

# The SACRED HARP PUBLISHING COMPANY Newsletter

VOL. 4, NO. 2     Stories about singers and singings, our music and traditions, and Sacred Harp's present-day growth.

DEC 2015

## Read the Old Paths

### The W. T. Gwin Old Harp Singers Trophy: A Unique Piece of Sacred Harp Memorabilia from Mississippi

Warren Steel | Oxford, Mississippi



The W. T. Gwin Old Harp Singers Trophy, pictured with Ethel Wright Mohammed's embroidered depiction of a Sacred Harp singing, was first awarded to the Webster County Old Harp Singers for their performance at the 1924 North Mississippi Fair.

### An Unexpected Object on the Front Porch

A unique piece of Sacred Harp memorabilia came to light recently. On April 13 of this year, my wife Anne and I arrived at our home in Oxford, Mississippi, to find an unexpected object on our front porch: a large silver trophy cup with a detached base. A note inside indicated that it had come from our neighbor, Lee Uhlhorn, and had been presented to her great-grandfather, W. T. Gwin, a prominent Sacred Harp singer in Webster County. We decided to donate the trophy to the Sacred Harp

Museum in Carrollton, Georgia, where it would add to the meager documentation of Sacred Harp in Mississippi.

In the early twentieth century it was not unusual for Sacred Harp singers to compete at singing conventions, state fairs, and other events. This trophy cup was first awarded to the Webster County Old Harp Singers, representing the New Harmony Singing Convention of Webster County, for their performance in a community singing contest at the North Mississippi Fair, Grenada, Mississippi in October 1924. The winners of the trophy in turn presented it to

## Contents

### Read The Old Paths

The W. T. Gwin Old Harp Singers Trophy: A Unique Piece of Sacred Harp Memorabilia from Mississippi **1**

Warren Steel

Sacred Harp Singing, a Way of Wife **4**

Joseph M. Jones

### Just A Minute

Harmony Primitive Baptist Church Singing, November 19, 1995: "The Traditional Window Opening" **5**

Nathan Rees

### Singing Reports

Regional Roots: Growing Sacred Harp in the Netherlands, Alaska, and British Columbia **6**

Jesse P. Karlsberg

406 and More, in Sweden **13**

Gill Minor

### Harpeth Valley News

Some Dos and Don'ts for Sacred Harp Singers **15**

Priestley Miller

### Number, Measure, Weight

Seasonal Songs **16**

Jesse P. Karlsberg and Mark Godfrey

### Help Me to Sing

Recovering Sacred Harp History through Newspapers **21**

Robert L. Vaughn

## Introducing Vol. 4, No. 2 of the Sacred Harp Publishing Company Newsletter

Jesse P. Karlsberg and Nathan Rees

The ninth issue of the *Sacred Harp Publishing Company Newsletter* shares stories from Sacred Harp's past, explores the leading choices of singers today, and offers thoughts on how our singings continue to expand as well as suggestions for how each singer might contribute to Sacred Harp's future.

The issue begins with Warren Steel's account of how he happened upon a unique artifact from our past, a 1924 trophy awarded to the winners of a Sacred Harp singing contest. Joe Jones tells the story of how whistling a Sacred Harp tune in 1954 sparked an encounter with his future wife. In this issue's "Just a Minute" installment, Nathan Rees reveals just what caused Sacred Harp singers to break into a Northwest Georgia church in November 1997. Turning to the present, Jesse P. Karlsberg and Mark T. Godfrey explore how leaders think about songs in relation to the calendar. Reports on singings in Sweden, The Netherlands, Alaska, and British Columbia by Gill Minor and Jesse detail the remarkable role strong regional hubs are playing in fostering the growth of new singings. Finally, two articles—one new, one old—suggest how we all might contribute to Sacred Harp's future. Robert L. Vaughn details how any singer with computer access can contribute to preserving Sacred Harp history for future generations by searching historical newspapers. Priestley Miller's list of Sacred Harp "Dos and Don'ts" is a pithy reminder of why so many of us value our music, and it still retains currency fifty years after its original publication.

The *Newsletter* team welcomes your comments on these articles. We also invite your suggestions of topics for future issues. Please don't hesitate to get in touch. ■

### Editorial Information

**Date published:** December 2015

**Editor:** Jesse P. Karlsberg

**Associate Editor:** Nathan Rees

**Editorial email:** [jesse@originalsacredharp.com](mailto:jesse@originalsacredharp.com)

**Design (print):** Elaena Gardner and Jason Stanford

**Design (web):** Leigh Cooper

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

### Visit us online

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](http://originalsacredharp.com/newsletter)

W. T. Gwin in appreciation of forty years faithful service as Director. Gwin later became the first president of the Mississippi State Sacred Harp Singing Convention when it was organized in 1929. Both events were memorialized on the cup in handsome, stylized engravings.

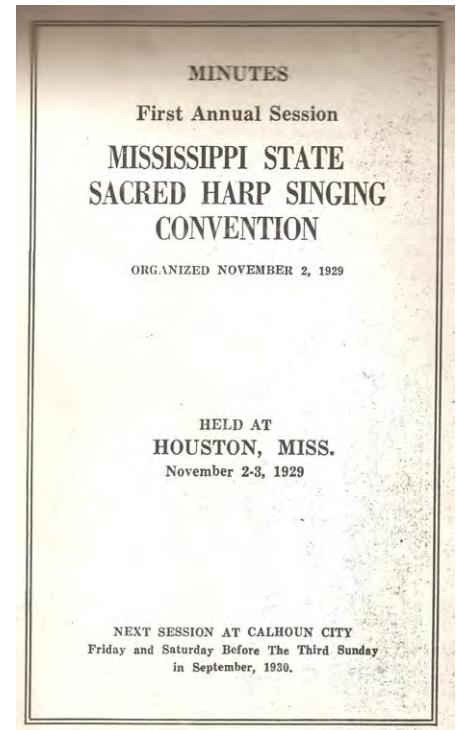
After the trophy arrived, I attempted to find more information on Gwin, while the trophy was exhibited at three events before reaching the museum. On May 17, at the 141st annual singing at Concord Church in Calhoun County, the trophy was shown, and Lee Ulhorn, Mark Davis, and I led song on page 36b in memory of Lee's great-grandfather Gwin, who had led this song to begin the first Mississippi State Convention in 1929. On August 22, I brought the trophy to the Mississippi State Convention, of which Gwin had served as the first president; current president Mark Davis and I led the same song. Finally, on September 12, Anne and I carried the trophy to the United Sacred Harp Musical Convention in Atlanta, where I spoke a few words at the annual business meeting.

### William Thomas Gwin

William Thomas Gwin was born July 21, 1853 in Woodruff, Spartanburg County, South Carolina. He emigrated to Mississippi at a young age, where in 1874 he married Mississippi native Gennella Inez Pounds. They had seven children, born between 1875 and 1893. Gennella died in Eupora in 1915; Tom Gwin died in Eupora in 1934; both are buried in the Eupora City Cemetery. Gwin served as tax assessor for Webster County, and was an incorporator of Cumberland Normal Institute. Where he learned music is not known, but in 1883, he was the founding president of the New Harmony Singing Convention of Webster County; which he led for 52 years until his death.

On 30 August 1929 a group of singers met in Houston, Mississippi to organize a "State Singing Convention" to be held the following November. W. T. Gwin was elected temporary chairman. On 2 November, again in Houston, Gwin





**Top Left:** Warren Steel and Mark Davis lead "Ninety-Fifth" (p. 36b) with the W. T. Gwin Old Harp Singers Trophy at the Mississippi State Convention.

**Top Right:** Minutes of the first Mississippi State Sacred Harp Singing Convention, held in 1929, of which W. T. Gwin was elected chairman.

**Bottom Left:** A September 2, 1948, article on Gwin from the *Webster Progress*.

**Bottom Right:** A 1964 feature on Dosia Earnest, Gwin's daughter, then still an active singer at age 90.

Illustrations courtesy of Warren Steel..

### Sacred Harp Singers Will Gather Here To Honor Memory of Three Founders

Singers from Webster and surrounding counties, and no doubt many from the Delta and other states, will meet in the large Latham Auditorium of the Eupora High School building on Sunday afternoon, 1 o'clock, September 12, in special congregation to honor the memory of three pioneer singers of this section, the late W. Tom Gwin, J. C. Winter and D. A. Tabb, all three of whom were charter members of the Mississippi State Singing Convention and the old New Harmony Singing Convention. The latter body met recently in its 97th annual session. All three men aided in its organization, took part in its annual meetings, and Mr. Gwin was its only president for the first 52 years of its existence.



The Late Tom Gwin

The committee in charge of making plans for the memorial meeting to be held September 12 is composed of Mrs. Docia Earnest, daughter of the late Tom Gwin, W. F. Hood who has been president of New Harmony since Mr. Gwin's death, and J. E. Hubbard. They were appointed as a permanent committee and said that a memorial singing at Eupora will be held every year in the future.

The old-time Sacred Harp songs will be sung according to original methods and standards, and all singers and the general public are urged to attend to do honor to Founders Gwin, Winter and Tabb.



### 'SACRED HARP' SINGERS

Mrs. Dosia Earnest of Eupora is 90 years young, and still travels miles to join the good fun and spiritual fellowship of a Sacred Harp singing convention. She's joined for lunch during "dinner on the grounds" by Billie Reid Lewis, 15-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Wade Lewis of Eupora. Mrs. Earnest, or "Miss Dosia," has been singing Sacred Harp songs since the 1920's. (See story). — Color Photo by Perry Nations.

opened the convention by leading "the old song, 'Ninety-Fifth,' page 36, with much sentiment and force in poetry." At the business meeting that afternoon, Gwin was elected the first President of the Mississippi State Sacred Harp Singing Convention. The following day, 3 November, prior to adjournment,

*"the President and Convention sang that great and by all much beloved song, so full of hope and wonderful love, to-wit: "God be with you till we meet again"; with this great hope and sweet injunction the Mississippi State Sacred Harp Singing Convention closed its first great session, with her interest and hope of future*

*success burning in the hearts of her officers and members, and the session will long be remembered and never forgotten, by all who were present and by those who in after years, may chance to read her proceedings, recorded in her book of records; long may she live and soon may her influence touch the minds, hearts and lives of every man, woman and child in our great State, and we will ever ascribe the honor and glory of it all to Him, who rules the destiny of man."*

Among Tom Gwin's children, Lillie (1890–1955) became deaf in childhood, and attended Gallaudet College in Washington, D.C. Theodosia ("Dosia," 1875–1971) married Hilliard Earnest and was a lifelong Sacred Harp singer in Webster County. Another daughter, Minnie Mae (1885–1982), married Lee Harpole. The Harpoles had five daughters, all of whom became church musicians, including Minnie Lee (1907–2003), who married Edward Atkinson Pryor. Their daughter Lee Uhlhorn is likewise a church music director, and has preserved the trophy presented to her great grandfather W. T. Gwin. ■

## Read the Old Paths

## Sacred Harp Singing, a Way of Wife

Joseph M. Jones | Huntsville, Alabama



**Left:** First Baptist Church, Montgomery, Alabama. Photograph by Carol M. Highsmith. Courtesy of the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, LC-DIG-highsm-05622. **Right:** Joseph and Frances Jones in the 1960s.

**Editor's Note:** This article was initially published in the Huntsville Sacred Harp Newsletter, no. 18 (February 1994), edited by David Ivey [<http://home.olemiss.edu/~mudws/huntsville/feb94.html>]. Thanks to David and to the author for suggesting it for inclusion in this issue.

How many of you Sacred Harp singers can give credit, unquestionably, to that cherished oblong book for your introduction to your life-long mate? Who can say that whistling a song brought them a wife or a husband?

I can. Let me tell you about it.

In January, 1954, when I was a young unmarried newspaper reporter and a member of Montgomery's First Baptist Church, the Howard College (now Samford University in Birmingham) a cappella choir presented a Sunday night program for our church. One of the pieces they sang was a beloved "standard" from the Sacred Harp tradition—I don't now even remember which piece it was. Their singing put me in mind of *The Sacred Harp*, for then and even more so now, Sacred Harp is never very far from my mind.

I inherited a trait from my father, the late Leo R. Jones, who as he went about work or just "doing nothing," would sing, whistle, or hum a Sacred Harp tune. That became my habit and remains with me, pronounced even, in the graying years. But I have other expressions of Sacred Harp music that Papa didn't have. My vehicles are strewn with Sacred Harp cassettes, most of them homemade and not very well recorded. Though not an accomplished singer myself, I have a keen love of the music, and typically several times a week I hear those blessed songs from tapes—especially and unfailingly on Sunday morning during the twelve-minute drive to church.

With that background, then, one should not be surprised that following the Birmingham choir's singing from *The Sacred Harp* book, I would have the music on my mind, and would





Joseph and Frances Jones today.

be whistling a Sacred Harp tune as I climbed the stairs leading to the church's fellowship hall, where our church young people would host the visiting choir singers in a little reception. On the stairs nearby, unknown to me at that point, was a pretty young lady, a student at Huntingdon College, who was visiting our church that night with a girlfriend. Frances Etheredge of Ozark was a product of Primitive Baptist and Sacred Harp traditions, the youngest child of the late Elder S. W. Etheredge, who pastored Primitive Baptist churches in the Wiregrass and elsewhere for sixty years. Frances, too, had a love for and devotion to the old music that was as fully developed as mine—and more informed, for she was a music student and would later teach Sacred Harp singing schools in the Dale County, Alabama, area.

So, it was quite understandable that Frances would hear and be attracted to the strains of the music, inexpertly whistled by the fellow who was three or four steps ahead of her on the stairs. She made herself known to me, who, by any unbiased measure, would have had to be

considered gawky and somewhat socially deprived. That stairway self-introduction and further conversation in the social hour that followed led, naturally, to a suggestion on my part that she allow me to escort her back to her college dorm, in company with her girlfriend who paired up with a friend of mine. So, we descended the stairs to my new Chevy, still hardly girl-broke, and made our way in a decorous manner to the campus.

It was nearly as whirlwind a romance as one encounters. Several phone conversations occurred that week, followed not many days later by a bona-fide date. And another and another. In less than five months, on May 28, 1954, we were made Mr. and Mrs. by Elder Etheredge at the family home in Ozark. And we are still making music together.

**About the Author:** Joe and Frances are faithful supporters of Sacred Harp in Huntsville and beyond. Joe, originally from Cleburne County, Alabama, is the grandson of M. F. McWhorter, composer of the tune “Jackson” (p. 317).

■

#### Endnote

1. David Ivey, *Huntsville Newsletter*.

## Just a Minute Harmony Primitive Baptist Church Singing, November 19, 1995: “The Traditional Window Opening”

Nathan Rees | Grand Forks,  
North Dakota

With their standardized formatting and regimented lists of leaders and songs, the minutes might give the impression of a greater degree of order than actually reigns at any given singing. Longtime singers will attest that conventions don't always proceed according to plan—and occasionally the minutes reflect those haphazard moments when things go awry. Few such moments are so charmingly described as in the opening lines of the entry for the annual singing at Harmony Primitive Baptist Church, in Calhoun, Georgia, for November 19, 1995:

*The traditional window opening was performed by Jimmie Denney. In a break with tradition, Jeannette DePoy was designated to crawl through the window and unlock the church doors.*

As Jeannette recollected at Camp Fasola in 2013, she had actually volunteered for the job. The preacher hadn't shown up with the key as expected, so everyone was left waiting around outside. After a certain point, Jeannette started looking around for any possible way of getting into the church. “Here we were,” she remembered, “thirty-five people standing around outside of a church, and it's getting later and later, and finally, I said, ‘this is ridiculous!’” She enlisted John Hollingsworth (not Jimmie Denney, despite what the minutes say) to help locate an unlocked window, and then, as she related, “I hiked myself up there in my long-ish skirt, and got in the window, and opened the door.” ■

## Singing Report

# Regional Roots: Growing Sacred Harp in the Netherlands, Alaska, and British Columbia

Jesse P. Karlsberg | Atlanta, Georgia



Night singing in Amsterdam, Netherlands. Photograph by Lauren Bock.

## Introduction

Sacred Harp's first wave of expansion beyond the southern United States was boosted by the dedication of dozens of long-time southern singers who traveled repeatedly to sing with newcomers across the country. These emissaries exemplified the sincere fellowship and deep love of our music that has long characterized Sacred Harp singing. Their presence also shored up the sound of these new singings, enveloping new singers in the received practices that define Sacred Harp's rich history. This contact helped new singers learn and provided the connection to southern singing that ensured that as singing from *The Sacred Harp* spread, its many traditions followed. *[Read about a 1985 trip to New England in Volume 2, Number 2 of the Newsletter—Ed.]*

Today Sacred Harp classes across the United States and in parts of Europe are well established; their local ranks capable of sustaining lively and well-attended singings and conventions.

Singers are still connected to each other across Sacred Harp's ever-expanding geography through reciprocal travel. Yet in some areas, regional cores—sturdy groups of singers with substantial Sacred Harp experience—are helping ensure the success of new classes in their areas by attending new singings in significant numbers, holding singing schools, forming friendships, and encouraging budding singers to travel within their region and beyond. Through these activities, singers from regional cores welcome new classes into the international Sacred Harp network, fostering Sacred Harp's growth in a period when chartered busses no longer regularly transport southern singers to new conventions (although talk is underway to revive them). I myself have lived in places where our singings were supported by nearby hubs and in some of these regional cores. In central Connecticut and the mid-Hudson Valley of New York, our small but stable local groups were supported at

all-day singings and conventions by larger established cores in Boston, New York City, and Western Massachusetts. In Boston, and now in Atlanta, I've carpoled with other members of these cities' active and growing Sacred Harp classes to support singing schools and new singings in our regions.

Over the past few months I have seen Sacred Harp's regional hubs in action far from home. In late August, my wife Lauren Bock and I attended singings in Amsterdam and Utrecht, and in October, I traveled to Sitka, Alaska, and Vancouver, British Columbia, in western Canada. Each of these newer local singings were supported by and connected to Sacred Harp's larger family through the presence of singers from well-established classes in the region. Although the singings I attended differed in size, circumstance, and history, all owed their success to the energetic efforts of devoted local singers, boosted by regional support. The quality of the singing itself, the





**Top left:** Night singing in Amsterdam, singing “Amsterdam” (p. 84) for the first time. **Bottom left:** Socializing by the Canal in Utrecht after the All-Day Singing. **Right:** Cath’s singing school in Utrecht. Photographs by Lauren Bock and Jesse P. Karlsberg.

speed of its growth, and its sense of connection to the larger Sacred Harp world are all buoyed by these nearby hubs. In her essay in last winter’s issue of the Newsletter on “our transnationally expanding singing community,” Ellen Lueck argued “that the roots of ... new singings [established abroad] are growing, and will soon run deep.”<sup>71</sup> In the Pacific Northwest, in Germany, and in many other places, Sacred Harp singing’s regional roots are deep and vital, spurring the flowering of new branches across the Sacred Harp landscape.

### Germany as an Engine of Central Europe’s Sacred Harp Growth: The Netherlands All-Day Singing

Sacred Harp arrived in the Netherlands when Amsterdam lawyer Anne Eringa discovered the music by happenstance and traveled to Alabama in 2009 to attend Camp Fasola. Eringa began attending singings in Europe soon after, and eventually

founded a local group. To firm up its ranks, she drew in members of a Bach choir with which she sings. Singings continued in Amsterdam in the years that followed, growing at a slow yet steady pace. A plan to hold the country’s first all-day singing coalesced after the singers were invited to organize a workshop at the Utrecht Early Music Festival, a world-renowned annual gathering in a historic city thirty minutes southeast of Amsterdam by train. Festival organizers invited Cath Tyler to teach a morning singing school. The Amsterdam singers obtained permission to use the designated space, a school auditorium, to continue singing into the afternoon. About seventy festival attendees signed up for the workshop, joining local singers and Sacred Harp visitors from afar. I was invited to give a short historical introduction before Cath’s workshop, and to speak about Sacred Harp’s contemporary sound and expansion to Europe at a symposium held at the festival the day before the singing.

Lauren and I arrived in Amsterdam on August 26, a few days before the festival. Anne generously hosted us in her apartment. During a couple of days of exploring the city we attempted to adjust to the bike-centric culture; enjoyed the beautiful canals, art, and architecture; and got to meet several of the Dutch singers over dinner, a forthrightly friendly group of varied ages and backgrounds. The day before the festival symposium, we traveled out to Utrecht, equally beautiful with its two-tiered central Oldgracht canal, lined with cafés and shops. We ran into Frankfurt singers Andreas Manz and Laura Eisen at a Hesperion XXI concert in the festival’s main concert hall. That evening we enjoyed exploring the city with Andreas and Laura, winding up sitting at one of many café tables crowding a large cobblestoned square filled with socializing patrons enjoying the night air.

A number of singers from Germany and two from the United Kingdom joined several of the Dutch locals for my





**Left:** All day singing lunch in the playground. **Right:** Lauren Bock beside one of Amsterdam's canal lined streets. Photographs by Jesse P. Karlsberg.

talk during the August 29 symposium, which focused on the contemporary performance of historical music forms such as early music. The singers sang two songs—"Hallelujah" (p. 146 in *The Sacred Harp*) and "Florida" (p. 203)—during the talk, which addressed how contemporary Sacred Harp singers think about the style's past in deciding how we should sound when we sing. After the symposium we journeyed back to Amsterdam for an evening singing and social; perhaps the largest local singing yet held in Amsterdam. Twenty-five or so local singers were joined by us two Americans, Ellyn Stokes from the UK, and several singers from various locations in Germany. The strong singing offered a chance to meet and get to know each other prior to the all-day singing scheduled for the next day. Midway through the evening singing, a German visitor called "Amsterdam" (p. 84). Amazingly, the song was new to the Dutch singers in the room!

The all-day singing itself began on Sunday morning, August 30, with Cath's singing school. The Utrecht school auditorium in which we gathered was full with over 100 singers and festival-goers arranged in a hollow square. After

my short introduction on the history of singing schools and singings, Cath taught an engaging introduction to the rudiments, sharing knowledge of Sacred Harp's practices and her own love of the music, making particularly clear how meaningful it is to singers. A delightful moment for non-Dutch speaking visitors occurred when Cath, in the course of running the group through scale exercises, led the group through the first notes of "Twinkle twinkle"/"Baa-baa black sheep."<sup>2</sup> The class caught on, and continued singing the melody, gradually breaking into a set of words in Dutch, and continuing to the end of the song. As the singing school continued, Cath taught the class to sing "Primrose" (p. 47t) from a printed packet. The sound of all 100 of us was astounding.

We broke for dinner on the grounds—a bag lunch in the school's playground—and then reunited for a demonstration singing for festival attendees. After singing the two songs we had practiced during the singing school, the arranging committee took over and the singing itself was underway. Following a break, many workshop participants left, leaving us with a core group of Dutch and German singers to

carry on for the remainder of the day. For almost all of the Dutch singers, this marked their first all-day singing experience. Although some had sung locally for a few years, others were almost entirely new. In the days leading up to the singing, the Dutch group had attempted to learn about and decide whether and how to adopt Sacred Harp practices common to conventions: what the roles and responsibilities of the singing's chair, chaplain, and arranging committee would be, and when to incorporate prayer into the day's proceedings. The German singers present—drawn from three cities with thriving singings (Frankfurt, Hamburg, and Bremen) and other towns where singings are not yet held but in many cases workshops were already scheduled—provided a continuity of practices and profound support to the sound of our class. Much as English and Irish singers do at new singings in the British Isles, the German singers helped connect first time attendees to the broader Sacred Harp network with their voices and their embodiment of our music's traditions.

The singing weekend also cemented bonds, several newly formed, between





**Left:** Alaska Convention Class. **Right:** Site of the Alaska Convention. Photographs by Jesse P. Karlsberg.

the Dutch and German (and English and American) singers attending. Many of us lingered at the school after the singing concluded, then crossed the street to the bank of a nearby canal to sit and talk. The two of us then followed a handful of German singers to the home of Utrecht singer and linguistics professor Jacomine Nortier for a delicious home-cooked Indonesian meal and more good conversation. As it so often is after a moving weekend of singing, food, and fellowship, it was hard to say good-bye.

### **Pacific Northwestern Roots and Sacred Harp's Growth Above the 49th Parallel: The Alaska Convention, and the Vancouver All-Day Singing**

Sacred Harp has had a foothold in Alaska for decades, yet singing in Vancouver, British Columbia, in western Canada is just a few years old. In Alaska, singing communities in Fairbanks and Anchorage coalesced in the 1970s after singers like contemporary stalwarts Lynn and Charley Basham encountered the music at folksong gatherings. Today the city's intergenerational group includes singers with decades

of experience and highschoolers who have just discovered the style. Kari Lundgren had sung in Fairbanks since the early 1990s, attended singings in Louisiana and Mississippi during a year in graduate school, and decided to start a local singing with David Kriess-Tompkins when she moved to Sitka in 2000. A motivated and energetic organizer, Kari collaborated with Washington State singers Karen Willard and Steve Helwig to take on organizing the state's first convention, which was held in 2008. More than thirty singers attended this first convention, including several from Oregon and Washington. Washington and Oregon singers were adamant in these early years that the Pacific Northwest singing community be extended to include Alaska. The established groups even allocated some funds toward travel for the first couple of conventions to ensure that experienced Washington and Oregon singers could be present. Since then the singing has gradually grown: over fifty attended on a bright sunny day this October. Meanwhile, the Fairbanks and Anchorage monthly singings continue, joined by Sitka, with recent singing schools held in Juneau and Ketchikan.

In Vancouver, as in Amsterdam, Sacred Harp's first seeds were planted by a Camp Fasola camper. Caroline Helmecezi, who attended the adult session in 2010, started a weekly singing at her home soon after returning. This singing received a major boost of energy just this year when Kevin Beirne, who recently relocated to Vancouver from Cork, Ireland, discovered Sacred Harp, attended the youth session of Camp Fasola, and returned to Vancouver excited at the prospect of organizing an all-day singing. Since the summer, the Vancouver weekly singing has moved to the Grandview Calvary Baptist Church, where it attracts a small but growing group of singers. The Vancouver singers hosted their first all-day singing this August, a successful affair that attracted more than fifty singers from as far away as New York City, and was supported by many from the Pacific Northwest.

I visited the Alaska convention and Vancouver weekly singing on a trip to a conference in Vancouver this October, arriving in Sitka on the 22nd, the Thursday before the singing. While en route, after arriving in Seattle, I joined a dozen other singers from California, Oregon, and Washington (and one



**Left :** Dinner on the Grounds at the Alaska Convention.

**Right:** Sitka Harbor.

Photographs by Jesse P. Karlsberg.



from Texas, an Alaskan singer expat returning home) on the “milk run,” an Alaska Airlines plane that runs from Seattle to Fairbanks with stops along the way in Ketchikan, Sitka, Juneau, and Anchorage. The view from the plane was incredible: dramatic tree-covered mountains spotted with pools of freshwater fed by the near-constant rain, descending into a vast blue ocean, snow-covered peaks in the distance. The large number of singers with me on the flight made it clear that, now in its eighth year, the Alaska Convention is still supported by singers from nearby states. As I soon learned, the Sitka singers overwhelmingly reward out-of-state singers with wonderful hospitality, delicious Alaskan cuisine, and a full itinerary of sightseeing.

Once in Sitka we were shepherded over a small suspension bridge to a rustic café for supper. The town's radio station was located right upstairs from the café and when we finished eating about fifteen of us walked straight into the studio and sang a few songs on the air to promote the upcoming singing. While some of the visiting singers stayed with locals, many of us were put up at the local hostel, which the convention had exclusively booked for the weekend. In this camp-like atmosphere we had the chance to chat into the evening and get to know each other.

Friday was a jam-packed day. A tour of the town must have taken us on nearly all of Sitka's twelve miles of paved roads. We drove along the harbor, past the Russian Orthodox church (one of many remnants of the town's Russian history), the Tlingit meeting house (one of many markers of the continuing presence of Native Alaskans in Sitka), the totem pole park at the museum, and to impressive sanctuaries for injured bears and raptors. After lunch, many of the Alaskan singers joined us tourists for a whale watch in the harbor. The beauty of this spot, enhanced by the unseasonably clear weather, is hard to convey with words alone. The boat navigated through kelp forests and between rocky outcroppings up to a nearby volcanic island and then back, passing dozens of spouting and diving humpback whales. A bald eagle, perched at the entrance to the marina, stood sentinel as the tour came to an end.

I taught a singing school that evening for a crowd of nearly sixty singers, two-thirds of them Alaskans with a range of experience levels. The singing itself drew a slightly smaller crowd, probably because the unseasonably sunny weather persisted; it was hard for Sitkans to pass up such a rare day of bright fall sun. But the singing was strong nonetheless, ably orchestrated by chair Steve Helwig, of Eugene, Oregon. Kari was taking a year

off after chairing the convention the previous seven years, but you wouldn't know it from her constant work ferrying singers around town, cooking, cleaning, and otherwise taking care of us guests.

As in the Netherlands, the support of visitors from the strong nearby singing communities such as Seattle and Portland made a considerable impact, bolstering the sound of our Alaskan hosts. These excellent visiting singers helped hold down the sections, and modeled leading and singing for the Alaskans. Singers from these Pacific Northwestern states, where Sacred Harp singing has a thirty-year history, have contributed to the strength of the convention each year since its founding, demonstrating their dedication to supporting fledgling singings in their region. Though perhaps it's also a testament to the wonderful hospitality of the Sitka singers and the stunning surroundings.

Oh, and did I mention the food? Dinner on the grounds in Sitka alone is worth the trip. The most delicious meal included black cod, shrimp so big I thought they were lobster tails, moose barbeque, a salad made of crunchy kelp covered on each side with cod roe, sea asparagus, sourdough bread made from 100-year-old starter, and much, much more. When our hosts told us about the various dishes before we ate, we learned



just how fresh the seafood was, much of it collected just that day from relatives and friends in town.

The singing, at the southern tip of the country's largest state, was in a sense the northern outpost of the thriving Sacred Harp network of the Pacific Northwest. Singers from Oregon and Washington have attended nearly every session of the Alaska Convention. As they help bolster the class during the singing, they also strengthen ties between the Alaska singers and the region at large, forging friendships while in Sitka and helping to promote the event to Pacific Northwesterners throughout the year.

A social Saturday evening provided time for yet more fellowship, which continued back at the hostel that night, and at brunch at the airport café the next morning. I was among several singers headed back to the lower forty eight on Sunday's midday "milk run" plane, while several others stuck around for Sitka's monthly singing that afternoon. Parting was again poignant, as we said farewell to new friends from across the state and throughout the region.

As others headed home, I traveled back north from Seattle to Vancouver, where an academic conference I was presenting at that week fortunately enabled me to stay long enough to attend the Thursday night weekly singing at Grandview Calvary Baptist Church. The evening of energetic singing was the largest weekly gathering the Vancouver singers have yet hosted, with sixteen singers present including members of the growing core group, two local newcomers, and three visitors aside from myself, David Wright, Kate Coxon, and Laura McMurray, who had driven for two hours from Seattle for the singing, crossing an international border along the way. The larger than expected crowd added energy to the night's singing. Solid singers supported each part. Some had just been singing a few months but were already quite able sight-singers. During a break between the two hour-long sessions, singers enjoyed a delicious spice cake Kevin Beirne had baked. Social media posts promoting the singing tend to focus



Vancouver's tenors (top), trebles (middle), and altos (bottom).  
Photographs by Jesse P. Karlsberg.

on Kevin's weekly creations, which are meticulously documented and often cater to visitors' tastes (I had requested the spice cake).

At a local watering hole after the singing, Kevin, David, and Kate described the first Vancouver All-Day singing. Like the Alaska Convention, the well-attended day was enlivened by the presence of many experienced singers from Washington and Oregon. Their voices helped make the day a solid example of the powerful, confident, and energetic sound of the contemporary all-day singings too many of us take for granted that bring together experienced and new singers alike from numerous local classes. This sound was a departure from the more intimate weekly practice singings in Vancouver, which typically drew a group of six to a dozen singers, mostly new learners. The invigorating sound of the all-day singing expanded the growing group's horizons. The weekend also fostered personal connections between the Washington and Oregon singers and their Vancouver counterparts. Vancouver singers have reciprocated, traveling to Seattle for the fall session of the Pacific Northwest Convention, for example.<sup>3</sup> As they had on this evening, Seattle singers began to regularly make the drive north across the border to sing in Vancouver on a Thursday night, often returning home well after midnight. These interconnections represent a considerable level of commitment from singers on both sides of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel.

## Conclusion

My trips to these singings were delightful reminders of the warm hospitality Sacred Harp singers enjoy across our expanding transnational landscape. They also made me think about how the ways singers support this growth are shifting as once-new groups become established and our map continues to expand. Certainly some drivers of this growth have stayed the same. All three of these areas' singing communities owe their existence to motivated local singers and continued connections to Sacred Harp singing's

most venerable regional cores. Singers in Amsterdam, Sitka, and Vancouver have worked hard year after year to ensure Sacred Harp's persistence, sometimes singing by themselves or with just a friend or two for months on end before a class of committed singers cohered and hosting an all-day singing became possible. While regional hubs are a great help, for a hub's range to expand through the support of a new singing, there must be enthusiasm on the ground. What's more, southern singing schools and singings remain critical training grounds and arenas for cementing these local leaders' interest in Sacred Harp. For Caroline, Kevin, and Anne, attending Camp Fasola in Alabama was a key step in building confidence in the ability to form a regular practice singing, and in learning skills such as singing, leading, and keying. [*Camp Fasola will hold sessions in Alabama and Poland in 2016. Learn more and register at [campfasola.org](http://campfasola.org).—Eds.*]

As I observed on these trips, the presence of well established and still growing Sacred Harp classes nearby accelerates the growth of these new areas. In the 1970s and 1980s new classes depended on contact with southern singers for a connection to Sacred Harp's traditions. In the absence (and even sometimes despite the presence) of such ties, new Sacred Harp singings during this period developed esoteric practices for a time, experienced limited growth, and sometimes functioned in the shadow of stronger and more regionally well-connected folk dance communities. Today, the deepened roots of regional hubs such as those in Germany and the Pacific Northwest foster the flourishing of new groups, offering support and well-worn paths into our international network. Other regional networks exist in the United Kingdom, and, of course, in well-established Sacred Harp regions such as the Northeast, Midwest, and Southeast of the United States. Singers from established cores in North Alabama and Nashville, Tennessee, for example, have recently fostered the growth of emerging singings in Suwanee and Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

This regional support too relies on the devotion of dozens of committed singers, willing to travel hours by car or plane, sometimes across national borders, to attend all-day singings, singing schools, and even weekly and monthly practice singings. The support singers in these regional hubs provide is hard work, but it's also rewarding and great fun—frequently accompanied by delightful food and the opportunity to take in new sites. Even more importantly, trips such as those taken by these singers offer a chance to make wonderful new friends.

So let's continue to encourage new singers and attend their singings in our regions when they crop up. Let's give them the space to build their own talents and local capacities. And let's also support them, and model for them the joys of travel to Sacred Harp singings near and far. Let's help these members of fledgling classes to discover, as we have, that in addition to the food and the music, a chief joy of Sacred Harp singing is the wide-ranging fellowship our singing and traditions foster. ■

## Endnotes

1. Ellen Lueck, "The Old World Seeks the Old Paths: Observing Our Transnationally Expanding Singing Community," *Sacred Harp Publishing Company Newsletter* 3, no. 2 (November 12, 2014), <http://originalsacredharp.com/2014/11/12/the-old-world-seeks-the-old-paths-observing-our-transnationally-expanding-singing-community/>.
2. The melody to this song predates its association with either set of lyrics and its life as an accompaniment to the English alphabet. The tune originated in the French countryside in the mid-1700s, where it was known as "Ah! vous dirai-je, maman." See George List, "The Distribution of a Melodic Formula: Diffusion or Polygenesis?," *Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council* 10 (1978): 36.
3. Caroline, in fact, has been attending singings in the Pacific Northwest since 2009.



## Singing Report

## 406 and More, in Sweden

Gill Minor | Wilmington, North Carolina



Poster advertising Sacred Harp at the church service. Photograph by Gill Minor.

“Zack, I’ll never forget this as long as I live,” declared fellow singer Steve Schmidgall as our group turned to acknowledge the applause of the smiling crowd that had stopped to listen to this strange music we were singing in the low, columned passageway leading into the central train station. It was Kulturnatt weekend—a time when the university town of Uppsala, Sweden, explodes with art, music, dance, theater, film, lectures, performances, and live demonstrations at nearly one hundred different venues across the city, and when the streets themselves come alive with everything from Argentine tango to male bellydancers to the säckpipa, or Swedish bagpipe. We ourselves were a disparate group of singers from five different countries, and we had just finished our first outreach of the weekend. Several listeners came forward to ask what we were all about.

Well, we were all about helping Zack Lindahl—an energetic, determined young Swedish clergyman and Sacred Harp enthusiast—spark interest in a permanent, ongoing shape-note group in Sweden. Zack had arranged other singings before, but the weekend of September 12–13, 2015, was to feature a two day singing school led by Michael Walker from the United Kingdom, as well as both impromptu and scheduled outreach singings across the town. Zack sent out an invitation on the “Sacred Harp Friends” Facebook page for the international community to come join him in Uppsala for the Kulturnatt festivities.

Those of us who answered the call arrived to cool but pleasant Swedish September weather, and on the evening of Friday the 11th, the first arrivals began to congregate for a meet-and-eat at O’Connor’s Irish Pub on the large downtown plaza of Stora Torget. The good Swedish beer may have had something to do with nearly a dozen

singers from Europe and the United States breaking into Idumea and New Britain (pp. 47b and 45t in *The Sacred Harp*), while Zack took the opportunity to invite the pub’s bemused patrons to our upcoming events. There was more beer, singing, and evangelizing as we moved to Murphy’s Pub a few blocks away. It was definitely going to be an interesting weekend!

At noon the next day, our full coterie of seventeen singers gathered at St. Michael’s Church (Mikaelskyrkan) in a small park on Kungsgatan (King Street). This was a warm-up session and a chance for us to coalesce as a group. We consisted of Zack and his sister, Billie, along with his good friends Jonas Bengtson and Hampus Majjer from Sweden; Michael Walker and Werner Ullah from the United Kingdom; and Andreas Manz, Franziska Schmidt, Christina Schumann, and Eva Striebeck from Germany, along with Geoff Grainger who had most recently been living in Bremen. Cornelia van den Doel hailed from the Netherlands; and Steve Schmidgall, Charles Biada, Abigail Braden, Pamela Minor, and I were the US contingent. An hour and a half went quickly by as we ran through many of the familiar standards, and then we took a break for “dinner the grounds”—delightful salad, sandwiches, and quiches that Zack, Jonas, and Hampus had stayed up late the night before to prepare.

It was after the warm-up session that we proceeded up Kungsgatan Street to Resacentrum, the central train station, for our outreach singing in the underground entranceway. The streets were already bustling with townspeople and visitors curious to sample the myriad offerings. We crossed the large plaza in front of the station and descended into the passageway to form our square by one of the massive columns supporting the low ceiling. And then we began to



**Left:** Singing in the Central Station. **Right:** Interior of Holy Trinity before the service. Photographs by Gill Minor.

sing. Passersby were stopping to listen, and soon a large crowd encircled us, as our voices reverberated through the cavernous space. Zack would pause after every few songs to explain a little about Sacred Harp and to encourage newcomers to attend the singing schools, which were scheduled for later that afternoon and on the morrow. On our last song—"Hallelujah" (p. 146)—the crowd was invited to join in on the chorus. A rousing "Aaand I'll sing hal-le-lu-jah..." filled the station, and as the last notes echoed away amid the crowd's applause, we were elated. This was truly a highlight of the weekend—and we did, in fact, attract a few listeners to the singing schools.

As we departed the station for our walk back to St. Michael's, a man on stilts ambled through the milling crowds, while a synchronized modern dance group began its performance near where we had been singing. Out in the plaza in front of the station, a group of young women in spangled bikinis and feathered headdresses were warming up to the strains of a Brazilian samba band. Kulturnatt was in full swing.

By five in the afternoon, a group of thirty singers had gathered at St.

Michael's for the class. Michael Walker's pragmatic approach to teaching—more songs, less talk—quickly got the newcomers introduced to the rudiments. Within a short time, he covered major and minor scales, time signatures and accents, and even fusing tunes. During the open singing that followed, the newcomers were encouraged into the hollow square to co-lead. All in all, we felt that we had made a good beginning to Sacred Harp in Sweden, for by the end of the session we had sung nearly twenty songs, from the simple to the complex. We felt quite justified in a bit of celebrating back at O'Connor's. There in the festive atmosphere, we enjoyed some good beer and pub food, and we were fortuitously treated to an impromptu concert by three lively young female patrons whose intricately harmonizing voices filled the bar with Swedish folksongs. However, it had been a long day of our own singing, and we slowly began to disperse to our various lodgings. A few stalwarts, though, struck off to make the rounds of a few more pubs before evening's end—names withheld to protect the guilty.

Wandering towards our hotel, Pamela and I could hear the distant sound of the

Swedish bagpipes, and as we proceeded up Dragarbrunnsgatan, a full American-style swing band was providing the jazzy beat for twenty or so swing dancers, dressed in 1940s garb, who twirled and swirled before an appreciative crowd. It was clear that not everyone in Uppsala was ready for bed.

Sunday dawned to a splendidly clear day, and after breakfast, we walked across one of the flower-bedecked bridges that span Uppsala's pretty river, Fyrisån. We headed up the hill past the main cathedral, the Domkyrkan, which towers above the town, and continued across the square to the small, newly-reopened parish Church of the Holy Trinity. Our group had been invited to sing during the morning service at this historic church, founded in the 1200s. Inside, the bare brick arches and the spare green and earth-toned frescoes lent a simple grace to its nave and apses. Vestry women in traditional Swedish dress busied themselves readying the service. By the time we finished our warmup in the adjacent rectory, the church had filled with a large and diverse congregation. Up some steps to a side apse we formed our square, and between the scripture readings we sang "Ninety-



third Psalm" (p. 3rt). Then, while children played quietly by the steps below us and the congregation came forward for the bread and wine, Michael led us through the remaining songs we had selected. What an honor it was to blend our voices in such a beautiful space for this simple, ancient act of worship.

Our second singing school was held at Uppsala University's Musicum, home to the Academic Chamber Choir and the University Jazz Orchestra. Again, we had about thirty participants, and with Michael's song-oriented approach, the newcomers were quickly participating. Andreas Manz somehow became the designated co-leader, so several new singers got their first taste of the hollow square by his side. At the conclusion of the evening we could see that Zack was getting the contact information from a few who seemed eager to become involved in a local Sacred Harp group.

All good things do end, and several of our international group had flights to catch or other pressing obligations. But the rest of us were treated to a bonfire and cook-out at a small campground outside of Uppsala. With libations and roasted sausages, we celebrated what had been a most enjoyable weekend. By the warmth of the fire we could look back and recognize the long planning and hard work that Zack had put into making us welcome and ensuring the schools' success. Similarly, we could appreciate the strong leadership and focus that Michael had given us as a group. It was with a mixture of sadness and satisfaction that we remaining singers walked up the hill in the dark to wait for the bus back to Uppsala, from whence we would go our separate ways.

Since our return home, Zack has posted that a core group of seven singers is now meeting on a regular basis, and that he is applying for official recognition as an educational organization—a move that will bring assistance with buying loaner books, and help with advertising and venues. I am definitely hoping to hear one day that there will be a first annual Swedish Convention. Jag skulle gärna vilja åka tillbaka—I'd gladly return! ■

## Harpeth Valley News

# Some Dos and Don'ts for Sacred Harp Singers

Priestley Miller | Brentwood, Tennessee

**Editor's Note:** Nashville Sacred Harp singer and aptly-named Presbyterian minister Priestley Miller wrote this pithy collection of Sacred Harp "dos and don'ts" in 1965. His admonitions retain their currency fifty years later. Contemporary singers too need the occasional reminder that our singing style has a proud history but is also of "the present age." His call to embrace fellowship among our pan-generational community is a wonderful reminder of why so many of us value our music. Miller published the piece in vol. 2, no. 4, of the Harpeth Valley Sacred Harp News, the first newsletter on Sacred Harp singing. Miller founded the monthly periodical in 1964 and edited it until his death in 1969, when he was succeeded by William J. Reynolds. We thank Reynolds's son Tim for permitting the Sacred Harp Museum to digitize and preserve his collection of Harpeth Valley Sacred Harp News issues. Keep an eye out for more great essays from the collection in future issues of this publication.



Priestley Miller. Image courtesy of the Priestley Miller Preschool at Harpeth Presbyterian Church.

**DO** remember that the music we sing is worthy of the best that is within us.

**DON'T** be "conned" into singing it in places where it doesn't belong. This only makes the music sound "strange" and us ridiculous. Remember, these are hymns, not hootenanny pieces.

**DO** be glad that young people are interested in Sacred Harp music. If they pick up the tempo a bit, don't think the world is coming to an end. It may be that your upper plate is loose. It is thrilling to see people of all ages at Sacred Harp singings and this is the way it should be.

**DON'T** let the over-tones of this "singing rurals" bit get too much recognition. It is too easy to pass from that into the idea that Sacred Harp singers are "nothing but a bunch of hicks," and this simply isn't the case. The shop-worn publicity image of "a few octogenarians with tattered song books" is gone and so should some ideas associated with it. They are, for the most part, wonderful and gracious people, and let Sacred Harp singers be proud, not only of their heritage, but of the contribution they can make in serving "the present age."

**DO** have FELLOWSHIP. The devotion and dedication that has gone and does go into this music makes it a cause. With the Apostle Paul some need to say "forgetting those things which are behind." This can be done as we "press forward." Frequently we hear at singings the exhortation to "notice the words." So, let me ask you to do something for me. Turn to page 330, bottom. Then notice the title of the tune and the words. Amen. ■

## Number, Measure, Weight

# Seasonal Songs

Jesse P. Karlsberg and Mark Godfrey | Atlanta, Georgia; San Francisco, California

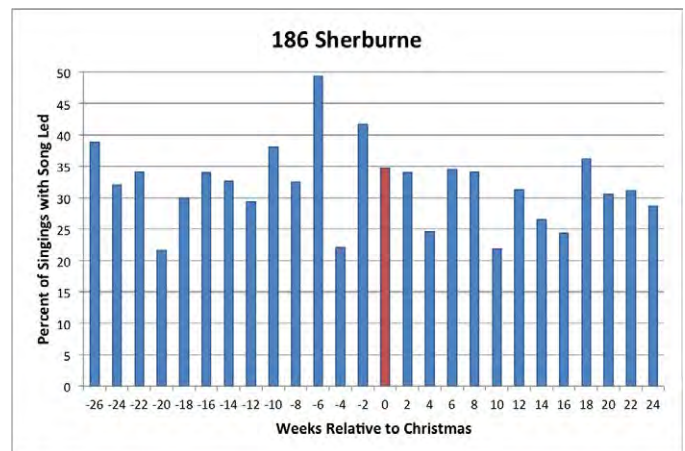
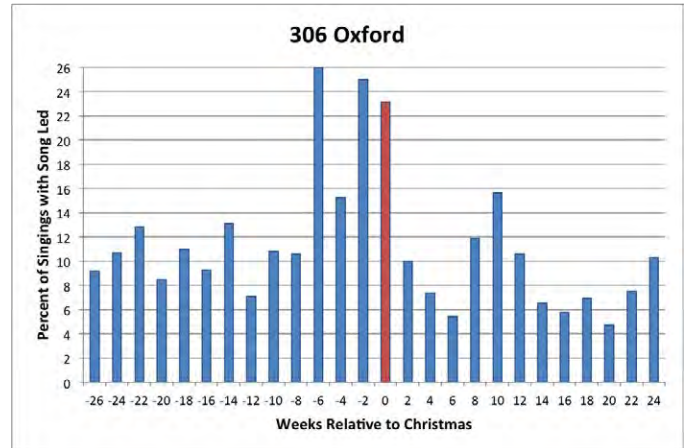
### Introduction

One choice every singer at a Sacred Harp singing faces is what song to lead. The songs leaders choose are building blocks that construct our experience of the day, and how leaders make such choices is surely as individual and varied a process as any in our music. In this essay we address one small but measurable factor influencing singers' selections: the time of year. Reflecting on our own experience, we can certainly think of times when leaders seemed to select a song because of its relationship to a holiday such as Christmas or the Fourth of July. Analysis of the minutes backs this up. Certain songs do indeed show a measurable and statistically significant burst in popularity at specific times of the year. Yet the reasons why some songs are led seasonally vary, as do the specific contours in the leading patterns of such songs over time. In this essay we explore the variety of seasonal songs in *The Sacred Harp* to shed light on just how singers think about songs in relation to the calendar.

### Holiday Songs

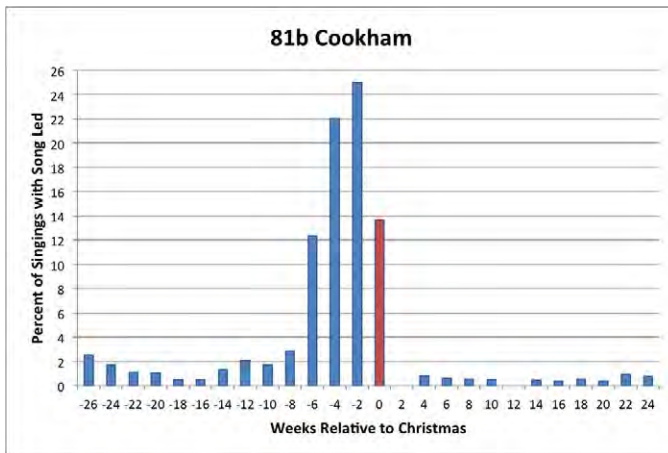
Many of the most pronounced seasonal spikes in the popularity of songs coincide with holidays. Singers draw on titles and hymn texts to associate certain songs with Christmas, Easter, the Fourth of July, and even Father's Day.

Christmas songs make up the largest and most popular group of holiday-related songs. The most popular Christmas songs experience a modest, but significant, seasonal bump. "Oxford" (p. 306 in *The Sacred Harp*), a setting of the Christmas hymn "Shepherds, rejoice! lift up your eyes," spikes in popularity in the run up to Christmas, led at between 26.0 percent and 15.3 percent of singings in the month and a half before the holiday,  $2\frac{1}{3}$  times as many singings than during the rest of the year. Yet the song is also popular throughout the year, led at an average of 9.6 percent of singings outside of the Christmas season. "Sherburne" (p. 186), a setting of the well-known Christmas hymn "While shepherds watched their flocks by night," is so popular year-round that its Christmas bump is even less marked. The song is led at 49.4 percent of singings in mid-November and 41.7 percent of singings in mid-December. Yet during the rest of the year it is still highly popular, led at an average of 31.7 percent of singings outside the Christmas season.<sup>1</sup>

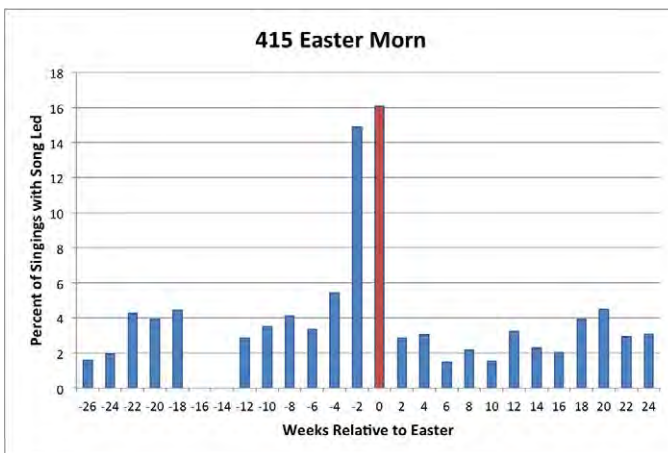


Many other songs in *The Sacred Harp* feature hymn texts and titles that invoke Christmas. "Cookham," "Shepherd's Rejoice," "Portuguese Hymn," "Christmas Anthem," and "Shining Star" (pps. 81b, 152, 223, 225b, and 461) are relatively little used in general but attract more attention as Christmas approaches, and consequently experience an even more pronounced spike at that time of the year. Indeed, these are among the most dramatically seasonal songs in the book. "Cookham," the Christmas song with the most seasonally extreme leading patterns, is led at one out of every four singings just before Christmas, but at just 0.68 percent of singings outside of Christmas season. The song is twenty-six times more likely to be led at a singing in two months before the holiday than at other times of the year. Unlike "Sherburne" and "Oxford," singers don't typically turn to these songs unless motivated by the season.





There are examples of both types of seasonal tunes among the Easter songs in *The Sacred Harp*. “Jesus Rose,” “Weeping Mary,” “Easter Morn,” and “Mary’s Grief and Joy,” (pp. 156, 415, and 451), like “Shepherd’s Rejoice” and “Christmas Anthem,” are songs strongly associated with the Easter holiday, yet little used during the rest of the year. Yet the song most often associated with Easter is so popular it exhibits only minimal seasonality. “Easter Anthem” (p. 236) shows a modest swell in the weeks leading up to Easter, but is so extraordinarily popular that its seasonal spike is more of a minor bump. The song, the second most widely used anthem in *The Sacred Harp* and the eighty-eighth most popular song in the book, is just 1.6 times more likely to be used in the weeks leading up to Easter than it is during the rest of the year.<sup>2</sup>

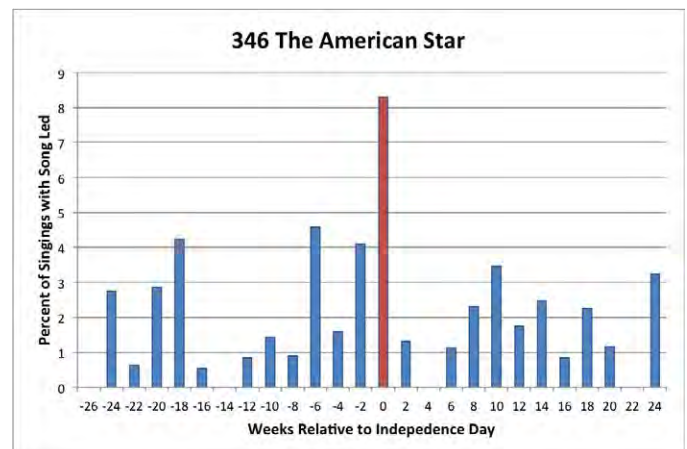


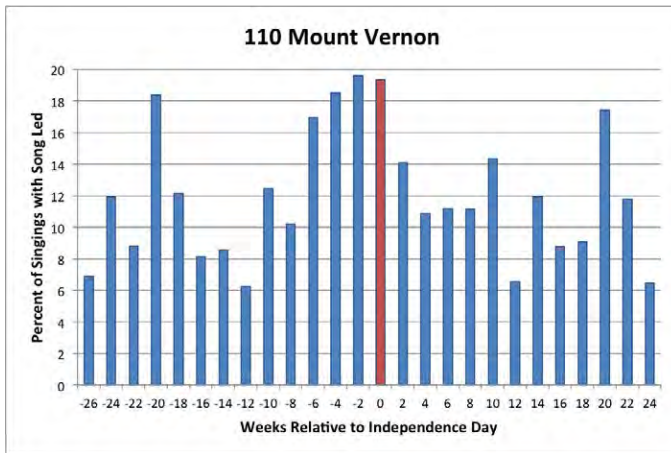
Songs in *The Sacred Harp* with patriotic texts experience seasonal spikes around the Fourth of July. “The American Star” (p. 346), relatively little used, is led 5.8 times as often at a singing around the nation’s birthday than during the rest of the year. “Ode on Science” (p. 242) also benefits from an Independence Day bump: the ode is four times as likely to be led around the fourth of July than during the rest of the year. These two songs and “Liberty” (p. 137), which experiences a less pronounced swell around the Fourth of July, feature texts celebrating the nation’s independence. Remarkably, “Mount



Bobby and Taylor Watkins sporting Fourth of July outfits. Photograph by Martha Beverly.

Vernon” (p. 110), a song with text commemorating George Washington’s death and a title named for his famed residence, likewise swells in popularity during the six weeks around Independence Day, but also experiences spikes during the two week blocks surrounding the first President’s birth and death.



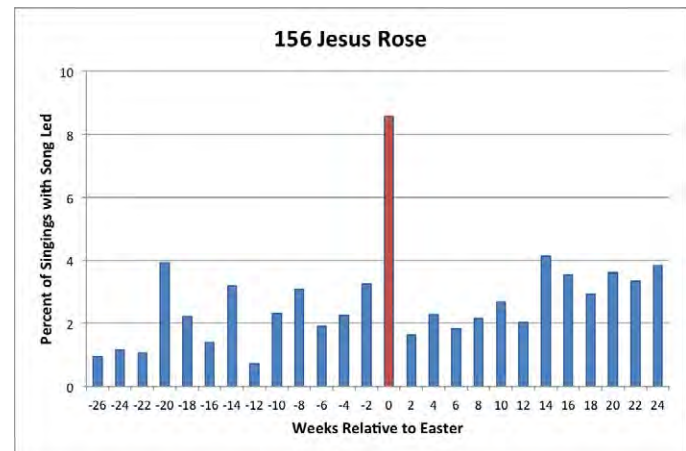
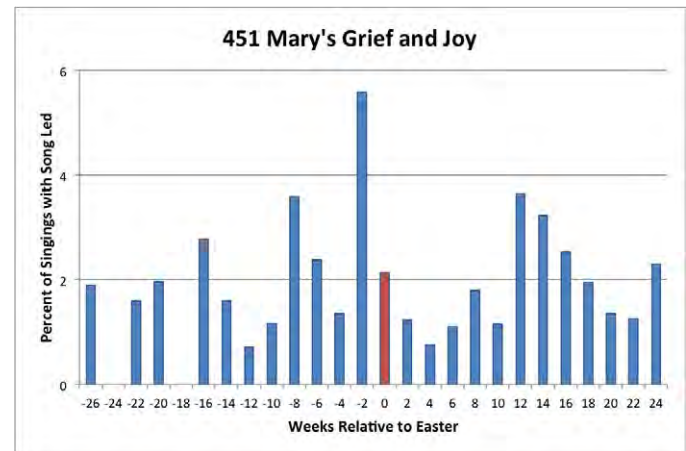


The timeframe in which leaders select seasonal songs also varies among holidays. The Independence Day bump is a short burst coinciding exactly with the two week block surrounding the holiday. Visitors to the singing at Liberty Baptist Church in Henagar, Alabama, on the first Sunday in July and the Saturday before will likely recall leaders selecting *songs* with patriotic texts as well as those who choose to mark the holiday by wearing *clothing* in red, white, and blue, or even preparing holiday-inspired food, like a sheet-cake decorated like an American flag. Singers also have the opportunity to mark the holiday at the Fourth of July singing held at Camp Lee in Anniston, Alabama, the site of the youth session of Camp Fasola. Patriotic songs are frequently called at these singings, whether they occur on the Fourth of July, just before, or just after, helping to ensure the seasonal spike right around the holiday. But singers typically wait until the holiday is just around the corner before taking up Fourth of July songs, and those tunes fall off in popularity just as speedily after the holiday occurs.

Christmas songs, in contrast, rise in popularity for a whole two-month season in the run up to the holiday, before falling off dramatically around the New Year. Christmas itself falls on the only weekend of the year when no annual singings are scheduled. The Christmas spike for several songs, unsurprisingly, occurs during the two week block preceding the holiday. Yet other Christmas songs experience their pinnacle of popularity a full month earlier, in mid-November, shortly before Thanksgiving and the unofficial start of the Christmas season, with a sustained bump through December's annual singings. By the time singings resume around the start of the New Year, interest in leading such songs has waned.

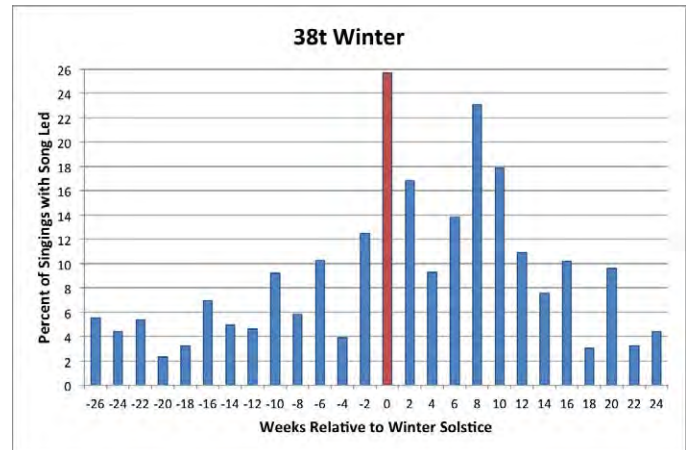
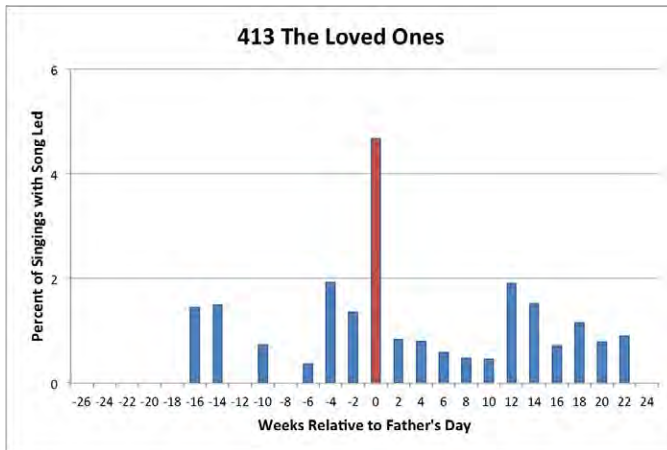
The seasonal bumps for Easter songs vary, sometimes demonstrating a striking relationship between the songs' text and the calendar in the weeks before Easter. Songs with texts speaking of Jesus's death, burial, and resurrection, like "Weeping Mary," "Mary's Grief and Joy," and "Easter Morn," are popular either during the two week block before Easter Sunday or during the full month surrounding Easter, reflecting singers' tendency to choose these songs to illustrate

different parts of the Easter story. In contrast, "Jesus Rose," which features a hymn text beginning after the resurrection, experiences its seasonal spike on Easter Sunday and the two week block following. "Easter Anthem," which likewise speaks of the resurrection, is popular during a much longer period. It begins to swell in use about ten weeks before Easter, leaps to yet higher popularity at the start of Lent, and continues to rise until Easter, remaining seasonally popular through the two week cycle after the holiday. While these other songs' bumps may indicate leaders' specific associations of their hymn texts with events in the Christian calendar around Easter, "Easter Anthem," despite its text's specificity, also acquires a broader capacity to signal the season at large.



At least one other among the most seasonal songs features a spike that corresponds with a holiday. "The Loved Ones" (p. 413), due to a text which urges singers to "be kind to thy father" and tells of the different roles of a father early and late in life, experiences a dramatic spike around the time of Father's Day. The song is a particular favorite at the singing at Hopewell Primitive Baptist Church in Heard County, Georgia, on Father's Day, the third Sunday in June, and is also led at other singings held on Father's Day, including those at Macedonia Primitive Baptist Church in Section, Alabama, King's Schoolhouse in Natural Bridge, Alabama, and Little Vine Primitive Baptist Church in Empire, Alabama.





## Winter and Spring

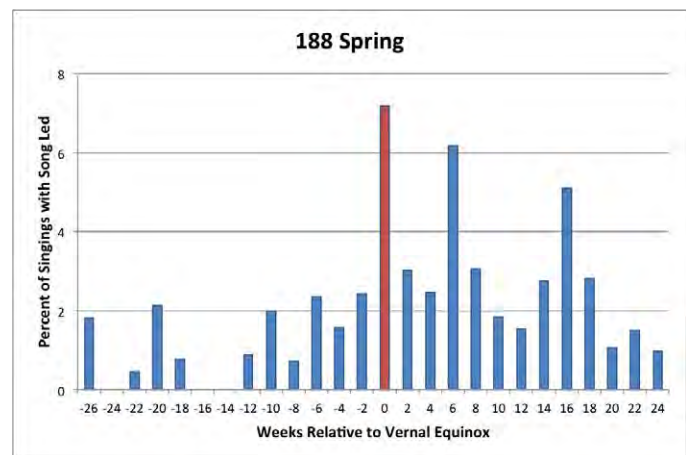
“Winter” and “Spring” (pp. 38t and 188), songs in *The Sacred Harp* with names (and hymn texts) that identify them with seasons of the year, also show leading behavior that corresponds with the calendar. We might expect such seasonal songs to follow a different pattern than holiday songs, showing a gradual swell rather than a sharp spike, but in fact analysis of the leading patterns for these two songs show both a spike at a certain time of the year and a swell over a longer duration.

Both “Winter” and “Spring” experience the most pronounced use during the two week blocks coinciding with the official starts of their respective seasons: the winter solstice for “Winter,” and the vernal equinox for “Spring.” It’s perhaps surprising that singers mark these dates, which receive less attention than Christmas or Independence Day, by singing these songs. Yet knowingly or unknowingly, singers do.

For both songs, the official start of the season also seems to inaugurate a period of relative popularity. This season begins for “Spring” right on the two week block coinciding with the equinox. It starts for “Winter,” in contrast, a couple of weeks in advance—understandable given that winter weather in many areas where singings are held also often precedes the December winter solstice.

“Spring’s” swell in usage lasts for two months. During spring the song is twice as popular than during the other seasons. It then experiences what we might term an early summer lull, before a small but perhaps significant spike in mid-July. Why? Perhaps thanks to nostalgic longing for spring after summer’s heat sets in?

“Winter” too continues to be led more often than at other times of the year after falling from its solstice peak, but it experiences a longer and more gradual slide in popularity extending a full four months after the solstice, until mid April.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps singers feel motivated by the second verse of the song, only added to *The Sacred Harp* in 1991, to lead “Winter” not just to mark its eponymous season, but also its conclusion as “He sends His word, and melts the snow, ... And bids the spring return.”



## Songs, Singings, and Singers

Sometimes a song’s seasonality can reveal a deeper association with a person or place. Mark Godfrey has developed a seasonality score, which ranks songs according to the spikiness of their leading behavior. A handful of the songs right at the top are those associated with a particular holiday, including several Christmas songs and the Father’s Day favorite “The Loved Ones.” But others are little used songs with no obvious relationship to a holiday. Why are “Tolling Bell” or “Mount Zion (second)” (pp. 459 and 88b) so seasonal?

The answer is that for songs that are led relatively little, one leader’s association of that song with a particular person or place can produce a statistically significant spike. (Indeed, the holiday songs at the top of the seasonality list are all also relatively uncommon. Popular holiday songs like “Sherburne” and “Oxford” show up much further down the list.) In this way, a song’s seasonality can be a marker not primarily of its relationship to the calendar, but of the kinds of associations Sacred Harp singers often have for many songs, the sorts of associations that join the words and music in making such songs meaningful. We frequently speak of a song as belonging to a certain singer, as “his” or “her song,” because of our memories of that singer loving and leading that song over the years, and the seasonality of such unexpected songs can be a surprising indicator of just such a connection.

A full 27 percent of lessons with “Tolling Bell” feature Judy Caudle leading the song at Gum Pond Primitive Baptist Church.<sup>5</sup> For Judy, leading “Tolling Bell” is a way to remember her great aunt Bera Bradford a member of Gum Pond and a Sacred Harp singer who was part of the group that organized the cemetery at the church in the 1970s. As Judy notes, the day of the annual singing at Gum Pond on the fourth Sunday in May

*was established as the decoration day for the cemetery. Aunt Bera passed away in early 1976 and became one of the first to be buried in the cemetery. Her son, Ben Bradford, traveled to this area from Michigan each year for decoration day and the singing at Gum Pond. At the singing, he would request that “Tolling Bell” be sung in memory of Aunt Bera, and it became a tradition to do so. Even though Ben has since also passed away, we continue to sing “Tolling Bell” as the memorial lesson song on the fourth Sunday in May.*

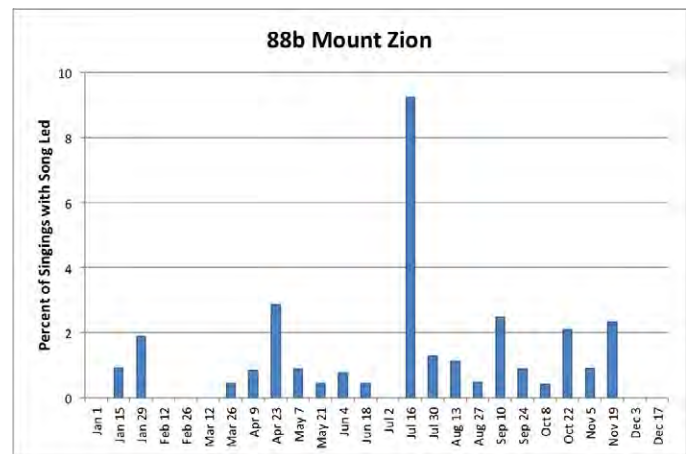
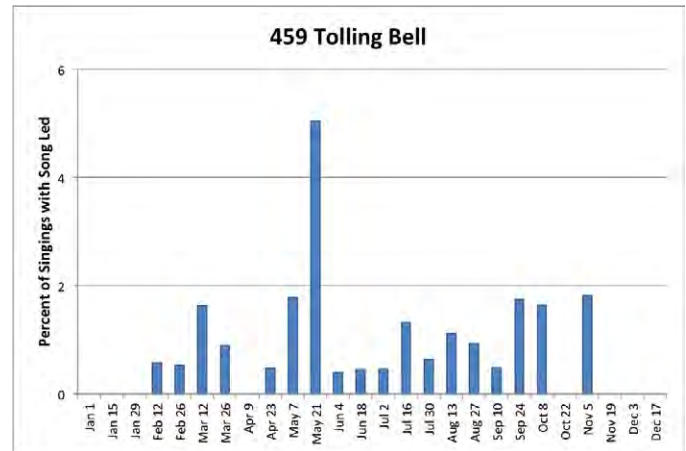
*It is important to me that we remember those who preceded us in our Sacred Harp tradition. Some of my earliest memories of singings include Aunt Bera going with my family to attend a singing somewhere. I don’t remember that she ever led a song, although she may have in earlier years, but she attended and sang treble at many singings. When I was a young woman, and singing treble myself, she was instrumental in teaching me the intricacies of the treble part. It is an honor for me to remember her in song.<sup>6</sup>*



Judy Caudle leads “Tolling Bell” as a way to remember her great aunt Bera Bradford. Photograph by Judy Caudle.

“Tolling Bell’s” high seasonality, then, flows from its deeper meaning: Judy’s association of the song with Aunt Bera, Bera and her son Ben’s connection to the Gum Pond church’s decoration day, and the infrequency with which the song is used in other contexts.

Some connections are more straightforward. John Plunkett has led the song on p. 88b, “Mount Zion,” consistently at the two-day singing held at Mt. Zion Methodist Church in Mt. Zion, Georgia—celebrating the coincidence between the song’s name and that of the singing and its location.<sup>7</sup>

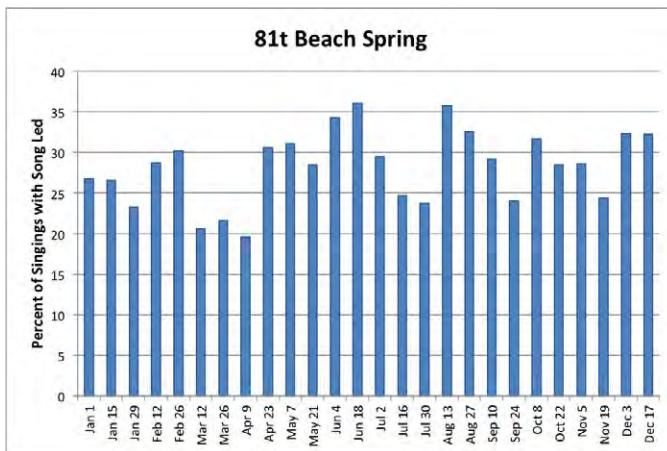
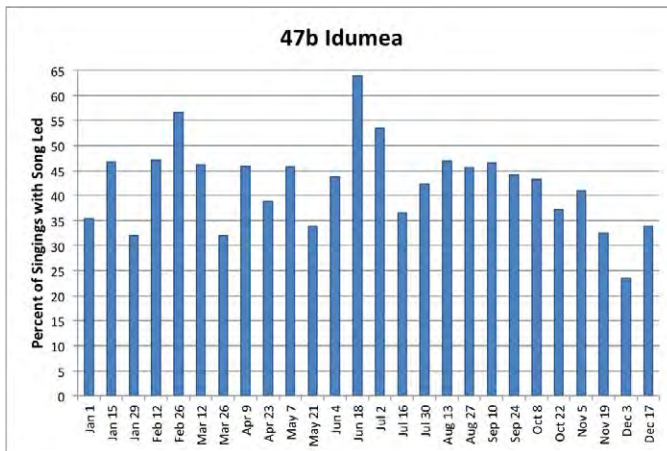


### Unseasonality

For most songs in *The Sacred Harp*, seasonality in leading behavior is minimal or insignificant. Especially for the most popular songs in the book, different individual leaders may have multiple complementary associations of the tunes with particular people and their singings so that such associations, as represented in leaders’ choices, cancel each other out, or are overwhelmed by the many other reasons leaders select songs that have little or nothing to do with a particular place, person, or time of year. Some popular songs



in *The Sacred Harp* may be associated with particular times, but the particularities of those associations inhibit seasonal leading behavior. For a number of singers, “Idumea” (p. 47b) is associated with the 2003 Hollywood film *Cold Mountain*. And while the song experienced a dramatic “Cold Mountain bump” in the year following the film’s premiere and has maintained its popularity more than a decade after the film’s release, the song is the eleventh least seasonal song in the book. Associating “Idumea” with a year and a movie doesn’t translate into seasonal bias. The song is popular year round.



Many of the other least seasonal songs are among the most popular in the book. “Beach Spring” (p. 81t), the seventy-seventh most popular song since 1995 is the most un-seasonal song in *The Sacred Harp*. The top five songs in popularity in the tunebook, “Hallelujah,” “New Britain,” “Northfield,” “Redemption,” and “A Thankful Heart” (p. 146, 45t, 155, 48o, and 475), are all relatively close to the bottom of the seasonality list.<sup>8</sup> Of the twenty least seasonal songs in *The Sacred Harp*, nineteen are among the 100 most popular.<sup>9</sup>

## Conclusion

Seasonality expresses itself in different ways for different types of songs. Many little-used songs tied to a person or place experience a spike that represents the gradual accrual of lessons held on a given weekend of the year. Holiday songs, depending on the nature of the holiday and the singing calendar, tend to spike on or just before the holiday, sometimes with a gradual swell in prior weeks. The two truly seasonal songs, “Winter” and “Spring,” spike, remarkably, at the astronomically defined starts to their corresponding seasons and then remain popular until season’s end, or, in the case of “Winter,” long after.

Seasonality can only tell us so much. It pales in comparison to other reasons why leaders select songs: their words, their music, and the memories and emotions that accrue around them. But seasonality does shed light on these very things, and is exquisitely measurable, thanks to the comprehensive record the many secretaries of our Sacred Harp singings have compiled. The lessons we lead at Sacred Harp singings represent both the most basic building block of an all-day singing and a beautiful opportunity for each of us to teach the rest of us something, to share an insight, thought, belief, or feeling. Examining *The Sacred Harp*’s seasonal songs reveals just one small piece of how singers think about selecting a song for their lessons, and how these individual discrete decisions build over time, shaping the seasonal ebb and flow of our collective experience. ■

## Endnotes

1. This figure represents the song’s median popularity at singings held from two weeks after Christmas to six weeks before.
2. Mark T. Godfrey, “Analysis of the Minutes of Sacred Harp Singings, 1995–2015,” unpublished dataset, 2015.
3. Winter peaks at 25.7 percent of singings at the winter solstice; “Spring” at 7.2 percent of singings at the vernal equinox.
4. The song is three times more likely to be used at singings during winter and early spring than at other times of the year.
5. Eleven times on the fourth Sunday in May and twice on the fourth Sunday in September.
6. Judy Caudle, personal communication, September 28, 2015.
7. Plunkett has led “Mount Zion (First)” (p. 88b) thirteen times, of which seven were at the Mt. Zion Memorial Singing.
8. The songs are the sixth, 133rd, forty-first, seventy-second, and eighth least seasonal, respectively.
9. But even here there’s an outlier. The exception, “Irwin-ton” (p. 229) is ranked 168<sup>th</sup> in popularity, sung about forty times a year at *Minutes Book* singings. Its leading is distributed almost evenly across the calendar, peaking slightly at New Years. Evidently there’s almost nothing at all seasonal about the song’s appeal!

## Help Me To Sing

# Recovering Sacred Harp History through Newspapers

Robert L. Vaughn | Mount Enterprise, Texas

## OLD-TIME MELODIES HEARD AT AN ALL-DAY SINGING

Calvary Baptist church, at the corner of Willow and Capital streets, near Faith's crossing, was the scene of an all-day singing yesterday. The occasion was the quarterly meeting of the Sacred Harp Singing Association.

The singing began at 10 o'clock in the morning and continued until late in the afternoon. It is estimated that 500 or 600 people were present at the church during the day.

The meeting was opened at 9:30 o'clock with an address of welcome by Superintendent C. A. Rainwater, of the Calvary church Sunday school. The opening prayer was offered by Rev. A. J. Goss, the pastor. The singing was conducted by about fifteen different leaders, each one being allowed a certain time. The singing was from the original Sacred Harp song book, containing old-time songs, and a feature was the fact that no instrument of any character was used. One of the by-laws of the associa-

tion specifies that no book but the Sacred Harp shall be used in the meetings.

At noon the singing was suspended and the congregation adjourned to a beautiful grove on a hill near the church, where a bountiful basket dinner was served. Shortly after 1 o'clock the singing was resumed. At intervals during the day short recesses were held, which afforded an opportunity for social intermingling.

The association is composed of lovers of the old-time music in Fulton and the surrounding counties, and they gather together every quarter to enjoy the melodies of those favorite songs. The object of the association is to keep alive that old-time music. City Detective Harry White, of Atlanta, is president of the association. A committee, composed of John Swinney, Professor J. L. White and J. F. Daniel, had charge of the arrangements for the meeting yesterday. The meeting was held at the Calvary church on invitation.

rise of the Internet made much information available that was previously inaccessible. The continued interest in and compilation of historical and genealogical materials gather many resources in a single, accessible place. Cemetery enumerations, such as Find a Grave, often are surprisingly comprehensive. Old newspapers are digitized and find their way onto cyberspace. All is not lost. Hope arises.

## The Way of Recovery

Recovering our history requires research—intensive research. Don't let that scare you. If you like history and love Sacred Harp (or vice versa), the research will be a labor of love rather than a chore. I would like to focus on recovering history through newspapers and other digital media.

You can search through newspapers in physical and digital form. Physical searching involves paging through hard copies of newspapers or microforms (film reproductions requiring a special reader). This is a time and labor intensive process that can be tiresomely challenging. To cut down on the tedium and increase the chance of success, searching through physical newspapers should begin with an idea of the time and place where relevant information might lie. Digital searching includes online newspaper archives and search engines such as Google that can lead to digitized newspaper articles. At least a few libraries have begun to digitize their microfilm holdings to make them searchable. Others have digitized hard copies of newspapers in their collections. Digital searching vastly reduces the time and labor, but introduces the problem of Optical Character Recognition (OCR, a technology in which computers attempt to automatically recognize text) not reading or recognizing what the human eye can and will.

So many exciting facets of our Sacred Harp history can seem hopelessly lost to time. Many old singing conventions have been disbanded for years. Many singers and singing families are gone and forgotten. Hopes of uncovering their stories may seem dim, but, there are resources available that can offer surprising glimpses of the history of our tradition. Newspapers, correspondence, family histories, county histories, living singers, even genealogists and church minutes, can be sources of otherwise hidden information about Sacred Harp's past. In this essay I offer some tips for recovering Sacred Harp history by searching historical newspapers online; but first, a word on why I think such work is important.

## The Need for Recovery

There is a need to recover Sacred Harp history. Our knowledge of Sacred Harp's past is sketchy at best.

No scholar or singer wrote a history of Sacred Harp before Joe James's *A Brief History of the Sacred Harp and Its Author, B. F. White, Sr., and Contributors* (1904).<sup>1</sup> [Read more about how a copy of James's *Brief History* found its way from the Library of Congress to the Sacred Harp Museum in Vol. 3, no. 2—Ed.] Little else followed James's book until the work of George Pullen Jackson in the 1930s.<sup>2</sup> People, places and events are forgotten. Time is passing away. Each passing day is one day farther away from the beginning of our Sacred Harp history, regardless of the area in which we live, or whether its history in that area dates from 1885 or 1985. Waiting increases the likelihood that meaningful data will never be recovered. Much information is missing. Minutes have been lost, destroyed, or are otherwise decaying. Memories fade.

Yet some things associated with the passing of time are helpful. The



## Tips For Digital Sacred Harp Research

- **Take advantage of free online newspaper archives**, such as the Library of Congress's *Chronicling America* or state-based archives such as the *Portal to Texas History*. Wikipedia.org publishes a list of online newspaper archives, which includes several free newspapers in Alabama, Georgia, and Texas.
- **Read newspaper microforms at the library**, where they're available for free. You can also purchase newspaper microfilm, from the *Georgia Newspaper Project* for example, but doing so is expensive.
- **Subscribe to an online newspaper archive**. Many of the most comprehensive archives only sell subscriptions to academic libraries.<sup>3</sup> Some archives that offer subscriptions to individuals have newspapers of interest to Sacred Harp singers, but be sure a given archive has papers that are specific to the time and location you are researching before signing up. (I subscribed to Newspapers.com, which has some issues of the *Anniston Star*, *Atlanta Constitution*, *Atlanta Journal*, *Carroll Free Press*, and *Dothan Eagle*.)
- **Vary your searches**
  - Search without quotes. This opens up the largest amount of results, though often with much peripheral or unrelated material.
  - Search with quotes. This narrows the results to the exact phrase that is placed within quotation marks and makes the finding more likely to be relevant. (Be aware that quotation marks do not always function the same in all searches.)
  - Use "advanced search" for resources with this capability, in order to narrow findings.
  - Vary search engines for online searches (e.g. Google, Bing, DuckDuckGo, Yahoo). Sometimes one will find something another will not.
  - Use variations of a person's name. Trying to find out more about a significant alto composer, I searched for "Mrs. R. D. Blackshear," "Anna Cooper Blackshear," "Anna C. Blackshear," "Mrs. Anna Blackshear,"—even misspellings such as Blackshere, Blacksheare and Blackshire. Just because we know "W. M. Cooper," "S. M. Denson," and "J. L. White" doesn't mean they won't show up in a newspaper as "Marion Cooper" or "Seab Denson" or "Jim White." Start simply. Search for a name, then narrow by time or place from the results page.
  - Search for the common first, and then the uncommon to narrow results. I searched for the hymn "The Lord Is in this Place." Using the first line, I got 2046 results on *Chronicling America*. Changing to the second line, "We see his smiling face," I got only twenty-two. (Unfortunately, none of the results were the hymn.) When researching people, search for uncommon names over common names when possible. If you are researching a Sacred Harp convention of which John Smith was the president and Hachaliah McMath was the vice-president, try searching for Hachaliah McMath first!
- Remember that **many search results are based on OCR text**. In material where the image is not clear, OCR processing might read words incorrectly or miss them altogether. Finding nothing doesn't mean there is nothing. Revert to old fashioned search methods when you feel you should have found something.
- **Even misinformation can help**. When trying to identify the J. M. C. Shaw who was credited with several songs in the Cooper revision, I found that "J.M.C. SHAW was a well known author of *sacred music for the harp*" and that he was a "noted writer of *Sacred Heart music*" (emphases mine). The genealogists did not get it right. They probably did not understand what sort of music Shaw composed—but they got it close enough for me to believe I had found the right man.
- Remember and **record what you've searched, where and how**—so you don't duplicate your efforts by searching for the same terms over and over in the same context. (But do go back and search later; material is always being added to the web and newspaper archives; just because you don't find something today does not mean you won't find it next month or next year.)
- **Create a good filing system**. I've learned this the hard way. I'm always looking for something that I filed away *who knows where!* Keep insignificant bits of information. They might seem worthless now, but could help you figure out something later.
- **Realize that just because something is printed in a newspaper doesn't mean it is correct**. Learn to discern what can be relied on and what cannot. Verify from other sources where possible. For example, if you find someone's obituary in a paper it is most likely that they really died, but it may get other facts wrong—the day of death, when and where they were born, etc. Singers' submittals (such as minutes) are usually more reliable than a newspaper reporter; a journalist's opinions and observations are just that.
- **Search, search, search**. Persistence can be the mother of discovery. "If at first you don't succeed: try, try, try again."

**THE CONSTITUTION: ATLANTA, GA.**

## OLD TIME MUSIC HEARD AT AN ALL DAY SINGING

The DeKalb and Fulton County Sacred Harp Singing Association held its quarterly singing yesterday at Forrest Station, 13 miles from Atlanta on the Central railroad.

The meeting was held in Forrest church and it is estimated was attended by about 700 or 800 people. The singing continued all day and was of the good old-time variety, all of the selections being from the old Sacred Harp song book.

At noon the singing was suspended and the melody makers repaired to a sumptuous basket dinner, which was spread in a beautiful grove near the church. This feature of the day was in progress from noon until 1:30 o'clock, and during that period the many delicious viands, prepared in an appetizing manner by the good women of the vicinity, were despatched with a relish.

A number of people attended the sing-

ing from Atlanta and many were in attendance from adjoining counties. Some of those who took a prominent part in the singing were the following: J. L. White, J. F. Daniel, C. J. Griggs, R. E. Ray and J. T. Wallace.

A "Droffe," arranged by Mr. Griggs, attracted considerable attention and proved a unique feature.

The annual meeting of the association will be held at Zion church, between Stone Mountain and Clarkston, the second Sunday in September.

It is announced that an annual singing will be held at Forrest Station on the third of each August in honor of the birthday of T. J. Stephens, a prominent member of the association. Before the meeting adjourned a resolution was passed tendering the thanks of the association to the officers of the church for the use of the church building and also to the ladies for the dinner.

## BIG SINGING CONVENTION.

**5,000 Delegates and Visitors Expected at Douglasville.**

Douglasville, Ga., July 24.—(Special.)—The annual meeting of the Douglasville Sacred Harp Musical Convention will be held here Saturday and Sunday, and over 5,000 delegates and visitors are expected to be in attendance.

Delegates from ten counties will be here, and visitors from all over the state. Already visitors and delegates are pouring in, and by Saturday at noon the town will be filled to its full capacity. Every home in the town has been thrown open for the visitors, and Saturday and Sunday, each, a barbecue and basket dinner will be served on the court house grounds.

President J. W. Harding says this meeting will eclipse all previous ones, and the interest in this kind of singing seems to be increasing every year.

Douglasville has many noted singers, who have devoted their time and money in the interest of this organization, and it has grown with great strides every year since its organization. Colonel Joseph S. James, the author of several noted song books and many important treatises on music, deserves special mention among those who have fathered this movement. Professor A. J. Showalter, of Dalton, is a prominent member of this organization, as well as many prominent musicians throughout the whole south.

An example of a recent significant newspaper discovery is one made by Sarah Kahre while researching her doctoral dissertation at Florida State University.<sup>4</sup> Although the copyright notice and introduction to W. M. Cooper's revision of *The Sacred Harp* are both dated 1902, period newspapers indicate the book wasn't available to the public until May of 1903.

### The Goal of Recovery

Recovering and recording facts can help us learn things we did not know and better understand things we already knew. Finding previously unknown and unsearched for Sacred Harp history brings new data to today's singing community. New facts can be considered in the framework of already recovered knowledge, and pooling this data can help grow the reservoir of easily accessible information on Sacred Harp singing from which future writers and researchers can draw. Understanding who we are as Sacred Harp singers is one of the higher goals of recovering

our history. Knowing our past gives us a sense of our present and a guide for our future.

Contributing to this communal project means sharing the results of your research. Posting information to the Fasola Discussions listserv is one way to dispense information. It gets the attention of the wider community, where some may offer interpretations. An individual can start a Sacred Harp related website or offer the information to an existing site such as Texas Fasola or Warren Steel's "Sacred Harp Singing." Writing is another way to preserve some of our history. You might think about writing a short article for a Sacred Harp, historical, or genealogical newsletter. They are usually looking for good material. [*The Sacred Harp Publishing Company Newsletter certainly is. Contact us if you are interested in writing—Eds.*]

What about the long term? Keep discoveries and documents for a time to use in your own research. You may want to pass down some materials through your family. For other items, plan ahead

by looking into options for a permanent repository. Placing Sacred Harp materials or historical research with such an institution will typically grant broader access to the items and ensure their preservation using proven techniques. Consider these possibilities:

- An organization operated by singers, like the Sacred Harp Museum in Carrollton, Georgia, or the Sacred Harp Music and Cultural Center in Bessemer, Alabama;
- A university library, music library, or special collections department;
- Your state archives; or
- Your local library.

Many of the online materials we find will lack appeal for archives and museums, but they might find a nice home in the vertical files of your library's genealogy department.

However you decide to go about it, let's start recovering the missing pieces of our Sacred Harp history. By combining our efforts, we can make a valuable contribution to this important effort. ■



## KANSAS.

It has been sometime since I wrote. I have been very busy on my farm chopping cotton and replanting corn. The bud worms are the worst I ever saw them. It is almost impossible to get a stand of corn on bottom or low lands.

Wheat is a failure, oats needs rain.

Since I wrote before Mr. Jonathan Akin had the misfortune to loose his wife and child. The bereaved have the sympathies of the entire community. She and her babe was both buried at Pleasant View church.

Mr. Ben Chapple was married to Miss Lizie Adair last Wednesday night. May peace and happiness attend them through life.

We are requested to say that the annual singing will convene at Pleasant View next Sunday the 4th Sunday of May. Let everybody come out with their old Sacred Harps and all other good books, such as Prayer and Praise, Class Choir and Congregation, and let everybody be sure to bring their well filled baskets and let's have a good revival singing. J. M. Hamrick, J. P. Reese, S. P. Barnett, C. M. Doster, G. T. Reeves are especially invited with all other good leaders of music together with you Mr. Editor.

## Endnotes

1. J. S. James, *A Brief History of the Sacred Harp and Its Author, B. F. White, Sr., and Contributors* (Douglasville, GA: New South Book and Job Print, 1904). The minutes secretaries of Sacred Harp singings compiled mark an important exception. Some nineteenth century singing conventions, such as the Chattahoochee Musical Convention, have preserved minutes from some of their earliest sessions, forming an important record of our music's past. For excerpts from the Chattahoochee Convention's record books, see Kiri Miller, ed., *The Chattahoochee Musical Convention, 1852–2002: A Sacred Harp Historical Sourcebook* (Carrollton, GA: Sacred Harp Museum, 2002).
2. George Pullen Jackson, *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands: The Story of the Fasola Folk, Their Songs, Singings, and "Buckwheat Notes"* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1933). More recently, historical writing on Sacred Harp has proliferated, beginning with Buell E. Cobb, *The Sacred Harp: A Tradition and Its Music* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989 [1978]) and continuing, most recently, with David Warren Steel, *The Makers of the Sacred Harp* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010).
3. If you do have access to an academic library, Sacred Harp Museum conservator and historical consultant Christopher Sawula recommends the following databases, which include a number of local and regional papers: 19th Century U.S. Newspapers, America's Historical Newspapers (a great place to start), African American Newspapers, 1827–1998, African American Newspapers: The 19th Century, America's Historical Imprints, American Antiquarian Society Historical Periodicals, American Broadides and Ephemera, Accessible Archives (South Carolina Primarily), and ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
4. Sarah E. Kahre, *Schism and Sacred Harp: The Formation of the Twentieth-Century Tunebook Lines* (Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 2015).
5. The Texas Fasola site has pages dedicated to historical material and biographies. The "Sacred Harp Singing" site includes "Articles and Essays on Sacred Harp Singing."

## New Online Exhibit from the Sacred Harp Museum: The United Sacred Harp Musical Association

Since its first session in Atlanta in 1905, the United Sacred Harp Musical Association, commonly known as the United Convention, has stood out as more than just an ordinary Sacred Harp singing, affecting the form of *The Sacred Harp* and public consciousness of our traditions. The story of the United Convention—told here through recordings, photos, and more—offers a fascinating perspective on the history of Sacred Harp singing in the twentieth century and beyond.

The exhibition was curated by Nathan Rees. The Sacred Harp Museum committee is Charlene Wallace, Karen Rollins, Nathan Rees, and Jesse P. Karlsberg. The Sacred Harp Museum wishes to thank Pat Graham and the Pitts Theology Library of Emory University, Nathan Salzburg and the Association for Cultural Equity, Jonathon Smith, and Ted Mercer for their assistance. ■

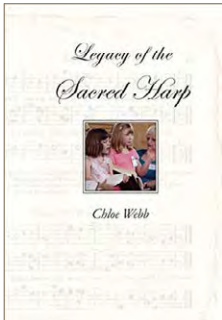
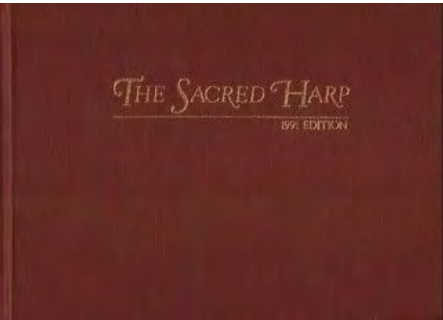


Visit the exhibit at [originalsacredharp.com/museum/united/](http://originalsacredharp.com/museum/united/)

- Read a selection of articles that Atlanta newspapers published about the United Convention when it was a major civic event in its first decades.
- Listen to the Sacred Harp Museum's recording of the 1977 United Convention, held at Antioch Baptist Church in Ider, Alabama.
- View a slideshow from the 1990 United Convention, the only session held beyond the South, in Chicago. Sacred Harp had blossomed in the Midwest in the previous decade, and numerous singers from around the country gathered to celebrate.
- In the twenty-first century the United Continued to travel, and returned to Atlanta, its original home, for the first time in sixty years. Listen to a complete recording of the 2015 United Convention, held in at Atlanta's Church of Our Saviour.

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



<b>The Sacred Harp, 1991 Edition</b>	The best collection of sacred songs, hymns, odes, and anthems ever offered the singing public for general use.
<b>Original Sacred Harp: Centennial Edition</b>	A commemorative reprint of the historic 1911 edition of <i>The Sacred Harp</i> , with a new introduction.
<b>The Makers of the Sacred Harp</b>	Companion to <i>The Sacred Harp</i> , tracing the sources of every tune and text in our songbook.
<b>Legacy of the Sacred Harp</b>	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](http://originalsacredharp.com), email [ordering@originalsacredharp.com](mailto: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/](http://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](http://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](http://campfasola.org) for more information.

.....