

## INTRODUCTION

In his best-selling book, *Stars Fell on Alabama*, Carl Carmer described an early 1930s Sacred Harp singing in north Alabama:

The church was full now. People stood along the walls and the doorway was packed. Crowds were huddled outside each window singing lustily. ... there were surely more than two thousand people... Hard blows of sound beat upon the walls and rafters with inexorable regularity. All in a moment the constant beat took hold. There was a swift crescendo. Muscles were tensing, eyes brightening.

Such singings were common throughout the Deep South in the 1930's, but Alabama was then, and is now, the cultural and geographical "heart" of this venerable tradition. For the past 23 years, hundreds of Sacred Harp singers, from Alabama and several dozen other states and a handful of foreign countries, have gathered in Birmingham, in June, for the National Sacred Harp Convention. For many, from outside Alabama, this annual gathering is a pilgrimage to the "mecca" of Sacred Harp Singing. For three days, hundreds of song leaders come to the center of the "hollow square" to sing the notes.

This recording of the 2002 National Sacred Harp Convention provides compelling testimony of the continued vitality of this sturdy and durable vocal tradition.

Henry Willett  
Director  
Alabama Center for Traditional Culture  
2003

## National Sacred Harp Convention

23rd Session ~ June 13-15, 2002

Trinity United Methodist Church, Birmingham, Alabama

Recorded June 14, 2002, by Steve Grauberger

Photos by Steve Grauberger

Program notes by John Bealle

In June of each year, on the Thursday, Friday, and Saturday that precede the third Sunday of the month, singers from around the nation and across the oceans gather in Birmingham, Alabama, for three days of vigorous singing from the shape note tunebook, *The Sacred Harp*. The occasion that brings them together is the National Sacred Harp Singing Convention, an event that draws from a deep-rooted tradition of public congregational singing. This recording of the 23rd session of the National Sacred Harp Singing Convention celebrates this important event.

Sacred Harp singing has a long and storied history, and the notion of a "national" gathering surely commands our attention. Ironically, the event is of relatively recent origin. The convention was founded in 1980 by Hugh McGraw and others in response to a burgeoning interest in Sacred Harp singing and was intended as a gathering for all singers. In recent years, under the chairmanship of Buell Cobb, it has accumulated a loyal and enthusiastic following and has become one of the most highly regarded Sacred Harp conventions.

Once established, the National Convention took on characteristics unlike other singings. It has fulfilled its promise as an event of uncommon significance, assuring a strong "class" of singers each year. But its most enduring trait has been its unparalleled diversity, each year attracting a strong contingent of singers from Alabama and from traditional areas in the South, pockets of singers from across the country and from other nations, and a loyal following of Birmingham-area singers and listeners.

### SINGING CONVENTIONS

The roots of the National Convention lie in the development of Sacred Harp singing conventions and, before that, the colonial-era "singing school" movement of New England. Singing schools were public events founded with the purpose of teaching note-reading and thereby improving music in the churches. These were truly public events in the sense that they often had no institutional sponsorship, but depended for their success on whatever audience the singing masters could attract. When shape note tunebooks were devised around 1800 and the singing school movement trudged south

and west with the European settlers, their success depended as much as ever on the tireless energies of their promoters. The clever device of printing shaped note heads to represent the scale helped countless numbers of Americans learn to sing, but it could not secure a future for the books or their compilers. Indeed, the vast majority of shape note tunebooks eventually ceased their active use with the death or inactivity of their compilers.



***Frontbench tenors at the 2002 National Convention***

It is a well-known circumstance that *The Sacred Harp* (1844) surpassed its contemporaries in longevity and influence. Much of this success can be attributed to its compilers, B. F. White and E. J. King. In their book, White and King incorporated selections from the popular “core repertory” of familiar tunes that circulated in other tunebooks. But they also solicited new compositions from fellow-Georgians, who thereby took a personal stake in the book’s future. Moreover, White, of Hamilton, Georgia, introduced important institutions that helped secure a brighter future for the book. To assure that his book would outlive him, White established a “revision committee” to oversee the reprinting and revising of the book. And, of most importance here, he established an annual singing convention, the Southern Musical Convention, with a small cadre of elected officers and with a skeletal bureaucracy through which the organizational machinery of the convention could pass from year to year. In this respect, all conventions, including the National, are no different from the Southern Musical

Convention and other nineteenth century predecessors. Like the singing schools and conventions of yesteryear, they depend for their existence on an invited presence, and thereby on the complex mixture of loyalty, anticipated pleasure, and spiritual striving that draws singers from great distances.

Readers unfamiliar with Sacred Harp tradition might be surprised that something called a "National Convention" could be no more than this. There is a small contingent of organizers to arrange for the facilities, and a large body of supporters compelled by duty, loyalty, religious devotion, love for singing, and a shared sense of the significance of the event. The event is genuinely a "national" event, though only in the sense of shared purpose that brings singers together from great distances.

## **ORIGINS OF THE NATIONAL CONVENTION**

According to Hugh McGraw, the idea to hold the convention was suggested to him by Maxine Aaron, a blind singer and member of the Denson family of singers, whose devotion and contributions to Sacred Harp singing were a steadfast inspiration to him and others. Her intent was to establish a venue where everyone could come together to sing.

There was never any question that the event would be held in Alabama, then the geographic center of the major singing populations. William J. Reynolds had put Hugh McGraw in contact with Samford University, a Baptist university in the Birmingham community of Homewood. During the years preceding the convention, McGraw gave several workshops at the university, nurturing university officials' interests in Sacred Harp. Notably, Claude H. Rhea, Dean of the School of Music at Samford, and Gene Black, Associate Dean, took a keen interest in the music. They offered to host the convention at the university in the auditorium of the Wright Fine Arts Center and took on many of the logistical burdens of the event. This arrangement was appealing to singers for many reasons, among them the legacy of support of Sacred Harp singing by Baptist churches through the years. School officials publicized the event with the local media, and Hugh McGraw and other singers sent invitations to Sacred Harp enthusiasts across the nation.

Although many contributed to the founding of the convention, Hugh McGraw was surely the enabling presence. A member of a prominent west-Georgia Sacred Harp family, McGraw had embraced Sacred Harp singing in the early 1950s. In 1958 he was appointed an officer of the Sacred Harp Publishing Company, an affiliation he maintained, mostly as executive secretary, through the end of the century. In 1959 he was among the six members of the revision committee for the 1960 edition of *The Sacred Harp*; of these, he alone represented the younger generation who would carry the tradition through the post-WWII decades. These were decades of great change in Sacred Harp tradition, and McGraw was preeminent among those whom circumstance put in the forefront of the transition.

As executive secretary of the Publishing Company, McGraw had been receiving correspondence and book orders from nationwide and even international addresses. He and others had been dispatched to faraway cities to teach singing schools and help start singing groups. This brought newfound energy and enthusiasm to Sacred Harp singing, but also an alarming diversity of interests. It was this new and diverse population of singers that the postwar generation of singers so expertly brought into the realm of tradition. A national convention would be an explicit recognition of this new feeling, a celebration of something about singing tradition that had not been clearly articulated before. Thus the formative spirit of the convention, spurred in part by the influx of new singers, was this newfound sense of fellowship and common purpose among all “fasola” singers.

Yet one wonders why — in the near century-and-a-half of singing from *The Sacred Harp* that preceded this event, even through periods considered vastly superior in magnificence and popularity of fasola singing — no national convention had been attempted before. The Southern Musical Convention had certainly established the character of the convention as having an expansive scope, small though it was at that time. And later there were state conventions beginning with Alabama, (1899), Georgia (1962), and Florida (1968), and also scores of others recognizing counties and other regional areas.

And there was the United Convention, founded in 1904 by J. S. James with the intent to establish “a central organization of all local conventions, singings, teachers, and leaders that use the *Sacred Harp*” (Cobb, *The Sacred Harp*, 135-39; Jackson, *White Spirituals*, 102-4). James was an ambitious promoter of Sacred Harp music, but his intentions were unmistakably partisan on behalf of his own revision of the book. Moreover, his choice of Atlanta as the site of the convention was not designed to unite disparate groups of like-minded singers in a site of recognized significance, but rather to expand Sacred Harp in an urban setting. Stories of this era recall a bitter rivalry among competing tunebooks that seems inconceivable from the perspective of the global fellowship of harpers that prevails now. The United Convention is still held today, now rotating to different host sites each year. It attracts singers from considerable distances, but its organization is designed around host groups that



***Hugh McGraw was the guiding spirit of the National Convention during its formative years.***



organize the convention and provide a contingent of strong singers. Thus, despite appearances to the contrary, the United would not have served the purposes to which the founders of the National Convention aspired.

There are other reasons to wonder that the National did not appear sooner. Around the turn of the twentieth century, music scholars became concerned over the apparent absence of a genuine canon of American music. Most of what was accepted as American music was imported from or inspired by European composers, whose music formed the basis of a robust cultural identity in the various European nations. American musical culture, depending as it did upon material not its own, was causing an identity crisis in musical circles. In response, musicologists from both sides of the Atlantic looked to American folk music as the basis for the new American musical canon. In the mid-1920s, folksong scholars discovered the vibrant fasola singing traditions of the American South and identified them not only as a living repository of ancient folk melodies but also as the rightful heir to the institutions, notably the singing schools, that produced America's first post-settlement composers. During the period of 1925 to 1940 the association of fasola singing with American national music was advanced, in scholarly and popular publications, as a kind of cultural nationalism, designed to counteract the influence of European ideas in American musical culture.

Throughout all of this, however, the idea of a national singing tradition lay dormant. In the pre-WWII southeastern U.S., fasola singing enjoyed a golden age. Singers remembered events of legendary size and scope compared to today's standards. But this was largely ignored by the musical mainstream. It was not until the 1960s that the idea emerged which facilitated anything akin to a national embrace of Sacred Harp singing — this was the folksong revival, through which Americans were inspired to actively embrace traditional culture to achieve a sense of historical engagement and spiritual authenticity. Exposed to fasola singing by way of recordings, festival performances, and



***The dinner line at the 2002 National Convention.***

concerts, new converts across the country sought to recreate the experiences they encountered. By the 1970s, folsola groups began meeting in northern cities and on college campuses. At the same time, communication technology — photocopy technology, interstate highways, accessible air travel, cassette tape recording, and, later, personal computers and the internet — began to facilitate the formation of a global community of common purpose. Over time, folksong lost its preeminence as a connecting link, and the nationwide system of conventions and local singing groups took its place.

Organizers of the National Convention were well aware of these historical circumstances, whose influences must have been felt more intensely during the passing of the U.S. bicentennial celebration in 1976. Certainly the name “National Convention” invoked the mantle of history by default. But there is no suggestion that this played a part in the founding of the Convention. Prompted to recall the prevailing motive, convention founders point decisively to Maxine Aaron and her desire that everyone be able to sing together.

## **THE FIRST NATIONAL**

Even with its distinctive qualities, the National Convention through the years has followed the organizational protocol by which most all Sacred Harp conventions operate. But the first National Convention, held in 1980, was a unique event, designed partly as a public program and also as a celebration among singers of their heritage.

The first National was a four-day event, longer than any convention for decades. As a nod to the past, organizers adopted the format for the Thursday sessions by which the most experienced leaders were preselected to lead “lessons” of several songs — rather than the contemporary practice of inviting all singers to lead. On three of the four days, only men were called as leaders; Saturday was “ladies’ day,” with the program planned and conducted entirely by a committee of women. Warren Steel, who drove down with a group from Michigan, recalled his delight in seeing legendary singers who were then advanced in years — singers like Bob Denson, Buford McGraw, and Loyd Redding.

Hugh McGraw was President of the Convention, with a slate of other officers as follows: Vice Presidents - Toney Smith, Donald Ross; Secretaries - Dan Patterson, Warren Steel, Leman Brown; Chaplains - Claude Rhea, Ricky Harcrow, Bob Denson; Arranging Committee - Jap Walton; Memorial Committee - Donald Ross, Ruth Brown; Resolution Committee - Leman Brown, Millard McWhorter, W. A. Parker; Finance Committee - D. T. White, Buford McGraw, Tommie Spurlock, Japheth Jackson. Saturday officers were President - Ruth Brown; Vice Presidents - Diane Ross, Anne Chalker; Secretary - Charlene Wallace, Carlene Griffin; Chaplain - Pearl McWhorter, Anne Chalker.

McGraw’s committee appointments set the tone of inclusiveness that would become the convention’s most distinctive quality. Dan Patterson and Warren Steel were music scholars from

outside traditional singing areas. Tommie Spurlock was from a community that sang from the Cooper Revision of *The Sacred Harp*. Japheth Jackson was from the African-American Wiregrass singing community. Racially integrated Sacred Harp singings have been uncommon throughout the history of the singing tradition, and Hugh McGraw is to be credited for his initiative in establishing a tone of inclusion that has endured ever since then.

Printed programs were distributed, detailing the order of singing sessions, business sessions, addresses, prayers, recesses, and other special events. Such meticulous planning is unusual at traditional singings, which can operate, sometimes as effortlessly as possible, according to habit. On Friday morning, Elijah Stephen Clark and Donald Stephen Clark, descendants of B. F. White, addressed the class on the subject of their ancestor. That afternoon, a film of the 75th United Convention was shown, and during the last session Hugh McGraw was presented with a key to the city of Homewood. A letter from William J. Reynolds and on Saturday a telegram from Neely Bruce were read to the class. On Saturday afternoon, a quartet of women singers presented six songs, accompanied on some by banjo. On Sunday, W. T. Edwards, the Samford University Chaplain, gave a morning sermon.

There was no traditional dinner-on-the-grounds during the first few conventions; rather, meals were catered from various commercial food establishments. Local singers Ralph and Azilee Adams, who lived near the convention site, served lunch at their house for those who knew to come. Gene Black provided sandwiches during the breaks, and distinctly remembers the watermelon cutting during the hot afternoons.

As a tribute to the convention, the Sacred Harp Publishing Company issued a special edition of *The Sacred Harp* tunebook. The cover had a yellow and green swirl background and featured on the front a facsimile reproduction of the cover of the 1844 first edition of the book. There were also t-shirts and baseball caps with Sacred Harp logos produced for the convention. A recording of the convention was produced, with twelve hours of singing on eight cassette tapes, and sold after the convention for \$45.

The minutes of the singing normally would have been recorded in a straightforward manner, listing leaders and songs, and published as part of an annual compilation of Sacred Harp singings and conventions held throughout the year nationwide. This first year, however, Gene Black and Claude Rhea produced a special 83-page commemorative booklet. Included in it were a section of photographs, a directory of registrants, detailed minutes with some addresses recorded verbatim, and an editorial overview section. The editors recalled the events that led to the convention and lauded the diversity of singers that the convention inspired and celebrated. Betraying some awkwardness with traditional terminology, they used defective quotes with common fasola phrases and called the event a "sing" (rather than the more common "singing"). In subsequent years, the National



Convention minutes were submitted to the "Minute Book" compilation in the manner of other singings.

On the whole, the special "Directory and Minutes" booklet commemorated a genuinely important event. The editors drew upon the infectious enthusiasm that sustained Sacred Harp tradition since 1844 and inspired this first National Convention. On the back cover, set in large type under the rubric "Concerning Sacred Harp singing..." they displayed a then-well-known adage coined by Tom Denson, "If you don't like it, you had better stay away from it, because it will get hold of you and you can't get away."



*Rodney Ivey and Richard DeLong*

## **THE NATIONAL THROUGH THE YEARS**

The most enduring characteristic of that first National Convention was the diversity of singers. Singers from the "Cooper revision" tradition from Texas, Florida, and south Alabama attended that first year and have returned every year since then. Singers from the African American communities in the southeast Alabama Wiregrass region attended, and in later years those from Mississippi came. Singers from new areas outside the South have been avid supporters from the beginning. Singers not ordinarily prone to travel from their own localities have come to the National, called by the unique sense of significance that no other singing event can claim.

The first year, the Convention drew singers from fourteen states: Alabama, Georgia, Texas, Florida, Mississippi, Massachusetts, Michigan, North Carolina, New York, Tennessee, Virginia, Minnesota, Missouri, and California. In 1982 and 1983 national support temporarily waned, with only one leader from outside the traditional southern areas. Except for this period, the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the first convention has prevailed. Most every year there have been contingents of singers from Massachusetts, Illinois, and California.

One distinctive function that the convention has come to serve is as a kind of coming-out venue by which previously isolated groups of singers embrace the nationwide fellowship of harpers. This has in part been a consequence of the phenomenon during the closing decades of the twentieth century whereby enclaves of singers who had maintained localized traditions, sometimes for many

years, discovered others who shared their love for fasola music. But it has also been the case when new groups of singers emerge and discover in their members an uncommon passion for the music. The National has been a chief site where bonds of common interest have been forged.

Richard DeLong, for example, remembers the thrill of seeing Dewey Williams, the great African-American singer from southeast Alabama, lead for the first time. In 1985 the contingent of Chicago singers came in force, and performed the arrangement of "The Star Spangled Banner" that they had sung for a baseball game at Wrigley Field. In 1995, there was palpable excitement at the appearance of the Lee family from southeast Georgia, who for many years had been singing from the Cooper Revision with little contact with other fasola singers. In 1986, the group of African-American singers from Mississippi, who had first adopted the J. L. White edition of the book, attended the convention. In 1997, fourteen singers from Great Britain came to the convention. "With One Accord," a performing ensemble consisting of some from the group, gave a short demonstration for the class of singers. In 2000, singers from the African-American community of singers based in and around Chambers County, in east Alabama, attended the National for the first time. Their tradition, a Denson-book tradition, dates to more than a century ago.

In 1987, booking conflicts precluded the convention from meeting in Wright Auditorium. Thus began a sequence of trial locations that included Homewood High School (1987), Samford University Recital Hall (1992), and Briarwood Presbyterian Church (1993). At this point, problems with bookings along with complaints about the acoustical qualities of Wright Auditorium prompted a search for a new location. In 1994 the convention began its run at Trinity United Methodist Church where the 2002 convention was held.

Through the years, the National Convention has maintained strong ties to the Birmingham community. Claude Rhea, during the years he was involved with the convention, arranged for publicity. There has been local television news coverage most every year. In recent years Buell Cobb has been sending out an announcement to a mailing list — more than half of this list consists of local supporters whose main affiliation with Sacred Harp tradition is their attendance at the National Convention as listeners. He estimates that around 200 listeners have been attending annually in recent years. This is distinctly different from the circumstance at most all other singings and conventions, where most or all of those in attendance come to sing. This is not to suggest, however, that the National Convention has ever been reshaped to accommodate a listening audience. Although the lengthy run at Samford University provided auditorium seating, and thus had the pretense of staged performance customs, the National has always been designed for the singers. It is all the more remarkable and all the more unusual that the National has this pact of mutual appreciation with the Birmingham community.

In 1989, singers from the convention began participating in the City Stages music festival in

downtown Birmingham. This festival featured a special "Alabama Sampler" area for traditional music with performances running during the time of the convention. Festival organizers scheduled Sacred Harp for a time slot just after end of the Saturday session and arranged for a bus to shuttle singers to and from the festival. In 1998, the festival presented the National Convention with the Music Heritage Award in recognition of its successful efforts to preserve a vital form of the state's traditional music. In 2002, the date of the Festival was changed such that it no longer coincided with the Convention, and the run of performances ended.



***Buell Cobb has brought vitality to the National Convention since he took over as chairman in 1993.***

In 1992, after twelve years as chair of the convention, Hugh McGraw asked to step down. A nominating committee selected Virgil Phillips, who was elected chairman that year. During the Saturday session, McGraw recalled the deep devotion to Sacred Harp singing of Maxine Aaron, who had died during the previous year.

The following year, Buell Cobb took the position and has served as chair since that time. He grew up in Cullman, Alabama, in an area rich in Sacred Harp tradition. He heard Sacred Harp as a youth, but began his long association with the music, as singer and scholar, while a student at Auburn University. His book, *The Sacred Harp: A Tradition and Its Music* (1978) is still the definitive written introduction to Sacred Harp singing. Now a Birmingham resident, Cobb has been a loyal and able steward of the convention, taking a deep personal interest both in its local ties and also in its diverse national and international following. He engineered the move to the new location, bringing stability to the convention and much satisfaction to singers who longed for a suitable home.

Annual Sacred Harp singings and conventions number in the hundreds and are now spread throughout the nation and even other countries. Some attract large numbers of skilled singers; some are steeped in century-old tradition. The National Convention holds a special place in that landscape. Begun as a response to the emergence of new populations of singers, it has become the chief venue where the fellowship of all singers is celebrated.

## TRACK LIST

### 1 - "New Britain" (45t)

Sandie Scott, Smyrna TN

John Newton (1779) | *Columbian Harmony* (1829)

Sandie Scott has been one of the key figures in the mid-1990s revival of the Harpeth Valley singing community in Nashville, Tennessee. ● John Newton's "Amazing grace! How sweet the sound" has surely become one of Christianity's most beloved hymns. Its story has been well documented, notably by Bill Moyers's PBS television documentary, *Amazing Grace with Bill Moyers* (1990) and recently in Steve Turner's *Amazing Grace* (2002). Newton (1725-1807) was largely self-educated and the son of a shipmaster. He entered the British navy and eventually became master of a slave ship. The hymn documents Newton's conversion experience at sea in 1748 and has been associated with his repudiation of slavery several years later. After his conversion, Newton began a period of study in preparation for ordination in the Anglican Church. Taking a position at Olney, Buckinghamshire, England, he made the acquaintance of the poet William Cowper. This friendship provided encouragement for Newton's writing and was influential in the publication of *Olney Hymns* (1779), in which "Amazing grace!" first appeared. ● The tune "New Britain" is of uncertain origin and has attracted much interest owing to the popularity of the song. There have been suggestions of traditional origins in Scotland or in Africa. Its first appearance with the "Amazing grace!" text was in *Southern Harmony* in 1835. Prior to that it appeared as "Harmony Grove" in *Virginia Harmony*. In the 1980s, music historian Marion Hatchett discovered the song in the tunebook *Columbian Harmony* (Cincinnati, 1830) under two names, "Gallaher" and "St. Mary." The recent book by Steve Turner has uncovered biographical information on Charles Harvey Spilman (1805-1892), the chief compiler of *Columbian Harmony*. Spilman's spent his childhood on farms in Kentucky and Illinois, but early in life became devoted to study. An apprenticeship in Vincennes, Indiana, brought him into contact with a wealthy benefactor, who financed his education in medicine at Transylvania University in Lexington, Kentucky. It was there that the plan to publish a tunebook was hatched. See: *Amazing Grace With Bill Moyers* (Public Broadcasting System, 1990). Marion Hatchett, "Benjamin Shaw and Charles H. Spilman's *Columbian Harmony*, or, *Pilgrim's Musical Companion*," *The Hymn* 42.1 (Jan 1991), 20-23. Steve Turner, *Amazing Grace: The Story of America's Most Beloved Song* (N.Y.: HarperCollins, 2002).

## 2 - "Return Again" (335)

Edd Snell, Brundidge AL

John Newton 1779 | Arr. William L. Williams 1850

Edd Snell of Ozark is an steadfast supporter of the National Convention, having never missed a session since the founding of the convention. He is an inspiring song leader, noted for the inimitable stride of his walking-style of leading.

● Under the title "Prayer for Revival," the text for this song was written by John Newton and published in *Olney Hymns* (1779). ● "Return Again" first appeared in *The Sacred Harp* in the supplement to the 1850 edition. The tune is in the family of "Invitation," which first appeared in the *Olive Leaf* (1878) attributed to F. R. Warren, *Dream Music*. *The Sacred Harp* gives the tune source as William L. Williams. See: George Pullen Jackson, *Spiritual Folksongs of Early America* (1937), song #63.



***Edd Snell of Ozark, Alabama, leads #335 "Return Again." Mr. Snell has attended every National Convention since its founding in 1980***

## 3 - "Evening Shade (209)

Dan Huger, Ashville NC

John Leland 1792 | Stephen Jenks 1805

Dan Huger, from Ashville, North Carolina, is one of the leaders of the western North Carolina *Christian Harmony* singing tradition. ● John Leland (1754-1841) was an important figure in the founding of the Baptist Church in the United States. His primary residences were Grafton, Massachusetts; Culpepper, Virginia; and Cheshire, Massachusetts. In his lifetime he preached over 8,000 sermons, continuing until six days before his death at age 85. He was an outspoken proponent of "rights of conscience," and was influential in the passage of the Bill for Religious Freedom (1786) and the drafting of the First Amendment to the Constitution (1791). He also will be forever associated with the famous 1,450 pound "Mammoth Cheese," manufactured by the citizens of Cheshire and delivered personally by Leland to President Jefferson upon his inauguration. ● Stephen Jenks (1772-1856) was a singing-school teacher and composer most active during his years in New England and New York state, before he relocated to Ohio. He was one of the exponents of the fugue-tune idiom of New



England. "Evening Shade" was published in *The Delights of Harmony, or Norfolk Compiler* (1805). Along with this tune, "Liberty," "North Salem," and "Mount Vernon" are well known among singers today. Singer Warren Steel of Oxford, Mississippi, is the chief authority on Jenks and has documented his life and work in several books and articles. See: David Warren Steel, "Steven Jenks," *New Grove*. Stephen Jenks, *Collected Works* (1995), ed. by David Warren Steel. Emerson Proctor, "John Leland," <http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Plains/2502/leland.html>.

#### 4 - "The Happy Sailor" (388)

Seth Holloway, Nashville TN

C. J. Griggs (1911) | Arr. B. F. White (1859)

Seth Holloway is in the music business in Nashville and was chair of the Young People's Convention when the singing was hosted in that city. He is descended through his mother Sarah Smith from the singing Beasley family of Marion County, Alabama. His uncle Joe Beasley (1929-1995) made some important recordings of Sacred Harp beginning during the 1950s that were recently released on compact disk. Beasley moved from Alabama to New York City and was a pivotal figure in the Sacred Harp revival there during the years before his death in 1995. In Beasley's honor, a scholarship fund has been established that is awarded to young Sacred Harp singers to help with college expenses. ● Benjamin Franklin White (1800-1879) was the chief compiler of *The Sacred Harp*. In 1842 he moved his family from Spartanburg, South Carolina, to Harris County, Georgia. It was there that White, having contributed in some now-unknown capacity to William Walker's *Southern Harmony*, set about to compile his own book. Along with *The Sacred Harp*, his chief contribution to religious song was the founding of the Southern Musical Convention (1845), thereby setting in motion the practice of democratically-organized singing conventions that has endured continuously since then. ● The tune of this song was arranged by B. F. White for the 1859 edition of *The Sacred Harp*; singer C. J. Griggs of Atlanta contributed the second and third verses. Griggs was a steadfast supporter of old sacred songs through the period when many turned to gospel music, and served J. S. James as assistant president of the United Convention in its early years. ● According to James, the author of the original verse of the text is unknown. Both text and tune have circulated widely in variants under the title "The Old Ship of Zion," notably as an African-American spiritual. As a spiritual, the most famous printed setting is surely the transcription by Lucy McKim in the book *Slave Songs of the United States* (1867), pp. 102-3. See: Jackson, *Spiritual Folksongs*, song #210. Information on C. J. Griggs is from the 1911 James footnote to "The Happy Sailor." Joe Beasley's recording is the *Joe Beasley Memorial Sacred Harp Album: Northwestern Alabama 1954-1976-1977-1978*, produced by Jean Seiler, 1999.

## 5 - "Milford" (273)

Elene Stovall, Birmingham AL

Anon., c. 1802 | Joseph Stephenson (1760)

Elene Stovall is businesswoman from Birmingham, Alabama. She is a lifelong Sacred Harp singer and a member of the Aldridge family of singers. ● "Milford" was first published in Joseph Stephenson, *Church Harmony Sacred to Devotion* (London, 1760). In the U.S. it was introduced by Andrew Law in *Select Harmony* (1779), and was apparently assigned by Law the name of his hometown of Milford, Connecticut. It is considered to be an old-world model for the New England fugue-tune idiom, featuring fugues in both sections, open intervals, unexpected harmonic clashes, and a brief modulation, which together represent, according to Richard Crawford, "a harmonic adventurousness matched by few, if any, American composers of the period." See: Crawford, *Core Repertory*, xlv-xlv.

## 6 - "New Agatite" (485)

Cathryn Baker, Chicago IL

Edward Perronet (1779) | Ted Johnson (1990)

Cathryn Baker has been a steadfast supporter and organizer of the weekly Hyde Park singing in Chicago and has served as chair of the Midwest Convention. ● The tune "New Agatite" was composed by Ted Johnson, a retired textbook editor from Chicago, Illinois. During the early years of the Sacred Harp revival in Chicago, composer Judy Hauff wrote a song called "Agatite," named for the street where Ted and Marcia Johnson lived. The song was printed in the photocopy booklet *Midwest Supplement* (1987). When Johnson later composed his own song for the same street, he called it "New Agatite." It was included among the new songs in the 1991 edition of *The Sacred Harp*. ● Edward Perronet (1726-1792) was descended from prominent French Huguenots who relocated to England and became swept up in the Evangelical Revival of the Wesleys and Whitefield. Ultimately Perronet defied both the Anglicans and the Methodists, and affiliated with a small Independent chapel in Canterbury. His most famous hymn is "All hail the power of Jesus' name," first published in *Gospel Magazine* in 1779. The hymn was first assigned the tune "Miles Lane," by William Shrubsole, but it has become indelibly associated in American churches with Oliver Holden's "Coronation." See: Julian, *Dictionary*, 41-42, 889-90. Melissa Boher Jacobson, "Edward Perronet," in *Hymnal* 1982, 2:564-65. Marion Hatchett, "All hail the power of Jesus' Name!" *Hymnal* 1982, 3B:846-54.

## 7 - "Warrenton" (145t)

Ruth Johnson, Ft. Pierce FL

Robert Robinson (1758) | J. Williams & William Walker (1835)



**Ruth Johnson, youngest daughter of Judge Jackson, leads #145 "Warrenton."**

Ruth Johnson is the youngest daughter of Judge Jackson (1883-1958), compiler of *The Colored Sacred Harp* (1934). The story of Judge Jackson's rise from poverty and his unrelenting dedication to religious song has been told several times, most extensively in Joe Dan Boyd's recent book, *Judge Jackson and The Colored Sacred Harp* (2003). Mrs. Johnson composed songs with her father and participated on recordings made during his lifetime. ● The well-known hymn "Come thou fount of every blessing" was written by the English hymnist and theologian Robert Robinson (1735-1790). J. S. James' synopsis of Robinson's life is an apt depiction of his spiritual journey: "He was converted under the preaching of Whitfield, and was ordained a Methodist minister. He afterward became a Baptist and then an Independent and finally a Socinian." The hymn was first published in *A Collection of Hymns used by the Church of Christ in Angel-Alley, Bishopsgate* (London, 1759). The reference to I Samuel 7:12, "Here I raise my Ebenezer" — the "stone of help" erected by Samuel in recognition of God's protection — is omitted from some church hymnals. ● The tune appeared in numerous American tunebooks and came to *The Sacred Harp* via *Southern Harmony*. George Pullen Jackson traced the tune, with a different text, to the "dialogue hymns" of the English Methodists, where it was performed by men and women singing alternate stanzas from opposite sides of the meeting hall. See: George Pullen Jackson, *Spiritual Folksongs*, song #205. Lightwood, *Hymn Tunes*, 144. Manual Erviti and Marion Hatchett, "Come, thou fount of every blessing," *Hymnal* 1982, 3B:1268-73. Julian, *Dictionary*, 252, 969-970.

## 8 - "Schenectady" (192)

David Light, Arab AL

Isaac Watts (1719) | Nehemiah Shumway (1805)

David Light comes from a family of devoted Sacred Harp singers. His grandfather, Marcus Light, was a fine singer and singing school teacher; his parents met at a Sacred Harp singing.

● Isaac Watts (1674-1748) was the great English hymnist and Nonconformist scholar whose poetry captivated Americans throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. American editions of his poetry achieved wide circulation, sometimes encouraged by competition among various editors, and were a key element in the spread of Christianity in the frontier areas and among African Americans. His works are by far the most widely used poetic sources for *The Sacred Harp* through all its editions. Most of his Sacred Harp texts are excerpted directly or indirectly from two works, *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* (3 vols., 1707-1709) and *The Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament* (1719). "Schenectady" is taken from Watts's version of Psalm 117. Recently these works have been combined in a reprint edition by Soli Deo Gloria Publications, providing a valuable reference for the text sources of *The Sacred Harp*. ● The tune was composed by Nehemiah Shumway (1761-1843), compiler of *The American Harmony* (1791, 1801). Born in Oxford, Massachusetts, he graduated from Rhode Island College and became principal of Freehold Academy in New Jersey. "Schenectady" is probably named for Schenectady, New York, where Shumway lived for a time. The tune first appeared in the 1805 edition of *The Easy Instructor*. See: Julian, "Isaac Watts," 1236-41. Kroeger, *American Fuging-Tunes*, 129-30.

## 9 - "Vernon" (95)

Alexa Gilmore, Amherst MA

Charles Wesley (1742) | Arr. Lucius Chapin (1813)

Alexa Gilmore is a leader, singing organizer, and alto from western Massachusetts, which is home to one of the most exciting recent Sacred Harp singing communities. ● The tune to "Vernon" has most often been attributed to Lucius Chapin (1769-1842) as an arrangement of a folk hymn. However, two closely-related major-key tunes appeared in Jeremiah Ingalls's *Christian Harmony* (1805), under the titles "Farewell Hymn" (with the text "Give ear to me ye sons of men") and "Wisdom" (with "Now in a song of grateful praise"). It was Chapin's minor arrangement, however, that entered the Southern tunebook idiom. Both Lucius Chapin and his brother Amzi moved from Massachusetts to Virginia and later the Ohio River valley area to teach singing school and promote Andrew Law's method of notation. "Vernon" appeared first in *Patterson's Church Music* (1813). But its most influential setting was *Wyeth's Repository of Sacred Music, Part Second* (1813), where it appeared along with other compositions and arrangements by the Chapins. The title "Vernon" was the name given to the Chapin homestead in Vernon, Kentucky, where Lucius lived and taught from 1794-1835 and which itself was named for George Washington's home, Mount Vernon. ● The text is from Charles Wesley's *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1742) and refers to the narrative of wrestling Jacob at Genesis 32:24. Watts is supposed to have said that "this single poem, Wrestling Jacob, was worth all the verses he [Watts] himself had written." Shortly after Charles' death, his brother

John Wesley tried to teach this hymn, but broke into tears when he reached the line, "my company before is gone, and I am left alone with Thee." See: James Scholten, "Lucius Chapin: A New England Singing Master on the Frontier," *Contributions to Music Education 4* (1976):64-73. James Scholten, "Chapin," *New Grove*. Geoffrey Wainwright and Marion Hatchett, "Come, O thou Traveler unknown," in *Hymnal* 1982, 3B:1166-71.

## 10 - "Confidence" (270)

Allison Schofield, New Braintree MA  
Charles Wesley (1742) | J. R. Turner (1850)

Allison Schofield is a fine singer and leader from western Massachusetts who was introduced to Sacred Harp in college through Tim Eriksen. She is chair of the 2003 Western Massachusetts Convention. ● James R. Turner, composer of the tune, was an important figure in the early years of *The Sacred Harp*. He was born in Hancock County, Georgia, in 1807, according to the profile by J. S. James, but is most associated with Villa Rica and west Georgia where he spent his adult life. He was a prominent singing-school teacher in Georgia and Alabama, a key figure in the 1860 revision of *The Sacred Harp*, and a member of the Chattahoochee Musical Convention from its organization in 1852 until his death in 1874. ● With

John Wesley and George Whitefield, Charles Wesley (1707-1788) is known as a co-founder of the Methodist Church. He was an indefatigable preacher, but his distinctive contribution to Christianity was his prolific hymn writing: he is said to have authored more than 6,500 hymns. The hymn source for "Confidence" appeared in *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1742) and addressed the subject of Habakkuk 3:17-19. See: James, "Prof. James R. Turner," *Brief History*, 91-94. Miller, *Chattahoochee*, passim. Julian, *Dictionary*, 104, 1255-66. Geoffrey Wainwright, "Charles Wesley," *Hymnal* 1982 2:657-59.



**Western Massachusetts singer Allison Schofield leads #270 "Confidence."**



## 11 - "Save, Lord, or We Perish" (224)

Lela Crowder, Fayetteville GA

Reginald Heber (1827) | M. Mark Wynn (1869)

Lela Crowder has become an inspiring song leader since attending a singing school by Hugh McGraw only a year ago.

She is a high school English teacher from Fayetteville,

Georgia. ● The tune was composed by the great Georgia

singer M. Mark Wynn and first appeared in the 1869 edition of

*The Sacred Harp*. Wynn is best known as author of the

constitution of the Chattahoochee Musical Convention which

resolved to "renovate, improve & systematize our Southern

Music." He composed other songs that have appeared in

various revisions of *The Sacred Harp*, including "Doddridge" in

the current edition. In 1904, J. S. James wrote that Wynn

"went west 30 or 35 years ago and his whereabouts are

unknown." ● The text is by English hymnist Reginald Heber

(1783-1826). Until 1823 Heber was a scholar, writer, and

rector in Hodnet, Shropshire, England; in that year he was

appointed Bishop of India and devoted himself fully to that endeavor. Most of his hymns were

published posthumously in *Hymns Written and Adapted to the Weekly Church Service of the Year*

(London, 1827), a collection intended to correspond with the events of the Christian year. "When

through the torn sail" was designated for the fourth Sunday after Epiphany. See: Miller,

*Chattahoochee*, passim. James, *Brief History*, 109. Julian, *Dictionary*, 503-4.



**Lela Crowder leads #224 "Save, Lord, or We Perish."**

## 12 - "When I Am Gone" (339)

Jeannette DePoy, Atlanta GA

Mary Stanley Bunce Dana | M. H. Turner (1850)

Jeanette DePoy began singing around ten years ago at a singing school taught by Richard

DeLong. She and her husband Scott sing with the group in the Atlanta area. ● Mary Stanley Bunce

Dana (1810-1883) wrote three volumes of "original sacred and moral songs, adapted to the most

popular melodies," most published under the name Mary Dana Shindler. They were arranged for

voice and piano and sometimes guitar, and set to popular tunes, traditional Scottish and Irish tunes,

and operatic airs. She is best known for her settings of "I am a pilgrim, I am a stranger" and "O sing

to me of Heaven," which entered or reentered oral tradition with her lyrics. "When I Am Gone"

appeared in her book *The Southern Harp* (1841), pages 76-77. It was arranged for voice and piano

with the melody of "Long, Long Ago!" by the English composer and dramatist Thomas Haynes Bayly (1797-1839). ● M. H. Turner, who arranged the song in fasola style, was a native of Coweta County, Georgia, and a member of the Southern Musical Convention. See: Paul C. Echols, "Mary Stanley Bunce Dana," *New Grove*. J. S. James, 1911 footnote to "When I Am Gone."

### 13 - "Exhortation" (272)

Stevie Fletcher, Hitchins, England

Isaac Watts (1709) | Eliakim Doolittle (1800)

Stevie Fletcher is from the group of singers from the United Kingdom who have supported the National Convention so faithfully in recent years. ● The text is from Watts, *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* I:91, and is based on Ecclesiastes 12:1. ● Eliakim Doolittle (1772-1850) was an itinerant music teacher and composer in western Connecticut and eastern New York and compiled his own tunebook, *The Psalm Singer's Companion*, in 1806. "Exhortation" was first printed in Stephen Jenks's *The Musical Harmonist* (1800). See: Kroger, *American Fuging-Tunes*, 42-43.

### 14 - "The Dying Minister" (83b)

Mark Davis, Brandon MS

Berriman Hicks | Edmund Dumas (1854)



**Mark Davis leads #83b "the Dying Minister" with Grace Marquez, great-great-granddaughter of the song's author, Berriman Hicks.**

Mark Davis is a high school band director from Brandon, Mississippi. He is one of the leading singers and singing-school teachers of Sacred Harp in Mississippi. Accompanying Davis as song leader was Grace Marquez, the great-great-granddaughter of Berriman Hicks. As Buell Cobb notes in his introduction to the song on the recording, Ms. Marquez has attended the convention the last two years. ● Edmund Dumas (1810-1882) was a Primitive Baptist preacher from Monroe County, Georgia, who composed a number of tunes for *The Sacred Harp*. He was a founding member of the Southern Musical Convention and served on the Music Committee for the 1869 revision of the book. ● Berriman Hicks (1778-1839), from the

Spartanburg, South Carolina, area, was a widely-traveled preacher and hymn writer. His most famous hymn, "Hick's Farewell," entered into wide circulation in oral tradition, probably as a direct consequence of his preaching. It has been popular on folksong recordings and has three settings in *The Sacred Harp*, including "The Dying Minister." See: J. S. James, "Elder E. Dumas," *Brief History*, 107. Miller, *Chattahoochee*, 122 and passim. Jackson, *White Spirituals*, 202-5.

### 15 - "Northfield" (155)

Evelyn Harris, Oxford AL

Isaac Watts (1707) | Jeremiah Ingalls (1800)

Evelyn Harris, wife of B. J. Harris of Oxford, is highly regarded for her contributions to the National Convention dinner-on-the-grounds. ● Jeremiah Ingalls (1764-1838) was a farmer, innkeeper, and singing teacher from Vermont. He was a prominent composer in the New England style and was compiler of the tunebook *The Christian Harmony, or Songster's Companion* (1805). He is notable as the first compiler to include what have been call spiritual folksongs — sacred texts set to folk melodies — which were the mainstay of southern tunebooks later. ● The text is from Watts, *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* 1:21, and addresses Revelation 21. See: David G. Klocko, "Jeremiah Ingalls," *New Grove*. Kroger, *American Fuging-Tunes*, 82. Jackson, *White and Negro Spirituals*, 69-73.

### 16 - "I'm On My Journey Home" (345b)

Mark Brown, Ider AL

Mead's *General Selection* (1807) | Sarah Lancaster (1859)

Mark Brown is from the singing Wooten family of Sand Mountain and is currently known for his fine rendition of "Beulah Land," which he is sometimes asked to lead at Sacred Harp singing as a special event. ● Sarah Lancaster resided near West Point, Georgia, and was one of the fine nineteenth century Sacred Harp composers. Besides "I'm On My Journey Home," her songs include "Sardis" and "The Last Words of Copernicus." She was taught to sing by B. F. White and J. P. Reese. ● Stith Mead (1767-1834) published the first edition of his Methodist hymnbook, *A General Selection of the Most Admired Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, in 1807. Mead was a Methodist circuit preacher, campmeeting revivalist, and



**Mark Brown leads #345b "I'm On My Journey Home."**

a contemporary of Lorenzo Dow. He introduced Methodism to sections of Virginia, Georgia, and Mississippi. He is particularly associated with Augusta, Georgia, where he founded the first Methodist church. See: James, *Brief History*, 111-12. Matthew H. Moore, "Stith Mead," *Pioneers of Methodism in North Carolina and Virginia* (Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1884), 107-12.

### 17 - "Blooming Youth" (176)

Bernice Harvey, Ozark AL

Thomas Gibbons (1769) | Henry G. Mann (1869)

Bernice Harvey is the daughter of Dewey Williams (1898-1997), one of the mainstays of the African-American singing community in the southeast Alabama "Wiregrass" region. In 1983 Williams was the recipient of a Smithsonian National Heritage Fellowship and was featured in the film *Amazing Grace with Bill Moyers* (1990). Mrs. Harvey has been an influential ambassador of the Wiregrass singing tradition, including participation in important performances for the Smithsonian Institution. She is a key organizer of the Dewey Williams Memorial Singing, held each year in Ozark, Alabama. She has also continued her father's practice of leading the song "Give Me Just a Little More Time" at the close of a session. ● Henry G. Mann was from Georgia and from a prominent Sacred Harp family. He composed several songs that have been in various editions of the book, including "Fleeting Days." ● Thomas Gibbons (1720-1785) of London, England, was an author of sermons, religious essays, and hymns. He was a disciple of Watts, and published several volumes of religious poetry. James recorded that the text of the hymn came to *The Sacred Harp* via an old hymnbook belonging to Mrs. Mattie Johnson of Floville, Georgia. See: James, 1911 notes to "Blooming Youth." Julian, *Dictionary*, 420.

### 18 - "Mear" (49b)

Hannah Cooper, Nottingham, England

Isaac Watts (1719) | *A Sett Of Tunes* (1720)

Hannah Cooper is the daughter of Ruth Cooper, and is from the contingent of United Kingdom singers who have enthusiastically supported the National Convention in recent years. ● The text of "Mear" is from Isaac Watts's *The Psalms of David* (1719) and recounts the destruction of the Temple in Psalm 74. ● The tune was first published in *A Sett of Tunes in 3 Parts* (London, ca. 1720) and thereby ranks as one of the oldest in *The Sacred Harp*. It was introduced the U.S. in the tune supplement to one of the later editions of *The Bay Psalm Book* (Boston, 1737). When fugues later became fashionable, the slow-moving harmonic pace of songs like "Mear" found favor with musical conservatives who preferred the old style of singing. Consequently "Mear" was endorsed by New England church congregations and by turn-of-the-nineteenth-century "old way" musical reformers. See: Crawford, *Core Repertory*, xliii-xliv.

## 19 - "Stratfield" (142)

Teenie Moody, Carrollton GA

Isaac Watts (1719) | Ezra Goff (1786)

Teenie Moody is the granddaughter of M. F. McWhorter, the great Alabama singer who composed the song "Jackson," on page 317 of *The Sacred Harp*. ● Watts's text for "Stratfield" is based on Psalm 90. ● Ezra Goff (1760-after 1807) was born and died in Rehoboth, Massachusetts, and served as a fifer in the Continental Army during the Revolution. See: Kroger, *American Fuguing-Tunes*, 58-59.

## 20 - "Love Shall Never Die" (278t)

Cath Oss, Northampton MA

Isaac Watts (1709) | Toney Smith (1987)

Cath Oss is a western Massachusetts singer best known as a member of the performing group, Cordelia's Dad. She is a highly regarded song leader, noted for her intense involvement in the music. Cath was chair of the 2001 western Massachusetts Convention ● Toney Smith is a retired barber from Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and a leading supporter of Sacred Harp and Christian Harmony singing in west Alabama. He served on the Revision Committee for the 1991 revision of *The Sacred Harp* and composed this song for that revision. For many years he was the chief organizer of singing events in Tuscaloosa County, including performances at nursing homes and public events. ● The text is from Watts, *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* II:165.

## 21 - "Corley" (510)

Don Bowen, Cartersville GA

Marcus M. Wells (1858) | John Wilson; arr. Richard L. DeLong (1988)

Don Bowen is one of the nation's most conscientious Sacred Harp singers. He is son of the esteemed Georgia singer E. C. Bowen, whose memory as a compelling song leader is still vivid for so many singers. Don is well known for his comprehensive knowledge of the Sacred Harp book and has become legendary for his mastery of "Sacred Harp trivia," which is sometimes played during the social time at singing conventions. ● Richard DeLong is a history teacher from Carrollton, Georgia. He has taught singing schools throughout the nation and was one of the key figures in the expansion of Sacred Harp singing into new areas during the "Sacred Harp revival" of the 1980s. He is from a prominent west Georgia singing family and served on the Revision Committee for the 1991 edition of the book. ● Marcus M. Wells (1815-1895) was a farmer and toolmaker who lived in Cooperstown and Hartwick, New York. He is said to have written of this hymn, "On a Saturday afternoon in



October, 1858, while at work in my cornfield near Hardwick, New York, the sentiment of this hymn came to me. The next day, I finished the hymn and wrote a tune for it and sent it to Professor I. G. Woodbury." See: "Marcus M. Wells" and "Holy spirit, faithful guide" at [www.cyberhymnal.org](http://www.cyberhymnal.org).

## 22 - "Delight" (216)

Cassie Franklin, Henagar AL

Isaac Watts (1719) | Simeon Coan (1798)

Cassie Franklin is from the renowned Creel family of Sacred Harp singers from the Walker-Jefferson County area of Alabama. She is an expert singer in all respects, and has earned recognition as the most accomplished singer of her generation in that family. In high school, Cassie was a star basketball player; she is now a college student. ● Simeon Coan lived in Guilford, Connecticut, and published New England-style tunes in compilations by Daniel Read and Asahel Benham. "Delight" made its first appearance in *Benham's Social Harmony* (1798). ● Watts's text was based on Psalm 121. See: Julian, "Isaac Watts," 1236-41. Kroger, *American Fuguing-Tunes*, 35-36.



**B. J. Harris leads #303 "Heavenly Land."**

## 23 - "Heavenly Land" (303)

B. J. Harris, Oxford AL

Isaac Watts (1707) | Jeff Sheppard (1987)

B. J. Harris, husband of Evelyn Harris of Oxford, is a fine singer and Sacred Harp leader. He is also highly regarded for his oratory skills and is counted upon to bring a new joke or story to a singing. ● Jeff Sheppard operates a family shipping business in Anniston, Alabama. He served on the Revision Committee of the 1991 *Sacred Harp*. Jeff and his wife Shelbie were among the most influential purveyors of the Southern singing tradition during the 1980s period of Sacred Harp revival. Both travel widely and have taught

singing schools in many of the new singing areas. ● “There is a land of pure delight” is one of Watts’s best known hymns. It is said to have been suggested to Watts by the view across Southampton Water in the city of his birth. ● See: Julian, “Isaac Watts,” 1236-41.

## 24 - “Panting For Heaven” (384)

H. J. Jackson, Ozark AL

Maria DeFleury (1791) | S. M. Brown (1869)

Japheth Jackson of Ozark, Alabama, is the son of Judge Jackson, compiler of *The Colored Sacred Harp*. He is considered the chief custodian of the legacy of his father. With Dewey Williams, he led a movement to publish a revision of the book in 1973. He has taught singing schools, has performed on recordings, and has been a key ambassador of the tradition at festivals and other cultural events. ● Maria DeFleury was a British hymnist, writer, and Baptist theologian. Her writing is considered evocative of the experience of Baptist women in eighteenth century Britain. The text for “Panting for Heaven” appeared in *Divine Poems and Essays* (1791). ● S. M. Brown lived in Haralson County, Georgia, at the time he composed this song for the 1869 edition of *The Sacred Harp*. He and others from his family composed many fine Sacred Harp songs. He was one of the chief architects of the Chattahoochee Convention. See: James, 1911 notes to “Panting for Heaven.”



***H. J. Jackson is the son of Judge Jackson and the primary custodian of his father’s tunebook, The Colored Sacred Harp.***

## 25 - "Mercy's Free" (337)

Sarah Smith, Bessemer AL

Anon. | Leonard P. Breedlove (1850)

Sarah and Gary Smith of Bessemer are renowned for their convention hospitality, having remodeled their home to accommodate large numbers of visiting singers. Sarah is a member of the Beasley family of Marion County, Alabama, and a sister of Joe Beasley. ● Leonard Breedlove was a great nineteenth-century Georgia singer, renowned for his strong bass voice and his comprehensive knowledge of music. He was an energetic singing-school teacher who helped spread Sacred Harp in Georgia and neighboring states. He was on the revision committee for the 1850 edition of the book and composed several songs that have appeared in the book throughout its history. He was secretary of the Southern Musical Convention 1845-1850. See: James, *Brief History*, 113. Miller, *Chattahoochee*, passim.

## 26 - "Can I Leave You" (385b)

Amanda Denson, Birmingham AL

Samuel F. Smith (1832) | Arr., J. P. Reese (1859)

Amanda Denson was the daughter of Howard Denson of Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and granddaughter of Tom Denson. Her father Howard was on the revision committee for the 1936 Denson Revision and was president of the Sacred Harp Publishing Company. ● Samuel F. Smith (1808-1895), best known as the author of the "National Hymn," "My country, 'tis of thee," was an American Baptist theologian and writer, educated at Harvard and Andover. He is most strongly associated with Boston, where he was born and spent his later years, and Waterville, Maine, where he was a church pastor and Professor of Modern Languages at Waterville College (now Colby College). With Baron Stow, he compiled *The Psalmist* (1843), an influential Baptist hymn collection. Under the subject "A Missionary's Farewell," his hymn "Yes, my native land, I love thee" was contributed to Winchell, *Additional Hymns* (1832). ● J. P. Reese (1828-1900) was one of the great Georgia singers and composers, associated with Coweta County where he lived as an adult. For many years he was president of the Chattahoochee Convention. He served on the revision committee for the 1860 *Sacred Harp*. As a music teacher, Reese helped spread Sacred Harp in middle and north Georgia and east Alabama. He was a correspondent to Georgia newspapers on many subjects, and was noted particularly for his writings on music theory. Reese has many compositions in *The Sacred Harp*. See: Julian, *Dictionary*, 1063-64. James, 1911 notes to "Cleburne." James, *History*, 94-99.

## 27 - "Primrose" (47t)

Rodney Ivey, Henagar AL

Isaac Watts (1707) | Amzi Chapin (1812)

Rodney Ivey comes from the Ivey family of singers, based in the Henagar area of northeast Alabama. His fondness for Sacred Harp blossomed over the last decade, and he has become a devoted singer and organizer of singing events. He is well known as a dependable and energetic front-bench tenor. ● Amzi Chapin (1768-1835) was a singing master and devotee of Andrew Law's notation method whose work followed a course from his native Massachusetts through New York, Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and finally to Ohio. His greatest musical influence was during his period in Kentucky, where he taught and composed tunes with his brother Lucius. "Primrose" ("Twenty-Fourth") was published in Robert Patterson's *Patterson's Church Music* (1813) and *John Wyeth's Repository of Sacred Music, Part Second* (1813). ● Watts's text is from *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* II:88. See: James Scholten, "Chapin," *New Grove*. James Scholten, "Amzi Chapin: Frontier Singing Master and Folk Hymn Composer," *Journal for Research in Music Education* 23(1975):109-19.

## 28 - "David's Lamentation" (268)

Kennon Smith, Ozark AL

William Billings (1778)

Kennon Smith is a Cooper book singer from Ozark, Alabama. ● Many consider William Billings (1746-1800) of Boston to be America's first composer. He was primarily self-taught, achieving an extraordinary level of musical facility for his time. He had a modest upbringing, and entered the tanning trade as an apprentice at age fourteen. "David's Lamentation" was first published in his *The Singing Master's Assistant* (1778). The song is unusual in its structure, combining various features of the popular composition genres that comprise the idiom within which Billings wrote. ● The text, a poetic setting of II Samuel 18:33, encapsulates the profound grief of King David at the death of his son — which he, in part, had enabled. This song showcases the facility of the idiom to translate the essence of Biblical narrative into musical texture. See: David McKay and Richard Crawford. *William Billings of Boston: Eighteenth-Century Composer* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 89, 98-99, 241.

## 29 - "Alabama" (196)

Dorothea McCowan, Birmingham AL

*Southern Harmony* (1835)

Dorothea McCowan is the daughter of Ann Beasley Ballard and a member of the singing Beasley family. She will be remembered as having been featured as a youth in a photograph in a 1972 issue of Life Magazine shown leading Sacred Harp singing. ● The song "Alabama" first appeared in *Southern Harmony* in 1835; its origin is otherwise unknown.

## 30 - "Arbacoochee" (430)

Tommie Spurlock, Ozark AL

Isaac Watts (1719) | S. M. Denson (1908)

Tommie Spurlock is a retired schoolteacher and Cooper book singer from Ozark, Alabama. He is the nephew of the great singer Runie Glover. Mr. Spurlock is the primary organizer of the annual singing and fish fry at the Mapson United Methodist Church near Ozark. ● The text of this song was written by Isaac Watts and is from Psalm 35. ● Seaborn M. Denson (1854-1936) was the esteemed singer, composer, and singing-school teacher from Winston County, Alabama. His extraordinary career was summarized in a response by his wife to a query by George Pullen Jackson: "How many has he taught to sing? Every year, excepting four, since 1874. He has taught from 25 to 100 scholars a term, ten days and sometimes twenty [per term] and as high as 80 days in one year. You can estimate the vastness of his musical work for the past fifty-one years." The song was first printed in the *Union Harp and History of Songs* (1909), an unsuccessful precursor to the 1911 James revision. The song is named for the Arbacoochee community, in Cleburne County in east Alabama, where Denson was born. See: Jackson, *White Spirituals*, 107-8.



**Tommie Spurlock of Ozark, Alabama, leads #430 "Arbacoochee."**



### 31 - "Fairfield" (29t)

Mike Hawkins, LaGrange GA  
Edmund Jones (1787) | Hitchcock

Mike Hawkins is the great nephew of Roy Avery, composer of the song "My Home," on page 560 of *The Sacred Harp*. He is minister of music of a church in LaGrange, Georgia. ● Edmund Jones (1722-1765) was an English Baptist. Under his ministry at Exeter Baptist Church, singing was introduced into worship for the first time. "Come, humble sinner, in whose breast" is considered his most famous song. See: Julian, *Dictionary*, 605.

### 32 - "Christian's Farewell" (347)

Sally House, Annisquam MA  
*Primitive Hymns* | Raymond C. Hamrick (1989)

Sally House is a western Massachusetts singer who was led to Sacred Harp by her daughters. ● Raymond Hamrick, of Macon, Georgia, is one of the most highly regarded Sacred Harp composers of the contemporary era. A jeweler by profession, Hamrick was introduced to Sacred Harp singing long ago by J. M. Denton, a Primitive Baptist Minister from Texas. ● The text of this song was taken from Benjamin Lloyd's *Primitive Hymns* (1841), a text-only hymn book still used in Primitive Baptist Churches. Lloyd was a devout Primitive Baptist, who preached in Georgia and east Alabama during the turbulent years of division among nineteenth-century Baptists. His most enduring contribution to that church was his hymnbook, which was kept in print through the years by family members. See: Kelton, "Living Teacher-Composers," 139-40. Joyce H. Cauthen, ed., *Benjamin Lloyd's Hymn Book: A Primitive Baptist Song Tradition* (Montgomery, Alabama: Alabama Folklife Association).

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