

The SACRED HARP PUBLISHING COMPANY *Newsletter*

VOL. 3, NO. 1 Stories about singers and singings, our music and traditions, and Sacred Harp's present-day growth. MAY 2014

Honoring Jeff and Shelbie Sheppard: 2014 Citation Awards

Karen Rollins, Bowden, Georgia | Jesse P. Karlsberg, Atlanta, Georgia



Jeff and Shelbie lead at Camp Fasola, Camp Lee, Anniston, Alabama, July 4, 2007. Photograph by Jonathon Smith.

ON April 12, 2014, at the annual State Line Singing, the Sacred Harp Publishing Company presented Pam Nunn and Rene Greene with citation awards recognizing the contributions of their parents, Jeff and Shelbie Sheppard, to Sacred Harp singing. Jeff and Shelbie became the eighty-fifth and eighty-sixth recipients of the citations, given since 1969 to “honor and express appreciation to loyal supporters and dedicated singers for outstanding work in the company and untiring support of and dedicated service to the cause of Sacred Harp music.”

Of these eighty-six recipients, Jeff and Shelbie are only the third couple to be recognized. Shelbie is only the eighth woman. Shelbie’s mother, Lessie Cates, and Jeff’s brother, Jerry Sheppard, are past recipients of the citation.

During the presentation of the awards Karen Rollins spoke on the Sheppards’

contributions to Sacred Harp singing. Jesse P. Karlsberg addressed the couple’s involvement in Camp Fasola. We share these remarks below.

Supporters of Sacred Harp Singings

THOSE of you who are not from around here really can not know how much we will miss Jeff and Shelbie at our local singings. Especially in the last ten years or so, they were the backbone of the smaller singings in this area. You could breathe a sigh of relief when they walked in the door because you knew that they could fill in the missing parts and keep the singing going smoothly.

I speak of them as a unit because that is how most of us knew them—always together sharing their goals and experiences as well as their lives. They were a “Sacred Harp Couple,” a

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Introducing Vol. 3, No. 1 of the Sacred Harp Publishing Company Newsletter

Jesse P. Karlsberg and Nathan Rees

THE sixth issue of the *Sacred Harp Publishing Company Newsletter* features stories about key figures and events from Sacred Harp's history and celebrates the Sacred Harp Museum's rich collection of songbooks, papers, and recordings.

Our issue begins with company executive secretary Karen Rollins's and vice president Jesse P. Karlsberg's tributes to 2014 posthumous citation award recipients Jeff and Shelbie Sheppard. Matt Wells follows with the second installment of our series telling the stories behind the more unexpected moments reported on in the minutes, writing about this and Lara Andersen's "surprise wedding" at the 2002 Minnesota State Convention. Karen Freund shares excerpts from a conversation 2013 citation award recipient Jerry Enright recorded with Lookout Mountain singer Barrett Ashley about his lifelong love of Sacred Harp singing. Another article features a speech by music educator Irving Wolfe on Sacred Harp scholar George Pullen Jackson's contributions to our music, which was printed in the minutes of the 1965 United convention. Charlotte Wolfe, Irving's daughter, introduces the speech with memories of her father's involvement in Sacred Harp. Rebecca Over shares new findings about the life of Sacred Harp composer Lee Andrew McGraw, shedding light on the role Sacred Harp played in the lives of singers during early decades of the twentieth century. Finally, Nathan Rees reports on a recent donation of a rare 1909 edition of *The Sacred Harp* to the Sacred Harp Museum and a new initiative to digitize and make available rare and significant items in the museum's collection.

The Sacred Harp Museum presents three new online resources which complement these articles:

- A recording and complete transcript of Jerry Enright's conversation with Barrett Ashley (<http://originalsacredharp.com/museum/barrett-ashley-on-life-and-sacred-harp-in-conversation-with-jerry-enright/>),
- A complete transcript (and downloadable PDF) of the minutes of the 1965 United convention (<http://originalsacredharp.com/museum/minutes-1965-united/>), and
- A downloadable PDF of J. L. White's 1909 *The Sacred Harp*, Fifth Edition, recently donated to the museum and digitized by Charles Whitmer (<http://originalsacredharp.com/museum/digitized-version-of-j-l-whites-1909-fifth-edition-of-the-sacred-harp/>).

As always, we encourage you to leave comments on these new articles and to write us with your feedback and suggestions of topics for future issues of the Newsletter. ■

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

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vanishing breed. Both of them came from singing families; I remember Shelbie's parents. Her mom, Lessie [Cates], especially, was a strong singer. I do not remember Jeff's parents, but I have heard my father talk about his admiration for their leadership in singing.

We will miss their **knowledge and wisdom**. They knew our traditions, they knew how songs should be sung, they knew how to lead properly, how to key music, how to cook for a large singing, how to conduct one's self in the hollow square; the list could go on and on. And they *shared* this knowledge. Whether teaching at Camp Fasola, commenting at a singing, or teaching by example, Jeff and Shelbie were always ready to instruct, encourage, and lead us. Whether we were ready to learn or not, Jeff and Shelbie were there to teach us.

We will miss their **humor**. All of us have favorite tales of what one of the Sheppards said to us or about us. Jeff, especially, was surrounded by laughter wherever he traveled. I recently read some of the diaries that my mom kept on the bus trips of Mrs. Ruth [Brown]. Jeff was a central character in her stories. "Jeff wore a wig to the singing." "Jeff put on Lonnie's hat and serenaded the bus." "Jeff told the waitress that we were nightclub dancers." You had to laugh with Jeff even when you were the target of his taunts.

We will miss their **hospitality**. Shelbie and Jeff opened their home to singers from everywhere. They gladly shared whatever they had. They were the epitome of southern hospitality and many of you, I am sure, spent time in their home. We will miss their **love**. No one could hug like Jeff. He had lots of practice.

We will miss their **dependability**. As long as they were able, they could be counted on to show up for a singing and do their part. I am sure there were times that they did not feel like going. But they knew they were needed and they made an effort to be there.

We will miss their **leadership**. Whether serving on the music committee, as Jeff did, or serving on



the Sacred Harp Publishing Company board as Shelbie did for a decade, or chairing a singing, or starting a Camp, or singing at a funeral, or organizing a trip, or editing the minutes book, Jeff and Shelbie did their part—and more. Those of us who remain now have a job to do. They have left a large hole in our Sacred Harp fabric. I hope that we have learned our lessons well and that we are ready to honor their legacy and practice what they taught us. —Karen Rollins

Contributors to Camp Fasola

KAREN has just encapsulated so wonderfully Jeff and Shelbie Sheppard’s contributions to Sacred Harp music and to all of our lives. I want to speak just a little longer about their contributions specifically to Camp Fasola.

Camp Fasola is now the only annual in-depth singing school teaching Sacred Harp singing and traditions. As such

it is critical to our ability to continue to grow Sacred Harp and to give new singers the opportunity to learn about Sacred Harp singing and to deepen their involvement in our community. Camp Fasola would not exist without Jeff and Shelbie. As David Ivey has recounted, Jeff was a major part of the conversations that led to the idea for Camp Fasola, and Jeff searched for and found a location for Camp Fasola: Camp Lee.

Jeff and Shelbie played an active role in camp from its founding as long as they were able. Jeff served as co-director of Camp for much of its first decade. He taught rudiments and pitching. Shelbie taught classes on “proper behavior at singings” and “preparing and taking dinner to singings.” Together they participated in panel discussions on Sacred Harp history, and taught on “decorum and tradition,” and on leading—a topic which over the years,

Top left: Jeff and Shelbie Sheppard singing with David Ivey at the Lacy Memorial singing, August 29, 2010. Photograph by Matt Hinton.

Top right: Jeff Sheppard during a Christmas Party for the bus trip group at Jeff and Shelbie Sheppard’s home, early 1990s. Jeff was surrounded by laughter wherever he traveled.

Bottom left: Shelbie Sheppard, Rene Greene, Jeff Sheppard, and David Ivey during a tribute to the Sheppards at Camp Fasola, adult session, Camp McDowell, Double Springs, Alabama, July 6, 2010. Photograph by Martha Beverly.

Bottom right: Jeff winning over his pupils. Camp Fasola, adult session, Camp McDowell, Double Springs, Alabama, June 17, 2009. Photograph by Jonathon Smith.



Shelbie teaches Ashton Rogers during “leading bootcamp,” Camp Fasola, youth session, Camp Lee, Anniston, Alabama, July 8, 2010. Photograph: Jonathon Smith.

became identified with Shelbie thanks to her much anticipated “leading bootcamp” classes. The two were the subject of a tribute at Camp in 2010 at the conclusion of which they were presented with a “more than a lifetime” achievement award.

Jeff and Shelbie contributed to camp in other ways as well. The minutes from the 2003 session of Camp Fasola, the first, record that “David Ivey requested that students wear their green camp shirts, which Shelbie Sheppard had laundered and folded (all 75 of them), for the group photo and the community singing Wednesday.” David Ivey notes that Shelbie stayed up until 4 a.m. completing this work. This is the only time that the word “laundered” or “laundry” appears in our minutes!

When teaching the rudiments, Jeff sometimes went beyond what’s actually in the rudiments to share some of the norms and values that undergird our singings. To offer just one example, the 2004 minutes record that Jeff noted “when the front bench tenors ask you what verses you want to lead, they are really saying ... ‘which one or two do

you want?’ That is to say,” Jeff noted, “you should not answer ‘all of them.’” On another occasion, in a class on keying, [my wife] Lauren [Bock] noted her frustration trying to key music in the way I had learned to key, to which Jeff responded: “don’t let him tell you what to do!”

Jeff and Shelbie profoundly influenced the Sacred Harp experiences of thousands of singers across decades, and as Karen has attested, had a great impact on the singings and singers around them in Alabama and Georgia. But for a younger generation, including many singers who, like me, didn’t grow up singing Sacred Harp, Camp Fasola was where we first got to know Jeff and Shelbie. Through Camp Fasola, Jeff and Shelbie were able to reach this whole other population of singers. It is hard to overestimate the impact that they had, as teachers at camp, on my singing, my feeling of belonging to and membership in the Sacred Harp family, and likewise on the commitment to Sacred Harp of the whole generation of new Sacred Harp singers with whom I began singing.

This was accomplished through love and through admonition.

Preparing to attend camp for the first time in 2005, I had already heard a number of stories about Jeff and Shelbie, and I was deeply fearful of Shelbie’s “leading bootcamp,” as were many of the other singers then preparing to travel south to attend camp for the first time. When it was my turn to lead I instinctively stiffened up, attempting to censor the manner in which I imagined I would “jump, gyrate, bounce, sway, stoop, stomp, [or] ... wave ... [my] arm[s] wildly”—all affectations Shelbie had railed against in previous years. Much to my surprise, Shelbie told me that my leading was too contained, too stiff, and encouraged me to relax my arm, to take a step here and there, and to breathe. Getting through bootcamp was frightening, but the love and appreciation I felt from Jeff and Shelbie afterward was profound and enduring.

Jeff and Shelbie made dozens of northern singers feel deeply uneasy, but then even more deeply loved and included. Through their instruction and encouragement they insisted that new singers learn, appreciate, and adopt Sacred Harp traditions, and at the same time welcomed them into our Sacred Harp family.

Through Camp Fasola, then, Jeff and Shelbie renewed their deep commitment to sharing their love of Sacred Harp and the values it compasses with singers of all backgrounds. And through Camp Fasola their work will continue, and their love and guidance will reach future singers not yet born. This is a part of Jeff and Shelbie’s legacy. For that, I am deeply thankful. ■ —Jesse P. Karlsberg

Just a Minute

Minnesota State Convention, September 28, 2002: ‘To the Puzzlement and Delight of All,’ a ‘Surprise Wedding

Matt Wells | St. Paul, Minnesota



Lara and Matt lead during their surprise wedding at the 2002 Minnesota State Sacred Harp Convention. Photograph: Chris Magnuson.

I was bound and determined after my split-up with a non-singer that my next partner was going to be a singer, so there were a lot of third dates at Sacred Harp singings. Lara liked the first one she went to, and her second singing was the 2001 Minnesota Cooper Book singing, held conveniently four blocks from her apartment.

One thing led to another, and pretty soon it was time to discuss a permanent commitment. I had been married before in a full meal-deal church ceremony; Lara had married before in an elopement. We agreed that something completely different and relatively low-key would be in order, not least because we wanted to remodel the kitchen instead of spending money on an expensive wedding. We thought of who we would want as guests, and more than half were singers, so we hatched the

idea of getting married at the Minnesota State Convention.

We started by asking fellow singer Doug Donley (a fellow Cleveland Heights native) to do the ceremony. We broached the topic while the three of us were sitting in the outfield bleachers at a Twins game. He thought it was a great idea. We then asked the chairs if it was okay with them to end a little early on Saturday to do a quick ceremony. They approved. We invited our non-singing friends and Lara’s family to show up around 2:30 (my parents are singers so they were going to be there anyway) and planned a party for Saturday night at our house. We didn’t bother to mention it to any other singers—they were going to be there anyway! We figured word would get out. But it didn’t.

The minutes reflect what happened next:

The Co-Chairs, Cathy Lutz and Steven Schmidgall, announced the regular singings in the area and then turned the class over to Rev. Doug Donley of University Baptist Church in Minneapolis.

To the puzzlement and delight of all, Rev. Doug Donley re-arranged the front benches to seat the party for the surprise wedding of Matt Wells and Lara Andersen. After the applause and the laughter subsided, he conducted a brief and beautiful ceremony, exchanging vows and rings. The class celebrated the couple’s union by singing with them “Present Joys,” 318, led by Jeff Sheppard. Rev. Donley led a closing prayer, and the chairs dismissed the class for the day.

As we scrambled everyone into position, I think Tim Eriksen figured out what was happening first (I stripped off a sweatshirt and put on a suitcoat while standing next to him). Jeanette Nelson asked Lara “do you know what’s going on?” and Lara answered “yes.” We left the party at our house that night for half an hour and went over to the party that the singers had at the Willards’, where we accepted a lot of congratulations.

It’s all a blur now, almost a dozen years later. We have two boys, Charlie and Andy, who sing in the church choir, with the Minnesota Boychoir, and whenever someone breaks into “Natick” (p. 497). And we want to remodel the kitchen again.

Note: Watch a video of Lara and Matt’s wedding ceremony at the Minnesota State Convention on the *Sacred Harp Publishing Company Newsletter* website at <http://originalsacredharp.com/2014/05/12/minnesota-state-september-28-2002-to-puzzlement-delight-of-all-a-surprise-wedding/>. ■

Read the Old Paths, Sacred Harp Museum

A Happy Life: Reflections on Sacred Harp Singing by Barrett Ashley

Barrett Ashley, Collinsville, Alabama | Jerry Enright, Chicago, Illinois | Karen Freund, Chicago, Illinois

ON Sunday, July 4, 1993, after the end of the second day of the Henagar-Union Sacred Harp Singing Convention in Henagar, Alabama, Chicago Sacred Harp singer Jerry Enright sat down with Barrett Ashley, a singer from Collinsville, Alabama, and one of the key members and supporters of the Lookout Mountain Sacred Harp singing community. Jerry had started singing Sacred Harp at the beginning of 1989; four and a half years later, he sat in Liberty Baptist Church with his friend Mr. Ashley, a lifelong singer “born into it,” and recorded their conversation about Mr. Ashley’s life, the times he’d lived in, and his lifelong love of Sacred Harp singing.

Barrett Ashley died just over four years after this conversation took place, on July 29, 1997, at the age of eighty-seven, and is buried in New Bethel Cemetery, Cherokee County, Alabama.

—Karen L. Freund
Algonquin, IL
April 13, 2014

Jerry Enright: You were born here?

Barrett Ashley: I was born in a log house.

Jerry: A log house on Lookout Mountain. ... Where did you learn to sing Sacred Harp?

Barrett: I was born into it. ... My parents sang it, and my daddy was a teacher in this music. They sang it, and on both sides of the house: my mother’s people and his people, we all sang it. ... We sang at home, and a lot of time, after supper, somebody would start a song and we’d get started to singing—there was four of us kids, and my mother and daddy—and we’d get started to singing, and we had all parts—sometime we’d sing [until] ten, eleven o’clock at night.

Jerry: No kidding.

Barrett: We’d do that two, three times a week, sometimes four.

Jerry: That must have been a lot of fun.

Barrett: A lot of fun, a lot of joy. And I tell everybody I had a happy life because I was born and raised in this old Sacred Harp singing. Now I don’t claim the Sacred Harp singing altogether. I believe in the church. I’m a member of the church and I believe in the church. But if I have a calling, it’s to sing. I go by the calling, I believe in the calling, in my heart, through God, and my Lord Jesus Christ. That’s what I believe in. And when you leave that, you’ve left me. And this singing is part of that. It’s a part of it that will never, never die.

Jerry: Well, I think we can see that when you lead.

Barrett: [Laughs] Well, I enjoy it, sure do. Sometimes I get so full and get so happy ... I just might have to hold the bench to keep from getting up and hollerin’—seem like you’d hear me four mile, but I’d cut it down to three.

Jerry: Do you remember any of your singing school teachers?

Barrett: Uncle Telly Reed, that’s S.T. [Reed]’s grand-daddy, and his other grand-daddy’s Uncle Sherman Oliver. ... I been going to a singing school ever since I was just a little old bitty feller. I’d say three or four years old, I can remember going to a singing school. We lived close and if my daddy wasn’t teaching, well, Uncle Sherman Oliver and Uncle Telly Reed, why they’s a-doing the teaching and I’d go out—we lived right close to the church.



Jerry: Did you go to school at all at Pine Grove? Was that after your time?

Barrett: That’s all the schooling I got, was right there at Pine Grove. I was borned and raised right there in hollerin’ distance of Pine Grove. ... I got all my schooling and everything, except experience. That’s the greatest teacher.



Jerry: How did you get to singings, the early singings, when you were young?

Barrett: We hooked a pair of mules to a two-horse wagon.

Jerry: And how far were you able to go to a singing?

Barrett: Ten miles, sometimes ten or twelve miles, something like that, we’d get up and leave by sun-up, in a wagon, we’d go, we’d get there, start about ten o’clock. ... If there was four or five miles, why us young people, we’d walk, you know, there’d be a road full of us, you know, going to the singing where it’s four or five miles, you know, if it’s further than that most times we’d go on a wagon.

Jerry: How many people did you used to have at the early singings? It’s hard to remember.

Barrett: Well, we didn’t have... I would say, when I first began to direct and lead, we’d have thirty-five to forty maybe.



Barrett Ashley leads “Columbiana” (p. 56t in *The Sacred Harp*) at Liberty Baptist Church, Henagar, Alabama, 1992

Jerry: That’s a good number.

Barrett: And I can remember when they call leaders, they didn’t have one song or two songs, they had fifteen minutes, twenty minutes, and some of the older ones would have thirty minutes, I can remember that.

Jerry: And you didn’t call everybody at all either.

Barrett: No, no. And some of them, they want to talk a lot, you know, and some of them just want to sing, take up all their minutes in singing, and some of them would want to sing some and talk some, and that was enjoyable, I remember that part of it. It was quite amusing when they would begin to leave that off, you know, and they begin to call leaders, we used to lead four at a time, on the floor, there’d be four of us on the floor, and we would march. At the end you sing after the first stanza, on the repeat or where the repeat is, and you exchanged places that way, and when you repeated it you changed and you marched, that’s what we used to call marching. ... We begin to have more company, more singers, we begin to run short of time, and I made the suggestion to use one song, sing one song, and one person, and if we got around, pick the leaders that’s the furthest off, let them sing twice. I made the suggestion to do that and they took it up, and then we went ahead with that, we sang one, we could sing a whole lot more leaders that way than we could

singing two or four, a lot more. And it worked out fine, and then the time come up, keeping time. You know, the older people, they taught four beats to the measure. There’s no books, no Sacred Harp books teaches four beats, they went back to Showalter’s and Gaines and all of them you know and the seven shapes, and that’s what they got the four beats, to teach the four beats, if you understand. But I always liked the two beats to the measure. But of course I went along with the crowd, I kept four for a long time.

Jerry: So when you learned to lead they were singing four beats?

Barrett: Singing four beats.

Jerry: Up on Lookout Mountain.

Barrett: On Lookout Mountain, yes sir. And we had one book at that time, and that was the Cooper book. It was the old Cooper book.

Jerry: I would never have guessed that.

Barrett: And I’ve got one of the books used back in those days, still got one of the books. And then the books began to change, you know, they come up White come out, you know.

Jerry: Did you switch to the White book then?

Barrett: No, we used both, we used both, the Cooper and White, we used both books. And then we used them two and James come out with one, then we kind of put the Cooper kind of on the back shelf, and took the James and the White,

“And I can remember when they call leaders, they didn’t have one song or two songs, they had fifteen minutes, twenty minutes, and some of the older ones would have thirty minutes, I can remember that.”

because James had a few new songs in it, but though we would sing some of the songs in all three of the books, we'd go back and sing some in the Cooper book, you know, but our main song would be in the James book and the White book. And then we used that 'til Denson's come out in 1936, and now Denson come out in 1936, then we dropped the James because they had the songs that was in the James, most all of them you know that wasn't in the Cooper and they put that in the Denson book. The first books that come out in the Denson book was 1936. And I come to this convention, it was held up here at New Hope, and there was some people there that had the book, I bought my first book there, at New Hope, of the Denson book. Give two dollars for it. [Laughs] ... And I remember very well the first convention that I visited other than our convention, the Lookout Mountain Convention, that's all I knowed, about ten, twelve year old, something like that. It was the North Alabama convention ... that's the first time I ever visited a convention. We had people that was, by that time I was singing a lot faster than most people, well any of our class sang faster, but not as fast as they do now, but anyway, and they had people there, a few, that they didn't like fast singing at all.

Jerry: They were four-beat people?

Barrett: They were four-beat people, they didn't like two beats to the measure. And there was an old gentleman there, he was a wonderful man, he was a foundation of the Sacred Harp music, he was real old at that time.

Jerry: Do you remember his name?

Barrett: It was Uncle Tommy Durham, Uncle Tommy Durham, and I went to that convention, and I was called on to sing.

Jerry: Did you get fifteen minutes?

Barrett: No, I just got one song, whenever we was. ... I sang 298, and I sang it fast, too. I sang the notes, and Uncle Tommy Durham, settin' over in the chair, he got up and he told me where I was headed to with that fast singing, he told me I was ruinin' the singing and so forth and so on. Of course, I was just a kid. I didn't say

a word. I could have, but I didn't. I respected him, because he was an old gentleman, and he had done so much for the Sacred Harp, but he wanted it done his way, if you understand. He wanted the singing to go, but he wanted to still stay like he wanted it, and he had a perfect right to feel that way if he wanted to, I didn't fault that with him like that at all.



Jerry: There are some [singsings] that really stand out. Liberty's a good one, and Lookout Mountain is always my favorite place to sing. The people there are such wonderful people, that there's a spirit there that you don't, I don't find at other singsings, and I, you know, I know a lot of people and I sing all over the country, and there's lots of wonderful singsings, but there's nothing that matches Lookout Mountain.



Barrett: We appreciate that. We appreciate you all very very much. It's something that's—there's two conventions, this convention here, the Henagar Convention, the Lookout Mountain Convention, we've been together so long, singing together so long, we're just like a family, we're just like kinfolk, we get along better than kinfolk. ... Because we love them, we loved them all their lives, sing with them all their lives, you know, so it don't matter. That's why I told you, the Henagar bunch and the Lookout Mountain bunch is so close because we been together so long. Well, the Woottens, you know, they're all up there, you know, around Ider, why, they're just the same way, yeah, they're the same way, just plain old country folks, love singing, they're good Christian people, it's wonderful. I like to be with people like that, I like to be with people like y'all. Y'all have done a lot for our convention.



Jerry: Did the old singsings sound different from the singsings today?

Barrett: Yes.

Jerry: They were probably slower. If they beat them in four.

Barrett: Yeah, it was—

Jerry: Pretty slow.

Barrett:—something like that. I always said they just dragged the bark off of it. ... And they had a singing in Gadsden every fifth Sunday. And after I got, oh, ten or twelve year old, I'd go down there every fifth Sunday. They used two beats. They shoved, I mean, they shoved it.

Jerry: You liked that.

Barrett: Everybody thought they just running away with it, but they wasn't, they were just, they don't, they didn't sing near as fast as we do, you know, for common here. They sang a lot faster than we did with two beats to the measure, I loved that, and I loved the speed. And I enjoyed that very very much.



Now we used to, we'd have a house full of listeners, you know, some standing at the windows and all, you know, because they loved to listen at it. At Pine Grove we had a class, I mean, the biggest class there was in the country, and we'd go to singing there, where we had a singing right there at the Pine Grove, we'd go singing about 9:30, and we'd sing til 3:30, and a lot of time wouldn't get around then, and that was the people that lived in the community and adjoining, in the surrounding communities, you see ... a way back in. ... People, they come there in two-horse wagons, mules and two-horse wagons, buggies and all that, you know, and they come there so long, when they turn out for lunch, why you couldn't hardly hear your ears for the mules braying, they knowed it was dinnertime, they'd bring a bundle of fodder and corn to feed them mules right there on the ground, they had to have their dinner just like we did. ... People talk about "dinner on the ground," you know? It was on the ground.

Jerry: It was right on the ground.

Barrett: Right down ... the womenfolk'd bring a sheet or tablecloth or whatever, most people had sheets, bedsheets. They spread that right down on the ground, and there's where the dinner was put, down on the ground. And then we got to where that we'd move the benches, out, you know, and put it on the benches, and then we finally built a table, a stationary table, so that was a dinner on the ground. We didn't have anything but well water, we had a well there.



We would go to the neighbors', round to the Olivers' and the Reeds' once in a while and sing, you know, like that, but we done the most of our singing at home, you know, that's me, I'm talking about my individual family. And we used to, the community there, well, let's say the Sacred Harp singers, during the bad weather we didn't go, we didn't have singings in the wintertime, because we didn't have no way of going in a two-horse wagon in bad weather, you couldn't do that, you know, and ride in real cold weather and snowy weather and all that, you know, to a singing. But we'd meet at somebody's house, they'd give a dinner, you know, and they'd fix dinner for all of us in the whole bunch, we'd go there and eat dinner...

Jerry: About how many people?

Barrett: Oh, Lord, I don't know, there'd be forty or fifty. Yeah, everybody's family, well, take your family, you know, everybody. ...

Jerry: How long would you sing then?

Barrett: Oh, well, we'd go and talk 'til dinner you know, enjoy all that, you know, howdy to everyone and everything, and we always had something to talk about, you know. We'd eat dinner, we'd sing a while, and then sometimes we'd change that. ... My daddy was a fiddler and I was a banjo-picker, and after dinner, I'd get the banjo and he'd get the fiddle, we'd have music that evening, and we'd have buck-dancing. ... And then we had what we called square dances. And I went to many, many of them. And it was a little aggravating, after I got to be a young man, why, I loved to dance, you know ...

Jerry: They'd make you play the banjo.

Barrett: ... music would be short and I'd have to [laughs] pick music, you know. I didn't like that much, but anyway, it was a great, we had a great time. ... The people back then, you know, the Primitive Baptists, if you danced, they might turn you out, if you ...

Jerry: Yeah, I was wondering about that.

Barrett: They might turn you out, you know.

Jerry: So how'd you get to do all this square dancing?

Barrett: Well, they got to where they slacked up on it, you know. Now this dancing they do now, you know, just two, you know, and all of them on the floor and everything, we didn't know nothing about that. All we knew was square dancing.

Jerry: Do you think that the sound of the singing was different, you know, you said the speed was different, they used to sing it a lot slower, but do you think it sounded any different than it does today, or...?

Barrett: Oh, yes. It sounded different.

Jerry: Can you ... I know it's hard to talk about how things sound different, but ...

Barrett: It's improved. You see, when I was first started singing we didn't have no altos.

Jerry: I never thought of that but you're right.

Barrett: Never had no altos. And that's ... ladies fine for a singing. And you know I can remember the first alto we had at Pine Grove at our convention. Now me and my mother, there's a song or two or three that we'd sing alto to before my voice changed. But that was all alto we had, we didn't have any other alto. Do you know the Scoggins twins? ... Now, they were just little old girls, and they come down there and they sang alto ...

Jerry: The Scoggins twins were the first ones to sing alto at Pine Grove.

Barrett: And they sang on a high key. Altos sing on a low key now, you know. But they sang it on a high key.

Jerry: They sang an octave a ...

Barrett: You know 137?

Jerry: Yeah, yeah, the one Virgil does.

Barrett: That high voice, that's the way the Scoggins girls sang it, it was all high like that. ... And they were the best, and they were just alike, I couldn't tell 'em apart. You know, I was, I don't know, I was, I'm older than they are, some, and I thought they was the cutest things. ... Uncle Lige, that's Leonard's daddy, he had the wonderfulest voice that you ever heard. It didn't get too high for him, just as clear as a bell, he'd go with them girls, he was their uncle. And he'd get them girls to sing alto, he'd sing it all day with them girls, and that's on the high pitch.

Jerry: Did he, he sung at that high octave where they were?

Barrett: High pitch, yes sir, right up there with them. I tell you we had some greatsingers. Voices, my Lord ... give you just a little idea: Terry Wootten's got one of the greatest voices. We had some even better'n he is. You know he's good.



Barrett: I had a wonderful life, I had a happy life, yes sure did. It was wonderful. Raised in a wonderful community, great community. Everybody loved one another. ... Well, it's, I don't, it's like I said a while ago, I don't mean to brag, it's something I'm proud of, something that I'll treasure as long as I know anything or as long as I live, whichever, I'll treasure because I was brought up in a great community. Great people. ■

Acknowledgements

This conversation was transcribed by Karen Freund and Jerry Enright. The recording and transcript are © 2003 Squirrel Hill Recordings. The Sacred Harp Museum has published a complete transcript of this conversation as a complement to this excerpt (<http://originalsacredharp.com/museum/barrett-ashley-on-life-and-sacred-harp-in-conversation-with-jerry-enright/>).

Note: Watch video recordings of Barrett Ashley leading "Happy Home" (p. 343 in *The Sacred Harp*) and "Columbiana" (p. 56t) on the *Sacred Harp Publishing Company Newsletter* website at <http://originalsacredharp.com/2014/05/12/a-happy-life-reflections-on-sacred-harp-singing-by-barrett-ashley/>.

Read the Old Paths

Our Debt to George Pullen Jackson,

Irving Wolfe, Nashville, Tennessee | Charlotte Wolfe, Ann Arbor, Michigan



Paine Denson leads during a session presented by Irving Wolfe at the 1948 Music Educators National Conference in Detroit, Michigan.

At the 1965 session of the United Sacred Harp Musical Association, held in Nashville, music educator Irving Wolfe delivered a speech on George Pullen Jackson's contributions to Sacred Harp. Jackson, whose series of books and articles published between 1926 and 1952 had inaugurated the scholarly study of Sacred Harp singing, had died in 1953. Wolfe's speech was part of a special "memorial session for Dr. Jackson," held on Sunday morning during the convention. His remarks were followed by comments from Ruth Denson Edwards and Jackson's daughter Mrs. Fitzgerald Parker and by singing, with A. M. Cagle leading "Wondrous Love" (p. 159 in *The Sacred Harp*) and his own "Blissful Dawning" (p. 550)¹ and W. B. Matthews leading "Evening Shade" (p. 209).

In his speech, Wolfe notes Jackson's key role in drawing attention to Sacred Harp singing by telling its story in print. Wolfe also describes how Jackson sought to convince Sacred Harp singers to alter their singing habits. Some of Jackson's recommendations, such as following the leader and observing rests, resonate with teachings at today's singing schools. Other recommendations, such as adapting volume to a song's content, remain uncommon at singings, but speak to Jackson's background musical background.

Wolfe's remarks made an impression on the Sacred Harp singers in attendance at the 1965 United convention. The compilers of the Georgia minutes book saw fit to reprint his speech, unabridged, in that year's compilation. In this issue of the *Newsletter*, we present a newly digitized and transcribed version of Wolfe's essay. We have also included a newly written remembrance of Wolfe offered by his daughter, Charlotte Wolfe, a member of the Ann Arbor, Michigan, Sacred Harp singing community. As a companion to this article, we have also published the complete minutes from the 1965 United convention as an online resource of the Sacred Harp Museum.

—Jesse P. Karlsberg

Irving Wolfe, a Daughter's Perspective

My father, Irving Wolfe, moved his family to Nashville in the summer of 1940 when he was appointed head of the Music Division at George Peabody College for Teachers. One of the first people he met in Nashville was George Pullen Jackson who took him to a Sacred Harp singing in Alabama. Dad recognized that Sacred Harp singing was a valuable folk tradition that should be preserved. As a specialist in music education, he was particularly interested in the Sacred Harp tradition as a wonderful example of grassroots music education in action, and he wanted his students to be exposed to this. He frequently took carloads of students to rural singings in Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia, and from the early forties he sponsored an all-day Sacred Harp singing at Peabody College every year nearly to the end of his life in 1977.

In 1948 my dad presented a program illustrating the evolution of a folk song at the Music Educators National



George Pullen Jackson leading at Liberty Church, Lawrence, Tennessee, 1942. Courtesy of the family of George Pullen Jackson.

Conference in Detroit, which consisted of a talk by Dr. Jackson, followed by Tennessee folksinger/composer Charlie Bryan singing three or four secular folk songs to his own accompaniment on Appalachian dulcimer, each folk song followed by a group of around fifty Sacred Harp singers led by Paine Denson singing the Sacred Harp tune based on the folk song. This was followed by the Peabody Madrigalians, a small vocal ensemble led by my father, singing a concert arrangement of the Sacred Harp tune. The session concluded with a general singing by the Sacred Harp singers presented to an enthusiastic audience of some 2,000 people. Some years later, Dad and Hugh McGraw presented a program on Sacred Harp at a conference of the American Choral Directors Association, which again met with an enthusiastic and interested response. And we frequently sang Sacred Harp at home, my parents, sister, brothers, and friends making a balanced group for an evening of singing.

—Charlotte Wolfe

Our Debt to George Pullen Jackson

My introduction to Sacred Harp singing was through George Pullen Jackson. Twenty-five years ago he took me to my first all-day singing at the courthouse in Huntsville. There I learned the joy of singing the old songs with the genuinely friendly singers so dedicated to the *Sacred Harp*. Dr. Jackson loved the people of the rural South because of their sturdy belief in religious freedom and their deep love for the fine old songs of Zion. At many singings I heard Dr. Jackson talk informally with the class about the history of Sacred Harp singing and the meaning and significance of keeping the tradition alive. His brief talks always helped the members of the class to feel a little prouder of their fine old book and the singings which they loved so much. So it is fitting that we reflect today, while we are here in Nashville, on our debt to Dr. Jackson. George Pullen Jackson was recognized as the foremost scholar of the origins, history, and significance of spiritual song in America. Six books and many learned articles by Dr. Jackson on this subject attest to the thoroughness of his scholarship in this area of knowledge. He was trained at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Dresden, Germany, took two degrees including his doctorate from the University of Chicago, did post graduate work there and at the universities of Munich and Bonn. He was professor of German in several institutions including Oberlin College, Northwestern University, University of North Dakota, and Vanderbilt University here in Nashville from 1918 until his retirement in 1943. He was emeritus professor at Vanderbilt University until his death January 19, 1953.

Dr. Jackson was an active leader in community musical affairs. A few of his contributions while living here will illustrate:

- Founder of Nashville Symphony Orchestra (1920) and later of Nashville Choral Club and Vanderbilt Singers.



George Pullen Jackson gives a speech at the unveiling of a monument to the Denson family, installed in front of the Winston County Courthouse to commemorate the centennial of the publication of *The Sacred Harp*, Double Springs, Alabama, Sunday, September 24, 1944. Courtesy of the family of George Pullen Jackson.

- Founder and honorary member of Tennessee Music Teachers Association.
- Organizer and Manager of Old Harp Singers of Nashville.
- Organizer of Tennessee State Sacred Harp Singing Association, 1939.
- President of Tennessee Folklore Society, 1942.
- President of Southeastern Folklore Society, 1946.
- Member of council, International Folk Music Council.

What has this great man, this renowned scholar, this active music leader, done for Sacred Harp singers: Two of his books in particular have told the Sacred Harp story. In *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands* (1933) he wrote “the story of the fasaola folk, their songs, singings, and ‘buckwheat notes.’” In his own words he described this book as a discussion of his work with early collections of spiritual folk-songs: “How and where I found them, what strange sorts of songs they contained, whence the unique notation in which the songs are recorded, who made, collected, and sang them, how, when and where they came into being,

and how and where their singing persists at present.”

Closing his Foreword to the book he wrote: “My greatest inspiration has come from the southern ‘country singers,’ scores of them, whom I have met at ‘singings’ and the bigger convention, people who seemed glad to let me sing, talk, and eat with them and become their friend.” What a friend he has been to us, and will continue to be as long as this book is read: (I understand it has been reissued recently as a paper back, which I hope many of you will read.) A dozen years later, in 1944 on the centennial of the original publication of the *Sacred Harp*, he wrote *The Story of the Sacred Harp*—its footings in the Old Baptist music, how it came to be, its growth through various editions, an analysis of common criticisms, and the new interest in Sacred Harp tunes shown by their use by recognized twentieth century composers. Through these two books George Pullen Jackson has helped the English speaking peoples throughout the world to know about Sacred Harp as a vital part of America’s musical heritage, as “a vigorously living book,” as an American institution.

One additional incident will help us to recall the dynamic influence of Dr. Jackson. Taking advantage of the rare occasion when in the early forties the twenty-ninth day of February fell on Sunday making a fifth Sunday in February, he suggested that Sacred Harpers meet together for a special “school” to consider ways of singing more effectively. With the cooperation of several leaders the session was set up in the court house at Cullman, Alabama. Dr. Jackson and I spent the previous night in the home of Ruth Denson Edwards. I remember very clearly the points which he thought should be stressed in order to bring all Sacred Harp singing up to the best that he had heard.

- Singers should not try to sing higher than they can sing easily.
- We tend to sing all songs in a rapid tempo, whereas tempo should be according to the nature of the song.
- In some classes the singing is always loud, no matter what the words are about.
- We need to watch the leaders and stay with him exactly. Too often singers around the square try to set the speed, making for a ragged pulse.
- We should allow time for the rests, not come in ahead of them.

Such was Dr. Jackson’s spirit toward Sacred Harp. He lauded its virtues and strengths to the whole world; at the same time he worked for greater effectiveness. So as long as Sacred Harp songs and voices are lifted up in praise we shall be indebted to him. ■

—Irving Wolfe

Sunday, September 12, 1965
Nashville Convention of the United Sacred Harp [Musical] Association

Footnotes

1. The minutes of the 1965 United convention record Cagle as having led the song on page 570. “Blissful Dawning” appeared on this page in A. M. Cagle, et al., eds., *Original Sacred Harp: 1960 Supplement* (Cullman, AL: Sacred Harp Publishing Company, 1960).

Read the Old Paths

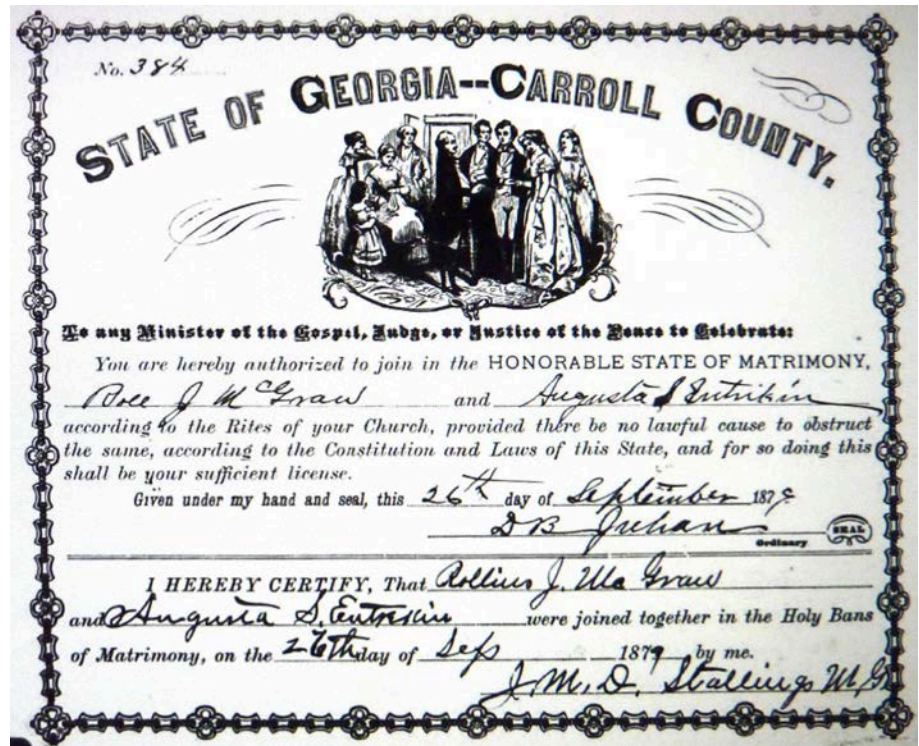
In the Footsteps of Lee Andrew McGraw

Rebecca Over | Ash Vale, United Kingdom

It was a warm, sunny afternoon in early summer 2009. Sitting in the garden with my brand new copy of *The Sacred Harp* I was following the advice in the rudiments to open the book at random and say the shapes to practice the rhythm. My book fell open at page 562, Tom McGraw's "Infinite Delight." I found the song delightful, and my love for the music of this family with such strong ties to Sacred Harp singing was born. Keen to know more in those days before the publication of David Warren Steel's *The Makers of The Sacred Harp* I wrote to Hugh McGraw, receiving an encouraging note from him and Charlene Wallace in reply. So began my on-going research into the McGraw family history. As my work progressed, I became increasingly interested in some lesser known members of the McGraw family in particular Tom McGraw's eldest brother Lee Andrew "L. A." McGraw, composer of "New Bethel" (p. 395 in *The Sacred Harp*). Though less well known than that of his younger brothers Tom and Henry Newton "Bud" McGraw, the story of Lee and his family can teach us something about the part that Sacred Harp singing played in the lives of the individuals who collectively make up the tale of our tradition's history.

Thursday October 7, 1858, was the most significant date in the history of the pre-singing generation of McGraws. On that day in Coweta County, Georgia, Ephraim Wesley McGraw, aged twenty-four, married twenty-five-year-old Jemima Adeline Kilgore. On the same day, in the same county, Thomas Neal Entrekin, aged eighteen, was married to twenty-five-year-old Harriett Henrietta Cannon by a different Justice of the Peace.

Both men were farmers with young families at the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861. Ephraim and Jemima's eldest



Marriage license of Roland Jackson McGraw and Augusta Ann Savannah Entrekin, 1879.

child, Roland Jackson McGraw, born on July 5, 1859, was almost two, and the Entrekins' eldest barely one. Both fathers enlisted to serve in the Confederate States Army and both survived the war. Thomas Neal was furloughed home unfit for further service in 1863 after contracting fever in Pennsylvania and being hospitalized in Virginia. He remained chronically sick with Bright's disease for the rest of his life. Roland's wife Harriett was a strong willed lady. Her family remembered that whatever she was doing she was the boss. She took on much of the responsibility for running their small homestead as well as bringing up their six children. She was the role model for their third child and eldest daughter Augusta Ann Savannah Entrekin, born on July 20, 1864.

On September 26, 1879 in Carroll

County, Georgia, Roland Jackson McGraw married Augusta Ann Savannah Entrekin in a ceremony conducted by Minister J. M. D. Stallings. Roland was twenty-one and Augusta fifteen.

Both Roland and Augusta were avid Sacred Harp singers. The Entrekins in particular were a prominent singing family. Augusta's eldest brother George and younger brother Jones became leading singers of their generation.

Augusta too became a dedicated Sacred Harp singer. She sang treble, the first in a long line of McGraw treble singers that has continued to this day. She knew the whole book from memory and sat on the treble front bench, often wearing a white dress. A family story tells that Sacred Harp composer Marcus ("A. M.") Cagle went to a singing and



Lee Andrew McGraw and Louisa Idenia Nix McGraw. Photograph courtesy of Darrell McGraw.

noticed that Augusta went the whole morning without once opening her book. Marcus sat next to Augusta in the treble section after lunch to see what she was doing. He was astonished to watch her singing—her book still closed—without missing a single note or word.

Roland and Augusta's first child, George, died in infancy. He lies in an unmarked grave in the cemetery at Macedonia Primitive Baptist Church in Haralson County, Georgia, not far from the grave of Silas Mercer Brown. [See Rebecca Over's 2013 article "In Search of Silas Mercer Brown" for more information.—Ed.]

Their second child, Lee Andrew McGraw, was born on March 4, 1882 in Bremen, Haralson County. At seven, Lee, likely joined his younger brother Henry Newton and sisters Mattie Mae and Roxie in travelling with their parents to the August 1889 session of the Chattahoochee Convention, held at Standing Rock Church in Coweta County. Roland, then thirty and Augusta, twenty-four, joined the convention that year and are listed in the Membership Book as "McGraw R.

J." and "Augusta Entrekin (Mrs R. J)." Neither Roland nor Augusta led music at the Chattahoochee Convention that year. I have found no mentions at all of Roland as a leader at Sacred Harp singings.

In her "Introduction and History" prefacing the 1971 edition of the *Original Sacred Harp*, Ruth Denson Edwards notes that Lee's brothers Henry Newton ("Bud") and Thomas Buford ("Tom") McGraw were both taught by famed Sacred Harp singing school teacher Thomas Jackson Denson. Lee and the other McGraw siblings would probably have attended the same singing schools. [For more on Denson's impact on Sacred Harp singing, see "Uncle Tom Denson's Last Lesson" and "Letters of Condolence after the Death of Thomas Jackson Denson," both published in the Newsletter in 2013.—Ed.]

At the time of the 1900 census, Roland and Augusta were living in the Turkey Creek District of Carroll County—the area of present day Mount Zion. Eighteen-year-old Lee lived with them and worked as a laborer on their rented farm. The family remained in Georgia until 1902 when Roland began a series of travels with Augusta and their eleven children, moving between Georgia and Alabama in search of better land for farming. They headed first for Cullman County, Alabama, a hotbed of Sacred Harp singing where they remained for about a year.

It was there that Lee married Louisa Idenia ("Lou") Nix. Lou was born in Carroll County, Georgia, on October 12, 1881, but had lived in Cullman County since at least 1900. Her family had evidently made the same journey as Roland and Augusta's when the Nix family moved to Cullman County. Lee and Lou married in Jones Chapel, Cullman County, on Christmas Day in 1902. He was twenty and Lou twenty-one.

The young couple soon traveled with Roland and Augusta to Lauderdale County in the northwest corner of Alabama and decided to settle there, where the land remains good for farming to this day. Roland died at the early age of fifty on June 30, 1910, and was buried

in Anderson Cemetery.

Lee was an active singer and leader by the early 1900s. Earl Thurman's history of the Chattahoochee Convention tells us that Lee was a "leading promoter" of the Tennessee River Convention, which was organized at Shelter Primitive Baptist Church, Anderson, Alabama in 1907.¹ Lee was twenty-five in that year.

In the 1910 census, Lee was recorded as a "general farmer" on rented land in Lauderdale County with Lou working on the farm as well as raising two young children, Hulon and Aubrey. Lee and Lou showed their high regard for the Denson family by giving their eldest son Hulon the middle name Denson.

Lee was a dedicated and successful farmer. By 1920, at the age of thirty-eight, he and his family were farming land that he owned. Hulon and Aubrey worked on the farm, seven-year-old son Curtis attended school and youngest son Edgar Leon was two years old. Lee himself was the census enumerator for Mitchell Beat No. 1 in Lauderdale County and recorded his own family as living on County Line Road, which lies east of and runs parallel to part of Highway 207 just north of Mitchell Cemetery.

It is not possible to pinpoint exactly where on County Line Road Lee's home was, but his enumeration duties would have taken him the entire length of it. On March 20, 2013 I drove the whole of it myself, enjoying being able to follow and photograph the same route that Lee had traveled all those years before.

Lee was census enumerator again in 1930, by which time he and Lou's last child, Mildred Magdalene, was six years old. His handwriting is shown on this extract from the census form. Twelve-year-old Edgar Leon was attending school.

Lee served as a member of the Music Committee for the 1936 edition of our songbook together with younger brothers Bud and Tom. He contributed two songs, both major fusing tunes dated 1935, to that edition. "Entrekin," named for Augusta's family (then on p. 284 in *Original Sacred Harp: Denson Revision*), was removed in 1991. Lee's

“New Bethel” (p. 395) remains in our current 1991 edition of *The Sacred Harp*.

In 1940, Lee and his family were still in Mitchell but now living on Middle Road. He and Lou lived with their daughter Mildred, son Curtis and daughter-in-law Lila. Lee owned the farm, valued at \$5,000. By then, his son Aubrey had married his wife, Annie, and had a son named James Earl. Aubrey rented his farm at a cost of \$8 per month. It is possible that Aubrey rented this portion of land from his father. Lee, recorded in the census as both a farmer and a cotton-ginner, no longer undertook enumeration duties.

The next record of where Lee may have been living is in 1944, when he attended the Sacred Harp Centennial Celebration, which ran from Monday, September 18, to Sunday, September 24, in Double Springs, Winston County, Alabama. The minutes from the celebration contain conflicting information. When Lee led music on the Sunday he was recorded in the body of the minutes as “L. A. McGraw, Anderson, Ala.,” but in the roll of “Visiting Singers And Others Who Attended,” he is listed as “McGraw, L. A., Minor Hill, Tennessee.” Minor Hill is north of Anderson on Highway 207 with its city limit on the Tennessee state line.

Lee and his brothers Bud and Tom would often lead each other’s songs at singings. At the Centennial Celebration, he chose to sing Bud’s “Sabbath Morning” (p. 283), Tom’s “Georgia” (p. 197) and his own song “Entrekin” (then on p. 284).

In 1952 Earl Thurman refers to “Lee A. McGraw, Minor Hill, Tennessee” but notes that he was “not personally acquainted” with him. Genealogist Darrell McGraw also mentions Lee living in Minor Hill, telling us that he “worked as a farmer, carpenter, brick mason, Clerk of the Anderson Gin Company, sub rural mail carrier, then rural mail carrier” and that adds that he was a member of Bethel Missionary Baptist Church, located on the corner of Highways 207 and 64.²

Powell, too small even to appear on



County Line Road, Lauderdale County, Alabama, March 20, 2013.
Photograph by Rebecca Over.

my detailed atlas of Alabama, lies on Highway 64 between Bethel Baptist Church at the corner of the 207 and the community of Grassy further along the highway driving west. The only way to know you are there is by the sign at the Powell Church of Christ. On March 19, 2013, while visiting Roland Jackson’s grave at Anderson Cemetery, I met a man in search of another grave. We got talking and when I said who I was looking for he told me that when he was a small child his family were neighbors of Lee. I would guess from the man’s age that this may have been some time in the early 1950s. He told me that Lee grew corn and was a quiet man—“like most folks it took a lot to get anything out of him”—but when they saw him loading up his car he often said he and his family were going to a singing. He knew that Lee sang regularly in the local churches in and around Anderson and also in Tennessee. He told me that at that time, Lee and his family lived in a community called Powell. Their house had burned down since then and he could not remember the exact location, but he described where Powell was in

sufficient detail that I was able to find it later that afternoon.

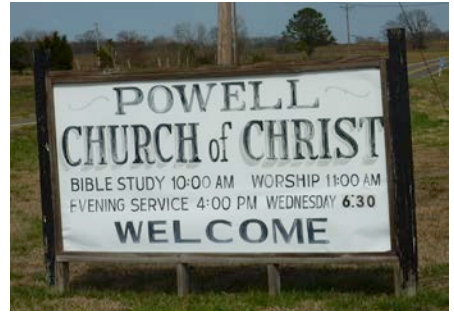
After spending a while taking pictures I drove on to take a look at Grassy, feeling truly grateful for my chance encounter with that man at the cemetery. Thanks to him I was almost certainly driving on a road along which Lee and his family must have traveled many times between their home and all those singings.

The earliest record I have found of Lee as a leader is at the Tennessee River Convention at Goodhope Schoolhouse (state not recorded) in 1924, by which time he was clearly a highly respected singer and leader at the age of forty-two. At this the Eighteenth Annual Session, which began on the Friday before the second Sunday in August, he was elected vice-president and member of the arranging committee. He sang for twenty-five minutes during the Memorial Lesson, which he conducted together with W. S. Hand, who also sang for twenty-five minutes. He remained a member and officer of this convention, which held sessions at various churches in the Tennessee River areas of Alabama

Left: Lee Andrew McGraw, tending to his corn. Photograph courtesy of Darrell McGraw.

Right: Powell Church of Christ. Photograph by Rebecca Over, March 19, 2013.

Bottom: Extract from the 1930 census form filled out by Lee Andrew McGraw, then census enumerator for Mitchell Beat No. 1. The "O" indicates that Lee owned his farm. Photograph by Rebecca Over, March 19, 2013.



NAME	RELATIONSHIP	AGE	SEX	EDUCATION
McGraw Lee A	Head	40	M	W 48
— Louisa J	Wife	48	F	W 48
— Aubrey L	Son	23	M	W 23
— Curtis E	Son	17	M	W 17
— Edgar L	Son	12	M	W 12
— Mildred M	Daughter	6	F	W 6

and Tennessee, throughout the rest of his life. He served as Chairman in 1956, the year before he died.

Lee sang mostly in northwest Alabama, parts of Tennessee adjoining Alabama, and in the area of Alabama around Cullman County. In Tennessee he sang regularly at Odem's Chapel in St. Joseph and was often an officer there. This was a very active area for singing. In 1950 one could have sung at the Tennessee River Convention, held that year at Anderson Creek Church, from Friday, August 11, through Sunday, August 13, followed by a whole week of singing at Odem's Chapel from Monday, August 14, through Sunday, August 20. Lee was vice chairman at Tennessee River that year and sang at Odem's Chapel.

In some years, Lee and family also traveled to Carroll County, Georgia, to sing at the Mount Zion Memorial Convention, where he served as chairman in 1926, vice-chairman in

1929, and member of the Memorial Committee in 1932. A particularly notable year at Mount Zion was 1934. On Saturday morning, July 21, one day after celebrating her seventieth birthday, Augusta led music. This is the only record we have of her as a leader. The minutes appeared in a local newspaper, from which we know that Lee led three songs, but there is also a manuscript record in the hand of secretary Faris F. Tant.

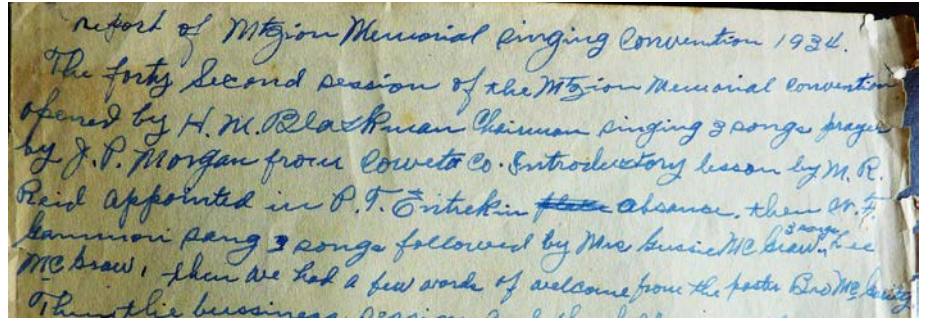
Augusta died on September 11, 1940 and rests with some of her grandchildren in the cemetery at Mount Zion United Methodist Church, home of the Mount Zion Memorial Singing.

Lee led music at Mount Zion again in 1935, 1941 (Leon also sang there that year), and 1946. When he sang at the 1949 session his son Aubrey and nephew Albert Jackson McGraw also led music there.

The last record of Lee leading music at Mount Zion is at the sixty-third

session in July, 1955. Lou had passed away earlier that year on March 11, at the age of seventy-three, after being at least a couple of years of illness. I have found no mention of Lou McGraw leading music but she was certainly a lover of Sacred Harp. Hugh McGraw remembers traveling with the Georgia McGraws to sing in Alabama and Tennessee a year or two before she died. They stayed at Lee's home and sang for Lou, who was sick and unable to leave her bed. At the time of her death she and Lee had been married for a little over fifty-two years.

Lee and Lou had six children. Eldest son Hulon Denson McGraw (1903–1970) enumerated "Anderson Village" for the 1930 census and served as postmaster of Anderson Post Office from June 15, 1945, until his death in 1970. He is buried at Mitchell Cemetery. Second son Aubrey Lee McGraw (1906–1972) appears to have sung for at least part of his life. I have found no evidence of their third child Curtis Eugene McGraw



(1912–1993) being involved with Sacred Harp. Fourth child Cecil Clay McGraw (1914–1915) died in infancy and was buried near Roland in Anderson Cemetery. Fifth child Edgar Leon McGraw (1917–1987) shared his father’s love of the land. He was a specialist in vocational agriculture at Auburn University and composed “Odem” (p. 295), a major plain tune named for his father’s good friend Lonnie Odem. He is buried at Auburn Memorial Park. Sixth child Mildred Magdalene Middlebrooks (1923–2004) held stock in the Sacred Harp Publishing Company.

Mildred and her husband Ronald Middlebrooks are buried at Bethel Baptist Church. Aubrey Lee and his wife Annie also rest there with their son James Earl McGraw.

It was at Bethel Baptist Church, on June 30, 1956, that Lee, now seventy-four, married his second wife, seventy-two-year-old Ida Bertha Hardman. Daughter of Civil War soldier Francis Marion Nix

and his second wife Nancy Elizabeth Duke, Ida was born in Carroll County, Georgia, on January 16, 1884. She was a half sister of Lou’s father, David Olean Nix, and hence “half aunt” of Lou. It was her branch of the Nix family that were keen singers, particularly her oldest brother Welcome Duke Nix and her youngest brother Robert Newton (“Newt”) Nix.

Ida was also a cousin of composer Alfred Marcus Cagle. Ida’s mother, Nancy Elizabeth Duke Nix, was an older sister of Samaria Mamie Duke who married Jesse Martin Cagle. Samaria and Jesse were the parents of Alfred Marcus.

In January, 1912, in Cullman County, Alabama, Ida married Henry Thompson Hudson. Although she was probably an avid singer I have found no mention of her leading music as a Hudson. She may have been too busy bringing up their seven children. I have not found Henry mentioned either but his younger brother Marcus appears in minutes as a leader.

Left: Augusta “Granny Gussie” McGraw with Lee (left), Bud (kneeling), and Tom (right), ca. 1934. Photograph courtesy of Charlene Wallace.

Top: “Report of Mt Zion Memorial Singing Convention 1934.”

“The Forty Second session of the Mt Zion Memorial Convention opened by H. M. Blackmon Chairman singing 3 songs. Prayer by J. P. Morgan from Coweta Co. Introductory lesson by M. R. Reid appointed in P. T. Entekin absence. Then W. F. Gammon sang 3 songs followed by Mrs. Gussie McGraw 3 songs, Lee McGraw, then we had a few words of welcome from the pastor Bro. McGarrity.”

Bottom left: Bethel Baptist Church. Photograph by Rebecca Over, March 19, 2013.

Bottom right: The McGraw family graves at Bethel Baptist Church lie beneath a large and beautiful Bradford Pear tree with the Middlebrooks’ plot a few rows behind. Photograph by Rebecca Over, March 19, 2013.

Henry died in 1938 and in the 1940 census Ida (then fifty-six) is recorded living with children Duke (twenty-nine), Edward (twenty) and twins Aubrey and Audrey (both eighteen) on a farm in Jones Chapel, Cullman County, Alabama, for which the family paid rent of \$4 per month. In 1947 Ida married singer William Henry (“Uncle Bill”) Hardman, whom she had met at a singing. She went to live with him in Atlanta, where they are recorded in the 1948 City Directory living at 464 Ashby Grove SW. Uncle Bill Hardman was a dedicated Sacred Harp singer, frequently traveling to singings in Alabama and Tennessee as well as parts of Georgia. He was a regular supporter of the Mount Zion Memorial Singing, where he sang at various sessions between 1932 and 1948.

Ida led music and attended some of the same singings as Lee. After not much longer than two years of marriage, Uncle Bill died, at the age of eighty-two, two days before Christmas of 1949. By this time he and Ida were living at 211 Arnold Street West in Cullman, Alabama, but he was buried with his first wife Mamie at Westview Cemetery in Atlanta. After her marriage to Lee, Ida began to lead much more often at singings. It seems that he inspired and encouraged her to do so. Lee retired from farming and went to live with Ida at her home in Cullman. The final record I found of Lee as a leader was at the New Hope (Joe Myers) Singing in Alabama at the end of October, 1956. Sadly he and Ida had been married for less than a year when Lee Andrew McGraw died in Cullman on Ida’s seventy-third birthday, January 16, 1957. He was buried with Lou at Mitchell Cemetery on Highway 207 north of Anderson. In August, 2013, the field next to the cemetery was, appropriately, full of ripening corn.

After Lee’s death, Ida continued to lead music and she is listed as a “contributor” to 1960 edition of *Original Sacred Harp* on the songbook’s title page.

Her inclusion may indicate that she gave the book’s music committee a copy

of Lee’s song, “Liberty Grove,” (then on p. 516) which first appeared in that edition dated 1959 (two years after it’s composer’s death). This major fudging tune was removed from *The Sacred Harp* in 1991.

Ida was particularly active as a leader in 1961. During that year she is recorded leading at nineteen singings in various parts of Alabama. At the sixteen singings that recorded song numbers, she led twenty-six different songs. She sang “Wondrous Love” (p. 159) and “Sharon” (p. 212) three times and led four songs twice (“Stratfield,” p. 142; “Georgia,” p. 197; “Calvary,” p. 300; and “Heavenly Dove,” p. 371). She led an additional twenty songs just a single time that year.

On Friday March 15, 2013, I visited New Hope No. 1 Cemetery opposite New Hope Church at Jones Chapel in Cullman County, Alabama, in search of the grave of David Olean Nix, father of Lou McGraw. After finding the small flat marker relatively easily I was looking around the cemetery when two custodians of the cemetery arrived. When I mentioned the names Nix and McGraw one of the men identified himself as a descendant of Henry Hudson.

At this time I knew nothing of Ida’s husbands before Lee, though I was quite familiar with the seventeenth-century English sea explorer! Imagine my surprise and delight then, when the man showed me Henry T. Hudson’s grave and explained that Ida B. Hudson, his wife, was none other than “our” Ida McGraw.

He told me that when he was a very small child he had known Lee and Ida. Though he could remember very little about them he could recall that all the family greatly respected “Mr. McGraw” and that Ida had really loved him. The man said that he was not a singer and had never been to the annual singing at New Hope (neither had the other man with him) but as a child he had been aware that both Lee and Ida loved Sacred Harp. Were it not for that chance meeting I would never have known that Ida was buried at this cemetery or that Henry Hudson had been her first husband.

Ida lived in the house that she had shared with Lee in Cullman until she died. In the back of the *Minutes of Carroll, Cobb, Coweta, Douglas, Fulton, Haralson, Heard, Paulding, and Polk Counties, Georgia* for 1963, she was listed as “McGraw, Mrs Ida, 211 Arnold St. W, Cullman, Alabama.” Buell Cobb told me that this would have been an easily walkable distance from where Ruth Denson Edwards lived at the time.

Ida passed away in Cullman on November 29, 1964, at the age of eighty. I feel pleased to have made the acquaintance of this remarkable lady in some small way and only regret that I have been unable to find a photograph of her. Through tracing the footsteps of Lee Andrew McGraw, and encountering the stories of other devoted Sacred Harp singers such as Ida McGraw along the way, I feel as though I have got to know these people—though separated from them by time and the veil of death. The details of their lives, and the connections among them, help us to appreciate the way in which singing from *The Sacred Harp* draws us all into this very special world that we understand as a community and as a family. ■

Acknowledgements

My heartfelt gratitude and thanks go to Hugh McGraw, Charlene Wallace, Charles Woods, Earlis McGraw, Judy Henry and all the present day McGraw family singers for their continuing generosity and help. I also thank genealogist Darrell McGraw, whose website inspired me to look into the McGraw and other family histories, and to all others who assisted in any way.

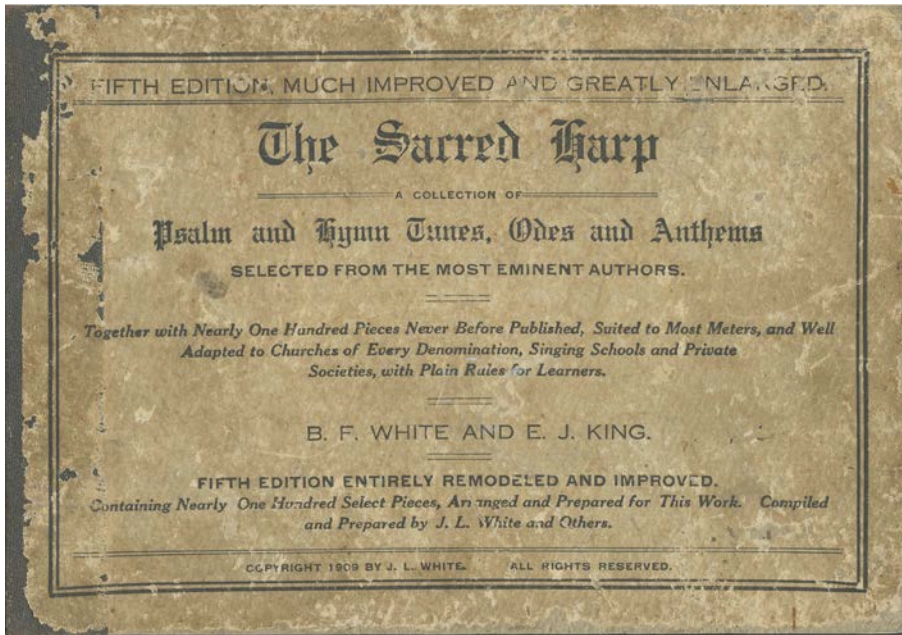
Footnotes

1. See Earl Thurman, “*The Chattahoochee Musical Convention, 1852–1952*,” in *The Chattahoochee Musical Convention, 1852–2002: A Sacred Harp Historical Sourcebook*, ed. Kiri Miller (Bremen, GA: The Sacred Harp Museum, 2002), 29–120.
2. Darrell McGraw, “Chambers Family Heritage,” accessed April 19, 2014, <http://www.chambersheritage.com/pafg558.htm>.

Sacred Harp Museum

Making the Sacred Harp Museum Accessible: A Newly Donated and Digitized 1909 White Book

Nathan Rees | Knoxville, Tennessee



Cover page of J. L. White's 1909 *The Sacred Harp*: Fifth Edition, donated to the Sacred Harp Museum by Charles Whitmer.

THE Sacred Harp Museum is thrilled to announce a new addition to the collection which will help us further our goal of preserving Sacred Harp heritage while making it as accessible as possible to the singing public. We express sincere thanks to Charles Whitmer of Conroe, Texas, for his generosity in donating a 1909 *Sacred Harp*, Fifth Edition, the first of J. L. White's three different attempts at revising the *Sacred Harp* between 1909 and 1911. The book is a rarity in part because it was rejected by most Sacred Harp singers, who felt that White's modernized harmonies and added gospel music ventured too far from tradition. While a contingent of singers continues to use his moderated 1911 revision, the 1909 "White book" never found sustained use at conventions. For further reading about the competing revisions of the *Sacred Harp* in the early twentieth century, see Buell Cobb's *The Sacred Harp: A Tradition and its Music*.

We are especially excited that Charles' donation will help us launch a new initiative to make our collections more accessible. The expansion of Sacred Harp singing well beyond its traditional borders has created a worldwide audience for our collections—while anyone is welcome to visit the Museum in Carrollton, Georgia, we recognize that this is not feasible for many singers. Along with the hard copy of the book, Charles also provided us with a digital version which we're making available online to anyone who is interested (access the book at <http://originalsacredharp.com/museum/jl-white-1909-sacred-harp/>). We look forward to making more of our collections accessible online, and welcome any suggestions of material that would be of interest, as well as books or other materials that you may wish to donate.

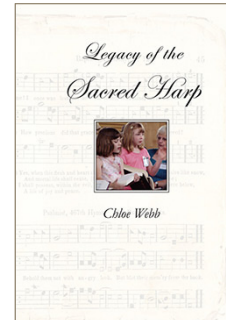
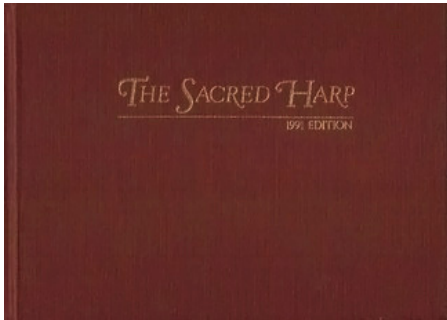
Charles Whitmer left the following comment on the *Sacred Harp Publishing Newsletter* website:

Thank you very much for your gracious message and I'm delighted that you are making the scanned pages available to others. Many thanks also to Robert Vaughn for his suggestion for me to donate it to the museum. I've been to the museum before and am happy that this rare revision will find a new home there.

This book was given to me by an elderly couple (non-singers) whom I knew decades ago via the folk music world as they knew I sang Sacred Harp and they happened to come across this book somewhere at a sale in East Texas back in the early 1990s. ■

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

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