who was unable to speak scrawling out notes on a pad to let me know how excited she was that I had started singing Sacred Harp, and

how much she hoped that I would keep coming back. This woman also wrote that she was eager to have a copy of the audio recording that I was making of the singing. I was lucky enough to get to sing with her many more times over the next several years.

In the second session that morning this woman, Amanda Denson, led 78b ("New Britain" in *The Christian Harmony*) and "You Are My Sunshine" with her granddaughter, Emily. I distinctly remember Amanda handing Hugh a note requesting "You Are My Sunshine" because it was Emily's favorite song, and it was just one week until her birthday. At not-quite four years old, Emily was shy about being in the square, but Amanda was so happy when everyone began singing that she clapped her hands, smiled, and cried from sheer joy. I learned later just how much this moment meant to her as I realized that the only thing that Amanda took as much pride in as Sacred Harp was her family. Nothing could surpass those moments when she was able to bring the two together. Even though "You Are

My Sunshine" is hardly an appropriate choice for a Sacred Harp singing—which no one knew better than Amanda, the granddaughter of singing master and composer uncle Tom Denson—we were happy to bend the rules if it would ensure that little Emily got to have the best possible experience in the hollow square. [Read about Tom Denson's last lesson and letters of condolence sent after his death in our December 2013 issue.—Ed.]

As I think back, I realize that this is the reason that Amanda wanted a copy of my recording—so she could relive the beauty of that simple moment.

Amanda was always sweet and encouraging to new singers. Even throughout her illness she was appreciative, gracious, and full of cheer. It is hard to believe that seven years have passed since she left us. May we always remember her unbounded joy.

There is a recording of Amanda and Emily leading at the William Walker Memorial singing in 2005. If you listen closely you can hear clapping and finger snapping— a brief moment where she was indeed full of "sunshine." ■

Listen to the recording

<http://bit.ly/shpc4-1-sunshine>

Footnote

1. The singing was held that year on the Saturday before the second Sunday in April instead of its usual date in March.

Read The Old Paths

The Advancement of Sacred Harp Music

Ruth Denson Edwards, Cullman, Alabama | Nathan Rees, Grand Forks, North Dakota

An exceptional singer and unparalleled supporter of Sacred Harp, Ruth Denson Edwards was also one of the most eloquent chroniclers of the music and its community. Singers today who were not fortunate enough to have known her might recognize her thoughtful, polished voice from the preface titled "Music" that introduces The Sacred Harp, 1991 Edition. While we are unsure of its original purpose, the following essay, preserved at the Sacred Harp Museum, makes a similarly impassioned case for the historical, aesthetic, and religious significance of Sacred Harp singing.

Ruth Denson Edwards' history is conventional in its chronology, following the narrative established by George Pullen Jackson, but in other respects, her work stands out. Rather than seeing shapenote singing as a historical relic, she focuses on its continuing relevance in the present. Furthermore, instead of envisioning a quaint, idyllic past, she notes that Sacred Harp has always existed in a troubled and threatening world—and has always offered profound comfort.

In her conclusion, Ruth Denson Edwards asserts that Sacred Harp was beginning to stir interest outside its southern homeland, even in foreign countries. As we reprint this work fifty years later alongside accounts of singing schools and conventions in countries around the world, it is worth noting the prescience of her remarks.

—Nathan Rees

The advancement of Sacred Harp music

The world was in a bad way when the famous Sacred Harp was born, one hundred and twenty-one years ago. Then, as now, the planet was at war.

Britishers were enlarging their empire by armed forces in China, India, and Africa. The French were doing the same among the Arabs in North Africa. The Danes were making war on their neighbors to the South. Russia was doing the same to the North, and we, here at home, were arming for war with Mexico, fighting the Indians, and putting down race-riots in Philadelphia.

It would not be strange if the singing master, B. F. White, on his way then from his peaceful Georgia home, to his publisher in turbulent Philadelphia, with his manuscript of the "Sacred Harp" in his carpet bag valise, wondered whether the world would come to an end before Southern country singers would be able to open his book and sing.

But it didn't, and the first edition of the *Original Sacred Harp*, by B. F. White, was published in 1844, and that type of music became very popular in his home state of Georgia.

"The Chattahoochee Sacred Harp Singing Convention", (organized in 1852—the oldest convention in existence) adopted it, as did other conventions in Georgia, Alabama, and other Southern States, and it was used extensively for a period of 65 years.

In the early years of the Sacred Harp's life, singers made great sacrifices, and endured many hardships, in order to attend singings and conventions. Travel was slow; at first, they rode in ox-carts and on horseback. Roads were only rough trails; creeks and rivers had to be forded; to get to a singing required three or four days of travel. They spent nights along the way and enjoyed the age-old "Southern Hospitality."

At the conventions, these loyal devotees sang together and enjoyed the fellowship of mutual friends, for three or four days. Opening and closing prayers were offered and a memorial lesson was sung for those singers who had died since the last session of the convention. Dinner was spread on the grounds. At the close of the session, they sang "The Parting Hand" and while singing, all singers grasped the hands of friends and bade them a fond farewell. The next day, they began the long trek home.

The casual listener is often prone to complain that all Sacred Harp songs sound alike, and that he cannot understand that type of music. This is because "Sacred Harp music" is "four-part music". It has been composed in such a manner that each voice-part is equally balanced. The tune part is submerged more deeply because each part (except bass) is sung by both men and women. This gives "Sacred Harp music" distinctive qualities which differentiate it from all other types of music, for it is known as Dispersed Harmony.

In every Sacred Harp singing, the notes are sung first, then followed by the words. This fidelity to the old traditions is commendable, for the notes and shapes are a valuable birthright, without which the "Sacred Harp" would not be the "Sacred Harp."

B. F. White said, "Seek the old paths and walk therein." "Sacred Harp" singers today endeavor to do just that, for they sing in traditional style and follow the pattern set for them by the illustrious and venerable trail-blazers, William Billings, J. P. Reese, B. F. White, Seaborn M. Denson, Thomas J. Denson, Paine Denson, and many others.

No family has contributed more to the development, perpetuation, and advancement of "Sacred Harp music" than have the Densons. For more than half a century, the brothers, Seaborn M. Denson and Thomas J. Denson,



Left: Ruth Denson Edwards directs the class at a singing, ca. 1970. Around her neck, a magnifying glass for when her eyes were “giving her problems.” Also pictured: Walter A. Parker (left) and Charlene Wallace (right).

Right: Ruth Denson Edwards with Bob Denson

Photographs courtesy of Michael Hinton..

dedicated their lives and talents to the cause of “Sacred Harp music.”

Their wives were sisters and were members of a well-known singing family—the Burdettes. Sidney Burdette became the wife of Seaborn M. and Amanda became the wife of Thomas J. Denson.

These ladies were gifted singers and were a great help and inspiration to their husbands. In their early years, the “four-some” rode hundreds of miles, on horseback, to attend singings throughout Georgia and Alabama.

Seaborn M. and Thomas J. Denson were pioneers in the field of “Sacred Harp music”, and were recognized as the greatest singers, leaders, teachers, and writers of that particular music. They taught singing schools in many sections of the Deep South and many of their compositions appear in the *Original Sacred Harp, Denson Revision, 1960—Edition*.

Their work is gratefully commemorated by a beautifully engraved granite

monument which stands on the courthouse lawn at Double Springs, Alabama, in Winston County.

We know that “Uncle Seab” and “Uncle Tom” will live on in the hearts of the hundreds they taught to sing, but this marker will remind generations to come of their great work.

Paved roads and automobiles have “shortened the distance”, and removed many handicaps for present-day singers. They often drive 250 or 300 miles on Sunday morning to attend a singing. Because of improved methods of transportation and adequate heating facilities, singings are not only held in the summer season, but are held every Sunday throughout the year. In the Deep south more than 800 annual singings, 47 of which are two and three day conventions, are attended by 10,000 singers.

More than a century has gone by since the Sacred Harp’s birth (1844) and the present day (1965), and thousands

of rural singers are enjoying its long and vigorous life, at all-day singings, in countless churches, courthouses, and school auditoriums throughout the Deep South. The very fact of the longevity of the book gives courage and confidence to its devotees. It proves to them that some good things and beautiful things last, while so many other sorts of things are destroyed, and so many of God’s creatures die in man’s combats.

Interest in this music, known as “White Spirituals”, has spread to many sections of our nation and foreign countries. It is being taught in our colleges and universities, now, since leading educators appreciate the beauty and realize the potentialities of “Sacred Harp music”—Our American Heritage.

—Mrs. Ruth Denson Edwards

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.

Books available



The Sacred Harp, 1991 Edition	The best collection of sacred songs, hymns, odes, and anthems ever offered the singing public for general use.
Original Sacred Harp: Centennial Edition	A commemorative reprint of the historic 1911 edition of <i>The Sacred Harp</i> , with a new introduction.
The Makers of the Sacred Harp	Companion to <i>The Sacred Harp</i> , tracing the sources of every tune and text in our songbook.
Legacy of the Sacred Harp	One singer's quest to reconnect with family ancestors who composed, sang, and lived by the words of <i>The Sacred Harp</i> .

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.



Connect with the Sacred Harp Community

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.

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