

OLD HARP

Number 43
2016

*The New Harp of Columbia
Annual Newsletter*

My Personal Recollections of the History of the Epworth Ecumenical Congregation

*By Christine Griffin, Lead
with additional comments by Kathleen Mavournin, Treble*

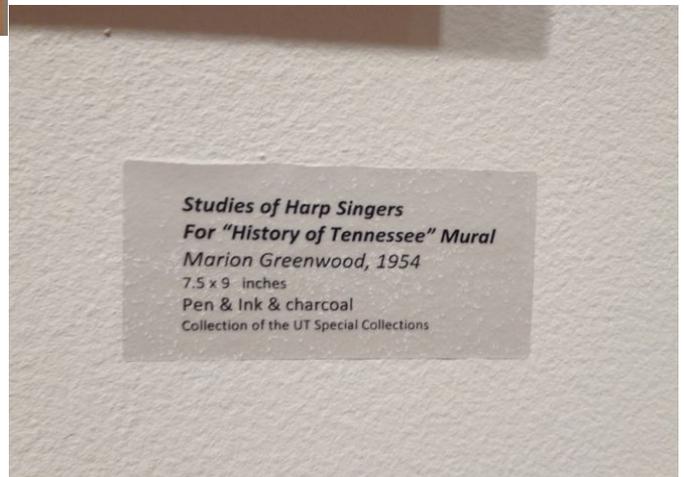
In August of 1967 I came to Knoxville to attend Graduate School. I lived at 1218 Clinch Avenue which is in the Fort Sanders neighborhood in Knoxville, TN, and near the UT campus. I looked around for a church to attend. A small group of Methodists were meeting in a house across the street from an old Presbyterian church at Laurel and 16th St. The Presbyterian congregation had moved on to the western suburbs. They rented their old church to a Catholic group that was building John XXIII on the UT campus.



The new Catholic campus church was ready. Now this Presbyterian church (built in 1898 at the end of the Civil War) would be the site of an interesting experiment between 4 church bodies: Presbyterian, Methodist, Catholic and Episcopal. Between the Methodists and Presbyterians they owned two churches and five houses along 16th Street and down and around the corner of Highland Avenue. The Catholic diocese was willing to give money to fund community outreach workers (\$300 a month salary) and the Episcopal Bishop would fund one preacher, Bill Daniels. The Methodists

would fund a second preacher, Renfro Sproul, and lend the church at 16th and Highland to be used for festivals, office space, whatever. We called it the Jubilee Center. Seven older women, members of this church and still residing in Fort Sanders, would be transferred to the new Experiment. They enthusiastically joined the new group. It was named the Epworth Ecumenical Congregation. Epworth would work to 'bridge the gap' between the University, the poor living down on Forest and Grand Ave, the middle class remnants of Ft. Sanders, and anywhere else it was needed.

I joined this interesting experiment. We reveled in our diversity—Methodist ladies to neighborhood kids who came after school, undergraduates seeking relevance, professors intrigued by the social experiment, artists, eggheads, and entrepreneurs. The two preachers were dynamic and full of vision. Music became a vital part of the service. A songbook and a number of music directors were hired over the years; all of whom played either guitar, mandolin or hammer dulcimer (there was no organ or piano). Songs with roots in Appalachia, as well as contemporary folk songs were sung loudly. And when John McCutcheon hitchhiked into town, he started a group of Old Harp singers who are still very active today. The church services often lasted an hour and half with many sharing their struggles and successes. Both preachers gave inspiring, thoughtful sermons. *(Con't.)*



(Epworth, continued)

Bill Daniels was drawn to the music side of things and eventually wrote Epworth's first grant application to the National Endowment for the Arts. Epworth became known regionally for its three-day Jubilee Festival with hundreds attending, filling up both the Epworth church and the Jubilee Center.

There was a wonderful atmosphere of creativity. If you had an idea for a food co-op, gay coffee house, many kinds of folk dancing, alternative school for elementary and high school kids who didn't 'fit in' to the public schools, a theater group, methadone clinic—just talk to Renfro and Bill. The East TN Community Design Center lodged in one of the houses. The Laurel Free School existed in another for many years, and a short-lived gay coffee house was at Epworth on Friday nights. Epworth was a kind of incubator thanks to its central location and enlightened management. Some of the endeavors hatched there have grown into respected community institutions today. And the Old Harp singers are still gathering on Second Sundays.

And then on August 13, 1982—yes, it was a Friday—the theater group called The Play Group finished its rehearsal in the Epworth basement, and left its Mr. Coffee pot turned off but plugged in. That night an electrical fire burned through the first floor and up through the roof creating a huge hole. But by 1982 the concert crowds had thinned. The congregation was small enough to move nearby to Helen Hutchinson's home. The Harp Singers also

met at Helen's home for a number of years. Renfro had moved on to Atlanta, and Bill carried on with the concert series (now named Jubilee Community Arts) using borrowed space at the Bijou Theatre. The church building sat vacant through two winters before a committee from Jubilee Community Arts and the Epworth congregation started fund raising and obtained a grant with help from the Community Design Center.

The Committee hired Joe Finucane as foreman to work with prison laborers and Susan Campbell as fundraiser. Don Horton volunteered as our architect. I was the Treasurer. And that was how Joe and I got to know each other, writing paychecks for the prison laborers every Friday night at my dining room table. By this time I had moved down to 2201 Clinch Ave. Many years later we married (in the Laurel Theatre/church, of course).

It took an army of volunteers to eventually restore Epworth. The congregation continued for a few more years. The Episcopal Church put Bill to work at another church. Janie Wilson was hired as the new Director of Jubilee Community Arts. JCA eventually bought the building and land from the owners, the Presbyterians. The Epworth Ecumenical Congregation existed about 15 years. It was a magical place and many lives were touched by what happened there. Today there is still much singing, dancing and sharing at events sponsored by Jubilee Community Arts.

Treasurer's Report

Friends of the New Harp of Columbia had income of \$1,831.00, up approximately \$644.00 from 2014. 2015 expenses were \$1307.60 for a net income of \$523.40. It cost approximately \$480 to publish and mail the newsletter in 2015. At the end of 2015 FNHC had \$5,111.76 in assets including checking accounts, cash on hand, and book inventory.

While the majority of our support continues to come from individuals giving \$5, \$10, or \$20, we received several donations this past year of 50 or more dollars. Special thanks go out to the following individuals or organizations for 2015: Bonnie Anderson, Cathy Neeley, Ann Strange, Earl Walker, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, and the Great Smoky Mountain Heritage Center.

Joe Sarten, Treasurer jsarten@utk.edu

Miscellaneous items of interest:

David Sarten hosts a singing for the Pigeon Forge Primary School each year • Jeremy Shipp hosted a presentation of Old Harp singing at Pecha Kucha in Knoxville in May • The *Shopper News* featured the Music of Appalachia Class singing in a September article • We expect Tennessee to again be the majority of participants at Camp DoReMi this August • Do you have old books or recordings of East Tennessee shaped note singers and singings? We'd like to add them to the archives • We mourn the loss of Henrietta Sharp (sister of Martha Graham) who passed away January 19.

The Continuing Adventures of the OldHarpList

by Claudia Dean

We want everyone who wants to get news about Old Harp singing by email to receive it. Tina Becker sends out monthly reminders of upcoming events and Old Harp community members send out occasional emails of interest to the community--now being delivered by a private Google Group. If you send out an email to the group, please be sure it of general interest. Many Old Harp singers know we recently had difficulties with our email list. Chris Stoddart worked more than a year trying to solve the problems and finally decided it was time to take a different approach. Chris has set up Old Harp List at Google Groups to preserve members' privacy and online security and prevent "outsiders" from using our email list to send spam. People must be added to the Old Harp List by an administrator (Chris or me). If you are getting email now from oldharplist, you have already been added. You can see past emails sent to the Old Harp Google Group list at <https://groups.google.com/forum/#!myforums> and clicking on OldHarpList under My Groups. If you don't want to be on the email list you can take yourself off or ask Chris or me to do it. An advantage of Google Groups, at least for the internet intrepid, is the ability to control your own settings. Information is available at support.google.com/groups. (Please see "Contact Information" in this newsletter.)

We also have an old fashioned mailing list for the yearly newsletter which goes through the post office. Ann Strange and I collect mailing addresses and phone numbers for this contact list and would love to have yours.

We are trying hard to inform Old Harp singers about upcoming singings while protecting personal information.

You can also see much of what's going on in the Old Harp Community on a monthly basis by going to <http://newharpofcolumbia.blogspot.com>. If you don't have computer access I will mail you a copy of the monthly singing schedule; give me your name and mailing address.

It's a Small World

by Chaz Barber

Three disparate events apparently draw me to shape-note singing. Though I grew up in East Tennessee, my first encounter with the old style didn't occur until I was working on a graduate degree in music at the University of Tennessee. My thesis was a study of the life and music of Tennessee composer Charles F. Bryan (1911-1955). Since Bryan based many of his classical compositions on folk tunes, in order to learn more about that I began attending Old Harp Sunday evening sings at Helen Hutchison's house in Fort Sanders. Charles F. Bryan wrote an opera called "Singin' Billy" about William Walker, who was responsible for Southern Harmony and Christian Harmony books and some of the tunes in them. At any rate, I was first smitten in 1978, both with the sound and feel of the music, with the wonderful people I met, and with the fact that I didn't have to be technically perfect, as was required in an academic environment.

I've long known that Lowell Mason (1792-1872, composer of several tunes in *New Harp of Columbia* along with many other hymnals and song books, also the uncle of gospel tune composer Fanny Crosby) was a distant ancestor on the paternal side. I feel a certain pride and connection whenever I see his name on a page in any hymnal or songbook.

Finally, my maternal great-great grandfather—Edward Everett Bourne—was a singing school teacher in Kentucky. He was born in 1853 in Jessamine County, and taught both "public" school and singing schools in the area. I don't know much else about him, as there were apparently many secrets in that lineage; my mother didn't give me his tuning fork along with his newspaper obituary until I was in my 40's and had been singing Old Harp for more than ten years.

Many singers talk about how this music "gets in your blood", but I guess I was born with it and just didn't realize it until I grew up!

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Founder: Larry Olszewski; Publisher: Friends of The New Harp of Columbia; Editor: Ann Strange. Thanks to contributors Chaz, Claudia, and all the moderators of all the singings.

NOTES FROM THE LOCAL SINGINGS:

The Knoxville group, by Claudia Dean

The Epworth group meets at the Laurel Theater in Knoxville the second Sunday of most months. Tina Becker and I have been sharing the responsibilities of moderator over the past year and Sara Melton and Chaz Barber have graciously filled in when I could not be there to unlock the Laurel. We have lost several singers recently and the Epworth group is shrinking. We desperately need singers at our monthly singings.

Last year, singing at the Jubilee Festival was dedicated to the memory of our recently passed singers and was very well attended despite nasty winter weather. The lively September singing with UT's Music of Appalachia class drew a good crowd and the Thanksgiving Eve Potluck and Larry Olszewski Memorial Singing was a success thanks in part to Robin Goddard's hard work and hostess skills. Our social events flourish but our music languishes without our regular attention. Please come to the second Sunday singings too!

The Greeneville group, by Jeff Farr

The State of Franklin Old Harp Singers has been meeting for more than 16 years. Many singers have visited the square during that time. We have a committed group of about a dozen singers, including local singers and friends from Chuckey, Johnson City, and Black Mountain, NC. One distinguishing characteristic of our group is a willingness to try any song in the book! We have found some treasures hiding in plain sight. Please come join us and learn a new song.

The Sevier County group by Joe Sarten

The Sevier County Old Harp Singers continue to meet on the third Tuesday evening of each month, except December. As with most of our monthly and annual singings, our numbers have dropped over the past couple of years through the passing of several of our faithful singers. Thanks to Tina Becker's efforts to advertise our singing in the local paper, we have averaged a couple of guests at our singings over the past year. Sometimes they are local, other times tourists. While this helps spread the word, it has not gained us any regular attendees yet. We appreciate all the folks from surrounding groups that periodically come to help us sing along with David and Susan Sarten for hosting our gathering and providing refreshments. Come join us sometime, we can always use another voice.

The Athens group by Cora Sweatt

There will not be an annual singing this year. Cora will be teaching Old Harp to Pre-K and middle school students weekly in Feb. and March in conjunction with the Athens City Schools and Living Heritage Museum. Athens is sad to note the passing of Carlos Matthews who sang with them for 15 years.

***Please return this to Old Harp, 307 Lake Forest Drive, Knoxville, TN 37920 or
respond with this information via email to: loudsinger@gmail.com***

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Donation to the non-profit Friends of The New Harp of Columbia: \$ _____

Note: We currently mail the annual newsletter to more than 300 people by first class mail which is rather expensive. If you want to receive the newsletter, please give us your address above. If you get information via oldharp.org, please send an email and ask to be taken off the mailing list. This newsletter is also posted to the website and updated notices are posted to the listserv and blogspot. Thank you for helping us keep our mailing information up to date. (We will not share your personal information except with other Harp singers.)

OLD HARP ANNUAL SINGINGS IN 2016

Date	Day	Time	Potluck?	Singing and Location and Contact
Feb. 28	Sunday	2:00	*	Epworth Annual Singing during the Jubilee Festival, Laurel Theatre, Knoxville. Contact: Claudia Dean. *Refreshments at 4:00 pm.
March 20	Sunday	2:00	No	Oldhams Creek Missionary Baptist Church, 3629 Boogertown Road, Sevier County. Contact: Veta King or Hal Wilson.
March 27	Sunday	5:30	Yes	Easter Singing at Bill Gooch and Meg Mabbs home, 4401 Alta Visa Way, Knoxville.
April 9	Saturday	9:30	Yes	Quay Smathers Singing School, Clyde, NC Contact: June Jolley
April 10	Sunday	2:00	No	Tuckaleechee United Methodist Church, Townsend. Contact: Tom Taylor.
May 1	Sunday (1st)	2:00	No	Middle Creek United Methodist Church, Sevierville. Contact: David Sarten
May 18-22	TBD		No	Wilderness Wildlife Week, LeConte Center. Contact: David Sarten or Veta King.
June 4	Saturday	10:00	Yes	Franklin singing at New Bethel Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Greeneville, TN. Contact: Jeff Farr.
June 26	Sunday (4th)	12:00	Yes	Beech Grove Primitive Baptist Church, Sevier County, Contact: Sharee Green
July 17	Sunday	2:00	No	Little Greenbrier Schoolhouse. Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Contact Robin Goddard.
Aug.	TBD			Camp Do-Re-Mi, Wildacres Resort, Little Switzerland, NC. www.campdoremi.com
Aug. 21	Sunday(3rd)	2:00	No	Cades Cove Primitive Baptist Church, Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Contact Robin Goddard or Tom Taylor.
Sept. 4	Sunday	TBD	No	Wears Valley United Methodist Church, Sevier County. Contact Bruce Wheeler.
Sept. 11	Sunday	5:30	Yes	Music of Appalachia class from the University of Tennessee and regular Second Sunday singing. Laurel Theatre, Knoxville, TN. Contact: Claudia Dean.
Sept. 25	Sunday (4th)	10:00	Yes	Headrick Chapel, Wears Valley, Sevier County. Contact David Sarten or Bruce Wheeler.
Oct. 2	Sunday (1st)	TBD	No	Valley View Baptist Church, Wears Valley, Sevier County. Contact: Bruce Wheeler
Oct. 16	Sunday (3 rd)	2:00	No	Dollywood Singing, Pigeon Forge, Contact: David Sarten.
Oct. 23	Sunday (4th)	2:00	No	Maryville College, Center for Campus Ministry. Contact: Tom or Nan Taylor or Nancy Olsen.
Nov. 23	Wednesday	6:30	Yes	10 th Annual Larry Olszewski Memorial Singing during the traditional Thanksgiving Eve potluck and Old Harp singing. Laurel Theatre, Knoxville, TN. Contact: Tina Becker.
Dec. 10	Saturday (2 nd)	9:30	No	Sugarlands Visitors Center, National Park, Contact Paul Clabo or David Sarten.

Old Harp Monthly Singings in 2016

ATHENS, TN—Old College Singers—at McMinn Living Heritage Museum (Call Cora Sweatt to confirm)
Third Tuesdays at 5:00 p.m.

Jan. 19, Feb. 16, Mar. 15, Apr. 19, May 17, Jun. 21, Jul. 19, Aug. 16, Sept. 20, Oct. 18, Nov. 15.

GREENE COUNTY—Franklin Singers at Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Greeneville (Call Jeff Farr to confirm)

Last Sunday of the month at 3:00 p.m.

Feb. 28, Mar. 27, Apr. 24, May 29, Jun. 26, Jul. 31, Aug. 28, Oct. 30, Nov. 27.

KNOX COUNTY—Epworth Singers at the Laurel Theatre, Knoxville (Call Claudia Dean to confirm)

Second Sundays at 6:30 p.m.

Jan. 10, Feb. 14, March 13, May 8, Jun. 12, Aug. 14, Sept. 11, Oct. 9, Nov. 13.

SEVIER COUNTY—at Middle Creek United Methodist Church, Pigeon Forge (Call David Sarten to confirm)

Third Tuesdays at 7:00 p.m.

Jan. 19, Feb. 16, Mar. 15, Apr. 19, May 17, Jun. 21, Jul. 19, Aug. 16, Sept. 20, Oct. 18, Nov. 15.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Bruce Wheeler: (865) 428-2239; wwheele1@utk.edu

Hal Wilson: (865) 436-2590

Web Sites of Interest:

www.oldharp.org

www.christianharmony.org and

www.thechristianharmony.com (NC, Ala, GA, seven shapes) • www.campdoremi.com •

www.qssingingschool.org •

www.oldfieldssingers.com (Upper East Tennessee, seven shapes) • www.fasola.org (Sacred Harp/four shapes) •

www.sacredharpnashville.org (Nashville Sacred Harp singers)

Board Members of the Friends of *The New Harp of Columbia*: President Chaz Barber, Vice President David Sarten, Treasurer Joe Sarten, Secretary Ann Strange, Claudia Dean, and Robin Goddard.

Numbers of the Scale.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	X	⊕	◇	△	⊖	⊞	△	⊗
Names of Syllables.	Do.	Ra.	Mi.	Fa.	Sol.	La.	Si.	Do.
Pronounced.	Do.	Ray.	Mee.	Faw.	Sole.	Law.	See.	