

# OLD HARP



Number 26  
Spring 2001

*The*  
*New Harp of Columbia*  
Newsletter



The Lamons Family (see page 2)

## THE COVER PHOTO

The cover photo shows the Lamons family. Of James and Elizabeth's 10 children, only Conard Lamons and Grace Clabo are still with us. The photo shows Minnie Whaley, Wiley Lamons and Bessie Eledge (seated). Bessie is on the far right. Standing (left to right) are Lula Cardwell, Conard Lamons, Reford Lamons, Roxie Sneed and Grace Clabo. Not shown here are Mary Williams and Bernice Barnes. Note that the men changed their name from Lemons to Lamons when they entered the service.

**I**t was the Folk Element in the tunes that first led Dorothy Horn to the *New Harp of Columbia*. The quaint harmonic background proved to be as of a great interest as the melodies themselves. Particularly interesting was the repeated occurrence of certain musical archaisms which have disappeared from modern music but which were common enough at one time in the development of the art. These were: (1) the avoidance of the final third in the cadence, (2) the common use of consecutive fifths and octaves, (3) a primitive form of counterpoint in which the dissonance's might result from the continuance of a melodic line, (4) Crude canonic entrances, and (5) the use of Aeolian minor instead of the Harmonic or Melodic Forms.

*This excerpt is reprinted with the permission of Dorothy Horn. This was taken from Vol. 5, #4 Southern Folklore Quarterly, December 1941 page #251.*

## IN MEMORIAM

Dorothy D. Horn passed away Sunday, February 18, 2001. She was 94 years old and lived in Maryville, TN. She wrote the compilation *Sing to me of Heaven*, which shows the music came from as tunes and chords for the *Sacred Harp*, *Southern Harmony*, and the *New Harp of Columbia*. More information can be found at [vintagejournal.com](http://vintagejournal.com). A harp singer was asked to speak at the funeral and the Old Harp singers were part of the service.

## NEWSLETTER NOTES

Old Harp Singing is a traditional form of community based singing using religious hymns of the 18th and 19th century. The book used in East Tennessee is the *New Harp of Columbia* by Swan. This book was first printed in 1848 in Knoxville, Tennessee, as the *Harp of Columbia*. In 1867, this singing school manual was revised with over 30 tunes or lessons omitted.

This year, The University of Tennessee will put out a revised edition restoring the lessons or tunes deleted in 1867. Books should be available sometime after March of 2001. (Please contact the University of Tennessee bookstore.)

Books will also be available for use and purchase at the Old Harp Singings. These singings are sponsored by churches, elders of traditional Old Harp Singing families, community non profit and for profit organizations, and people who just like to sing and enjoy the music.

The Old Harp Singings are evolving but built upon certain traditions. Every generation has contributed to make the singings grow and reach out to the ever changing communities. Everyone who comes to an Old Harp Singing is considered community. Extra books are usually available at the Old Harp Singings for use, review and even some for purchase. Visitors are encouraged to come up to the singing square of the class and join in and sing.

“ For my own part, I do not think myself confined to any Rules of Composition laid down by any who went before me. ”

– William Billings

### OLD HARP NEWSLETTER

Number 26, Spring 2001

c/o Jubilee Community Arts, 1538 Laurel Ave,  
Knoxville, TN 37916-2016.

Please see back cover for more information about mailing, e-mail, and phone lists, books old and new, new recordings, and contributing to the newsletter.

## THE NEW HARP OF COLUMBIA CALENDAR – 2001 SINGINGS

<u>DATE</u>	<u>DAY</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>DINNER?</u>	<u>INFORMATION (CONTACT PEOPLE)</u>
March 23	Friday	6:00 PM	No	Open the 31st annual Jubilee Festival, Laurel Theatre (D)
March 25	Sunday (4)	11:00 AM	Yes	Epworth Old Harp Singing, Laurel Theatre, 16th & Laurel Ave., Knoxville. Potluck at noon. (D) (H) (S)
April 8	Sunday (2)	1:30 PM	No	Oldhams Creek Singing, (end of Kings Branch Rd.) Sevier County (N) (P)
April 15	Sunday (3)	5:30 PM	Yes	Easter Singing, Gooch-Mabbs Residence, 4401 Alta Vista Way, Knoxville (T)(Y)
April 22	Sunday (4)	2:00 PM	No	Tuckaleechee Methodist Church Singing, Townsend (C)(K)
April 28	Saturday	11:00 AM	Yes	Greene County Singing at New Bethel Cumberland Presbyterian Church (Q) (W)
May 20	Sunday	2:30 PM	No	Old College Singing at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Athens, TN. Refreshments after. (U)
June 17	Sunday (3)	11:00 AM	Yes	Beech Grove Primitive Baptist Church Singing, Sevier County (G) (A)
August 19	Sunday (3)	2:30 PM	No	Cades Cove Missionary Baptist Church Singing, Great Smoky Mtns. National. Park (C) (K)
September 9	Sunday (2)	2:00 PM	No	Wears Valley Methodist Church Singing, Hwy. 321 (Wears Valley Rd.), Sevier County (J) (R)
September 23	Sunday (4)	11:00 AM	Yes	Headrick's Chapel Singing, Hwy. 321 (Wears Valley Rd.), Sevier County (B) (O)
October 7	Sunday (1)	2:00 PM	No	Wears Valley Singing at Valley View Baptist Church, Valley View Dr. off Hwy. 321, Sevier County (J)(L)
October 13	Saturday (2)	10:30 AM and Noon	No	Museum of Appalachia Homecoming Singing, Norris, TN (B) (O)
October 21	Sunday (3)	2:00 PM	No	Dollywood Singing presentation (I) (E)
October 28	Sunday (4)	2:00 PM	No	Maryville College Singing, Blount County (K) (C)
November 21	Wednesday	6:30 PM	Yes	Thanksgiving Eve Potluck & Old Harp Singing, Laurel Theatre, 16th & Laurel Ave., Knoxville (D) (H) (S)
December 8	Saturday	10:00 AM	No	Sugarlands Singing, Sugarlands Visitors Center, Great Smoky Mountain National Park (I) (E) (L)
December 9	Sunday	7:00 PM	No	Christmas Singing at Kathy Jones' home, 9121 Garrison Rd. (S) (O)

OTHER EVENTS: Second Sundays Singing, 7:00 PM, Laurel Theatre, Knoxville, (Call first) (D) (H) (S); Old Harp Workshop at Kathleen Mavournins 344 S Seven Oaks Drive, Knoxville. First Wed of April and May (I) (X); Last Saturday of each month, 7:00 PM, Central Christian Church, 118 W. Summer St., Greeneville, TN (W) (Q)

**CONTACT PEOPLE**

HHH Unless otherwise noted, area code for phone #s on this list is 865. HHH

NAME	PHONE	ADDRESS	CITY	ZIP	E-MAIL ADDRESS
(A) Sharee Rich	429-5877	829 Gnatty Branch Rd.	Sevierville, TN	37876	Trackisme4@aol.com
(B) Lois Luebke	693-9292	311 Triplett Lane	Knoxville, TN	37922	LuebkeL@aol.com
(C) John Wright Dunn	448-6445	7937 Old Hwy. #73	Townsend, TN	37882	
(D) Gideon Fryer	524-3136	509 11th St. #2006	Knoxville, TN	37916	VLPDSINGS@aol.com
(E) Martha Graham	453-3276	210 Conner Hts. Rd.	Pigeon Forge, TN	37863	
(F) Dave and Tina Becker	982-7777	1313 High Street	Maryville, TN	37804	..strokeofhealth@bellsouth.net
(G) Shirley Henry	453-5983	1850 Little Cove Rd.	Sevierville, TN	37862	
(H) Terry Faulkner	584-3659	4178 Ridgeway Rd.	Knoxville, TN	37919	
(I) Kathleen Mavournin	691-9506	344 S. Seven Oaks Dr.	Knoxville, TN	37922	Kmav@icx.net
(J) Henry Lawson	453-7638	3538 Wears Valley Rd.	Sevierville, TN	37862	
(K) Tom & Nan Taylor	984-8585	138 Stanley	Maryville, TN	37803	TTaylor706@aol.com
(L) Bruce Wheeler (weekdays)	974-5421	P.O. Box 1049	Pigeon Forge, TN	37863	..bwheeler@utkux.utcc.edu
(M) Nancy Olsen	983-7631				..bryne@ntown.net
(N) Hal Wilson	436-2590	950 Wilson Hollow Way	Sevierville, TN	37876	
(O) Larry Olszewski	(lv. msg) 522-5851	1232 Forest Brook Rd.	Knoxville, TN	37919	Larryoharp@aol.com
(P) Veta King	428-1375	2907 Jones Cove Rd.	Sevierville, TN	37876	
(Q) Lynn Bowerman	(423) 798-9819	3765 St. James Rd.	Greeneville TN	37743	..TARGHEE302@cs.com
(R) Warren Massey	453-8286	3032 Ogle View Rd.	Sevierville, TN	37862	
(S) Kathy Jones	690-3906	9121 Garrison Rd.	Knoxville, TN	37931	Kej@bigfoot.com
(T) Bill Good	522-0515	4401 Alta Vista Way	Knoxville, TN	37919	Goochbill@aol.com
(U) Carroll L. Ross	(423) 745-9379	P. O. Box 1356	Athens, TN	37371	
(V) Sara Hamilton (weekdays)	(423) 745-7504	TN Wesleyan College	Athens, TN	37371	
(W) Jeff Farr	(423) 639-8211	530 Morgan Rd.	Greeneville, TN	37745	..jeffarr@usit.net
(X) Bob Richmond	691-9506	344 S. Seven Oaks Dr.	Knoxville, TN	37922	..RSRichmond@aol.com
(Y) Meg Mabbs	522-0515	4401 Alta Vista Way	Knoxville, TN	37919	..Megmabbs@aol.com

<http://www.oldharp.org>

<http://www.fasola.org/>

Old Harp Singing Home Page (under construction)  
 Dorothy Horn history: [vintagejournal.com](http://vintagejournal.com)

This site is a starting point to help you find information related to the tradition of Shape Note singing.

## UPCOMING SINGINGS — 2001

### JUBILEE FESTIVAL PRESENTATION — Friday, March 23, 6:00 P.M.

**Directions:** The festival is held every year at the old Fort Sanders Presbyterian Church, later on called Epworth, at the corner of 16th and Laurel Ave. Take I-40 into Knoxville and take the 17th Street Exit. On 17th turn south towards the University of Tennessee. At Laurel Ave., turn left one block, Church on the right. For information on the Harp Singing, call Gideon Fryer at 865-524-3136. For more information on the Jubilee Festival call Jubilee Community Arts at 865-522-5851.

### EPWORTH OLD HARP SINGING — Sunday, March 25, 11:00 A.M.

Epworth Old Harp Singing at the Old Fort Sanders Presbyterian Church at the corner of 16th and Laurel Ave. (Directions above) Contact people are Gideon Fryer at 865-524-3136, Terry Faulkner at 865-584-3659, Kathy Jones at 865-690-3906 or e-mail ke@bigfoot.com. There is a potluck dinner at noon.

### OLDHAMS CREEK MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH SINGING — Sunday, April 8, 1:30 P.M.

**Directions:** From Pigeon Forge on Rte #441 head south towards Gatlinburg. After about two miles, turn left over the river and cross the other two lanes onto Kings Branch Road. Take

Kings Branch Road to the end. Turn right on Boogertown Road, church is 100 yards on the left. Hal Wilson's phone number is 865-436-2590. Veta King, his sister, phone is 428-1375.

### EASTER SINGING — Sunday, April 15, 5:30 P.M. at Bill Gooch and Meg Mabbs house. Their home is located at 4401 Alta Vista Way.

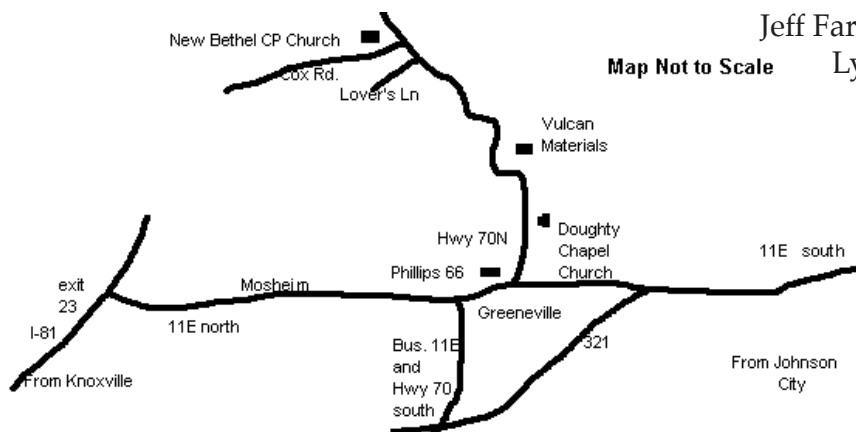
**Directions:** Alta Vista Way is off Kingston Pike, opposite Western Plaza and just east of downtown Knoxville. The house is the last one on Alta Vista Way, on the right. For more information call Bill or Meg at 865-522-0515.

### TUCKALEECHEE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH SINGING — Sunday, April 22, 2:00 P.M.

**Directions:** From Knoxville take Alcoa Hwy. (Rte 129) past McGhee Tyson Airport. Go left at the fork towards Townsend. Take Rte 321 into Townsend (20+ miles). You will see a billboard saying Tuckaleechee Caverns, turn right here. The church is a mile on the left. John Wright Dunn is the host. His phone number is 865-448-6445. Tom Taylor is his assistant for this singing. His phone is 865-984-8585 or e-mail TTaylor706@aol.com.

### GREENE COUNTY OLD HARP SINGING — Saturday, April 28, 2:00 P.M. at New Bethel Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Note: Potluck starts at 11:00 a.m. For more information call

Jeff Farr at 423-639-8211, or Lynn Bowerman at 423-798-9819.



#### Directions to Greene County Singing

**Directions from Knoxville:** Take I-40 N and then I-81 N toward Greenville. Take exit 23 and turn right onto 11E north. Travel 12.3 miles, entering Greenville, and turn left onto Hwy. 70 north at the Phillips 66 gas station. Travel 2.8 miles and turn left onto Cox Rd. New Bethel is the white church on the right, visible from 70.

**Directions from Johnson City:** Travel south on 11E. From the first traffic light past Greene Valley Dev. Center, travel 6.8 miles, through Greenville, and turn right onto Hwy. 70 north just before the Phillips 66 gas station. Travel 2.8 miles and turn left onto Cox Road. New Bethel is the white church on the right, visible from 70.

## UPCOMING SINGINGS 2001 (CONT'D)

### OLD COLLEGE SINGING — Sunday, May 20, 2:30 P.M.

Traditional Old Harp Singing has been moved to St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 123 S. Jackson, two blocks east of Tennessee Wesleyan College, Athens, Tennessee. Refreshments and social after. This singing is hosted by Carroll Ross.

**Directions:** From I-40, take Exit #49. Go east 4 miles on Route #30. Off Hwy. 30 on the left is Jackson. St. Turn left into the parking lot.

### BEECH GROVE PRIMITIVE BAPTIST CHURCH SINGING — Sunday, June 17, 11:00 A.M.

Traditional Old Harp Singing. Potluck dinner at noon. Contact people are Sharee Rich 865-429-5877, Trackisme4@aol.com; and Shirley Henry at 865-453-5983.

**Directions:** From Pigeon Forge heading toward Gatlinburg on Rte #441, take the first right onto Caney Creek Rd. There will also be a sign for Beech Grove Primitive Baptist Church. The church is situated two miles or so up on the left.

### CADES COVE MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH SINGING — Sunday, August 19, 2:30 P.M.

A traditional style Old Harp Presentation at the Cades Cove Missionary Baptist Church. The host for many a year, is the retired Postmaster of Townsend, John Wright Dunn. John can be reached for more information at 865-448-6445

**Directions:** From Knoxville take Alcoa Hwy. past the McGhee Tyson Airport and take the left fork into Alcoa. Stay on this road as you enter Maryville and continue south on what is now #321 to Townsend, Tennessee. Continue straight through Townsend into the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. At the fork of the river (the "Y") turn right to Cades Cove. The Cades Cove ranger station has the last non primitive facilities before you return from the singing. Take the Cades Cove Loop. The Missionary Baptist Church is the third church on the loop. Whatever time that you figure on getting to the church, you will need to add one hour after you get your final

answer.

### WEARS VALLEY SINGING AT THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH — Sunday, September 9, 2 P.M.

Old Harp traditional singing. Henry Lawson will host. He can be reached at 865-453-7638.

**Directions:** From Townsend turn left or east on Rte. #321 over into Wears Valley. The Methodist Church is about 10 miles on the left.

### HEADRICK'S CHAPEL SINGING — Sunday, September 23, 11 A.M.

Traditional Old Harp Singing at Headrick's Chapel. Potluck dinner at noon. Larry Olszewski and Lois Luebke 865-693-9292 are the contact people.

**Directions:** From Townsend, Tennessee, take the turn onto Rte #321 east to the Sevier County line. 100 yards past the line is Headrick's Chapel on the right.

### WEARS VALLEY SINGING AT VALLEY VIEW BAPTIST CHURCH — Sunday, October 7, 2:00 P.M.

Traditional Old Harp Singing at Valley View Baptist Church, hosted by Dr. Bruce Wheeler 865-974-5421 and Henry Lawson 865-453-7638.

**Directions:** From Townsend, Tennessee take the turn on Rte #321 east into Wears Valley. When you pass Headrick's Chapel on the right you will have to go about eight to ten miles to Valley View Rd. (after an "s" turn) Church will be about one mile at the fork in the road.

### MUSEUM OF APPALACHIA HOMECOMING SINGING — Saturday, October 13, 10:30 A.M. & 12 NOON

Old Harp presentation at the Museum of Appalachia Homecoming. 30 tickets are given out to the singers for this yearly event. For more information call Lois Luebke at 865-693-9292. Tickets are usually available at the Wears Valley Singings.

**Directions to Museum of Appalachia:** Exit I-75 at the Clinton/Norris exit. Head east and one mile on the left is the Museum.

## UPCOMING SINGINGS 2001 (CONT'D)

### DOLLYWOOD SINGING — Sunday, October 21, 2:00 P.M.

Presentation at Dollywood in Pigeon Forge Tennessee. For information call Martha Graham at 865-453-3276.

Directions: Follow the signs to Dollywood in Pigeon Forge. Tell the parking attendant that you are singing at the church today, show them your Old Harp book (*New Harp of Columbia*). Take trolley to main gate. Show ticket taker on the left side your Old Harp book and tell them you are singing at the old church today. Proceed to church.

### MARYVILLE COLLEGE SINGING — Sunday, October 28, 2:00 P.M.

Traditional Old Harp Singing at Maryville College. Contact people are Tom and Nan Taylor. They can be reached at 865-984-8585.

**Directions:** From Knoxville, head south on Alcoa Hwy., Rte #129. A half mile past McGhee Tyson Airport, take the left fork into Alcoa and Maryville. Stay on this road. In Maryville this becomes Rte. #321. At Lamar Alexander Parkway, turn right and then take an immediate left into Maryville College. The Singing will be held in the campus' middle building, the old Post Office.

### EPWORTH THANKSGIVING EVE SINGING — Wednesday, November 21, 6:30 P.M.

Thanksgiving Eve Old Harp Singing Community Celebration at the Laurel Theatre in Knoxville. This is located at 16th and Laurel Avenues in Fort Sanders near the UT campus. For more information, call Gideon Fryer at 865-524-3136, Kathy Jones at 865-690-3906, or Terry Faulkner at 865-584-3659.

### SUGARLANDS VISITORS CENTER SINGING — Saturday, December 8, 10 A.M.

Old Harp Singing Presentation in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

**Directions:** From Pigeon Forge, go through Gatlinburg on Rte #441 (or the bypass around Gatlinburg) about three miles. The Visitors Center is just inside the park boundary. Bruce

Wheeler will preside. He can be reached at 865-974-5421 or contact Martha Graham at 865-453-3276.

### CHRISTMAS SINGING — Sunday, December 9, 7:00 P.M.

Christmas Old Harp singing in Karns (Knox County) Tennessee. Kathy Jones has hosted singers off and on for more than five years at her home, but is now making a formal announcement. She lives at 9121 Garrison Road.

Directions: Take Oak Ridge Hwy toward Oak Ridge for several miles. At the stoplight by Hardees and Weigals, turn left onto Byington Beaver Ridge Rd (Hwy 131). Go about 1/2 mile, then turn right onto Garrison Rd.

The driveway is on the right and 9121 is on the mail box. Kathy's phone number is 690-3906.



## CHRISTIAN HARMONY SINGINGS

Our fellow 7-shape note singers "over the hill" are active as usual. The schedule is available for these singings throughout the year 2001. There are primarily in North Carolina and northern Georgia, but also Greenville, SC, Spartanburg, SC, and Johnson City, TN.

We regret we do not have space in this newsletter to print it in its entirety.

*For more information, please see the new web site*

**<http://www.blueridge.net/~larryb/larryxh.html>**

*or contact one of the following to receive calendar information or directions:*

Larry Beveridge (828) 287-9757

[larryb@blueridge.net](mailto:larryb@blueridge.net)

Dan Huger (828) 274-8899

[dehuger@mindspring.com](mailto:dehuger@mindspring.com)

Willie Israel (828) 254-1330 [jerrwill@gateway.net](mailto:jerrwill@gateway.net)

Sharon Kellam (828) 263-0905 [kellam@boone.net](mailto:kellam@boone.net)

## TRADITIONS

1. Look for an oblong book that fits in your hand easily, whether standing or sitting.
2. Look for the rudiments of music in the beginning. Many of the early singing school masters were self-taught as well as some of the students.
3. Since 1804 look for the notes to be printed in characters as opposed to round notes. A different shaped character for each note on the scale. In some 4-note variations, they double up and reuse 3 of the characters.
4. Each book is called a singing school manual. A way to teach basic music to students of all learned abilities.
5. The music is written in dispersed harmony as opposed to close harmony.
6. Each line has its own melody which is called polyphony (the alto may have been written in as an after thought to many of the lessons)
7. Many of the lessons were pirated from traditional sea chanteys, dirges, marching tunes, etc.
8. Odes, anthems and the harder tunes are in the back of the book for advanced classes.
9. Each of the four parts is written and separated from the other parts so students are better able to follow their own lines.
10. The Tenor is the top line, sung by both men and women with high voices.
11. The second line down is Alto, sung by women with low voices (and in the past men).
12. The third line down is the lead or melody line sung by men and women with normal voices (and in the past women).
13. The bottom line is the Bass sung by men with low voices.
14. Traditionally, though, any part may be sung one octave higher or lower as is the wish of the singer. This is called doubling up. Children often sang with their parents no matter what part they sang.
15. Each of the four parts is sung in a group of like singers in a square facing each other.
16. The choir is called a Class.
17. The song or tunes are called Lessons.
18. The lessons are called out by the page number.
19. The shapes or characters are sung, solemnized, before the poetry is sung.
20. Every one in the class can lead a lesson if they so wish.
21. Anyone in the audience can request a lesson or a person to lead a lesson of their choice.
22. A traditional singing will usually open with, and close with a prayer.
23. All day singings will have a covered dish or a potluck for dinner.
24. It is community singing; everyone who can carry a bucket to carry a tune is invited.

### GRACE (LAMONS) CLABO

*(As noted on the inside cover, the Lemons brothers changed their name to Lamons when they joined the service. This interview was conducted by Larry Olszewski)*

Look at the "wish-es engage" on the lead line of #89, *Morality*. Ti-do re-do-ti-la so sung with eights and 16th notes in 2/4 time. We had just played some tapes with Reford and Velma Lamons, Wiley Lamons, and Grace singing out on the front porch. The katydid's are doing the drone. I asked Grace if she would sing the ti-do, re-do, ti-la-so for me. Grace repeats it back for me without missing a lick.

Grace Clabo and Henrietta Sharp usually wind up sitting behind me at Headrick's Chapel, and when Paul Clabo leads #89, they hit those notes solid. I have to refrain from rubber necking around and saying, "how did you do that?" Now, I have Grace alone for this interview and ask her to repeat it for me once more, finally telling her I have never gotten those notes together in the time it needs to be sung. That piece of information gets her tickled. Her dad made her learn that. That was James Lemons. Her mother, Elizabeth, would always sing tunes while she cooked. Sunday afternoon was a time for sitting around and singing Old Harp as well as gospel tunes.

(continues on next page)



(Grace Lamons Clabo Interview, continued)

Grace had a couple of Primitive Baptist hymnals, "Good Old Songs," by Cayse they would sing from. Sunday was a family time for keeping the Sabbath holy. Singing those old tunes always kept them in good measure.

The tape on the recorder switches over to Wiley Lamons. Wiley is singing the lead line solo of many of the Old Harp tunes. In the last 15 years that I've known him, Wiley never got up to lead except once and that was at Caney Creek (Beech Grove Primitive Baptist Church). He wanted to hear #83. Wiley got up and led that one song standing in the pew. His voice was still strong and carried the church.

Back to Grace. One of her uncles was Russell Henry Clabo. "He was preacher over at Caney Creek. Many of the traditional singers have come from there," she said. "Arthur Blaine Shields, Giles Adams and others of the Adams clan. Also remembered were Haskew Trevina, James King, Will Perryman and his daughters, Zelma, Rue and Althea (Alred). All these people were great singers that formed great memories in our minds growing up."

After most of her elder siblings moved away, she can remember walking through Pigeon Forge and Wears Valley on a Saturday to make the Singing at Coker Hill, Blount County, with her father. Her dad called it Tuckaleechee as Grace remembers it. She spent the night with friends and sang all day, then trekked back to Pigeon Forge later that Sunday after the singing. That was in the 1930's.

Fond memories, warm humor, old stories, good folks all tie in. She is happy to have us youngsters take up the Singings. She hopes that we know we are entrusted in something that means a lot to her and her folks, that we are to treasure it and pass it on like the Lemons have.

Before I leave, I get a promise of one of Grace's tapes, as well as a copy of #89 *Morality*.



Interviewed and written by  
Larry Olszewski

## THE CHANGING OF TRADITIONS

As Old Harp Singing was being replaced in the towns as it was growing in the rural communities. Circuit Riders and self taught Singing Masters would hold periodic two week singing schools every 5, 10 or 15 years as Elders of a community would warrant. After the last class was held, a presentation to the "Publik," was held to show what they had learned, or how they had progressed since the last meeting. Students would get up and lead a "Lesson," of their choice to the community, followed by "dinner on the grounds," where everyone would bring their best dish, and sing again in the afternoon. In the afternoon session the people in attendance would join the class and everyone would get a chance to lead or not if they wished. Even those in the audience would have a chance to request a tune of their choice or someone to get up and lead. Everyone was able to contribute if they so chose.

As a member of the class gets up to lead, no one knows if it is a lesson in learning how to lead or whether a lesson that the "class" is able to follow, or a lesson in the poetry, or a memorial of those who have gone before. No one really knows, unless they announce it. The class just follows along as if the lesson were their own.

People had so much enjoyment at these events, that they would hold annual reunions called Harp Singings. Many of these oblong singing school manuals had a lyre embossed on the bindings on the covers, thus the deriving the name "Harp" Singings.

When the old books were no longer in print, like *The Harp of Columbia*, families would get up to sing and lead from the tunes that were not carried over into the new books. They were called Old Harp Singers. Nowadays, any one singing out of the *New Harp of Columbia* is called an "Old Harp Singer."

This book that you hold in your hands was meant, as a way to understand and sing music for every individual who would give it a try. In truth, any group singing from the oblong shaped-note-singing school manuals, singing the shapes first, setting in a singing square, singing acapella, the music written in dispersed harmony, everyone getting a chance to lead or not as they wished, would be called Old Harp Singing. This would be true whether from the *Sacred Harp*, *Christian Harmony*,

(Continued on page 11)

**NEW HARP OF COLUMBIA - REVISED, 2001**

In the 1960's Phil Tabor, a traditional Harp Singer, had a hard time finding copies of the *New Harp of Columbia* to use at the singings in East Tennessee. He used a small inheritance to have 1,000 copies printed and had 950 delivered. (A box of 50 books disappeared en-route) He spent the next ten years traveling to the singings and making books available at cost to those who wanted them until the books were all sold.

The Epworth Old Harp Singers were singing out of copies of the *New Harp of Columbia*. Dr. Ron Petersen of the University of Tennessee in collaboration with Dorothy Horn and Candra Phillips asked The University of Tennessee Press to do a reprint in 1978. The introduction is extensive and enlightening to the new and traditional singer. (That is another story to be told.)

That was a hardback edition that sold well.

However, in the 1990s, the hard cover edition sold out and a loose binder copy was printed. It was not as durable as the UT '78 edition. About six years ago, the Hymn Society came to Maryville and part of its program was to sing out of the *New Harp of Columbia* edition and sing with the area traditional singers still located here.

There were 300 books that were not bought by their members and the local singers were able to pick up 300 used copies. These ran out as well as at the UT Book Store at the beginning of 1999. Negotiations began with UT Press. Our contact person was Scott Danforth, an editor of the UT Press. He was highly interested in the project and asked that the Old Harp Singers bring a proposal to the table and see what would happen.

1. The first proposal that came to mind was go back to the hard bound copy. The "floppies" were not holding up under constant use. I had seen several copies re-bound by Kinkos or other bookbinder.
2. It would make it historically accurate if the tunes that were omitted in the 1867 ed. *New Harp of Columbia* were restored. Many of these tunes are

used in the Southern Harp Books.

3. To help make this happen, Steve Cotham of the McClung Historical Collection was contacted to see if he would make a copy in his possession available. Other copies were found at The University of Tennessee in the Hoskins Special Collections. Ron Petersen had donated many of his 60 odd singing school manuals to Hoskins. In addition, Cenda and Charlie Price of Austin, Texas, also offered their copy of the *Harp of Columbia* to help the *New Harp of Columbia* to become a reality.
4. Also to make this happen, a floppy edition was unbound and pages inserted where changes were

proposed. There were no changes in the front pages. Changes were made in the index. There, the old tunes to be included and the Indexes in the back were going to be all-inclusive with the restored tunes of the Harp of Columbia. All these additions were

included and presented on computer disk to UT Press in a ready to use fashion.

5. Dr. Bruce Wheeler, a UT History Professor and the leader of one of the traditional Singings in Wears Valley, was asked to do a preface.

This proposal was accepted by UT Press management and reviewed by them. They made some suggestions. The Old Harp Singers got together and wrote and rewrote an introduction to this. Many thanks to Kathleen Mavournin, Bob Richmond, Lois and Rhonda Luebke, Marion Hatchett and Ann Strange for their time and efforts. Gideon Fryer and Virginia Douglas proposed to add the poetry to the book that we have used to some tunes. This idea was reinforced by Judge Carroll Ross of the Athens Old Harp singing. We put that additional proposal to UT Press and they accepted it as a growing and living tradition. This would be added at the end of the book.

The *New Harp of Columbia* will be able to be purchased at the UT Bookstore and UT Press. The cost has not yet been determined. In addition, the new books will be available for sale at Old Harp Singings.

**THE NEW HARP OF COLUMBIA**

**BY M. L. SWAN**

---

A FACSIMILE EDITION WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

*Dorothy D. Horn, Ron Petersen, and Candra Phillips*

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE PRESS · KNOXVILLE

## THE CHANGING OF TRADITIONS

(continued from page 9)

*Southern Harmony*, *New Harp of Columbia* or other singings still going on to this day. The singing school manuals are just different in the type of shapes used and the music and poetry therein.

Most communities would have a visiting preacher once or twice a month, usually of different denominations. For it was Sunday, and everyone would attend. One could no better keep it Holy, whether they are a Methodist, Baptist or a Presbyterian. But there were Sundays that a preacher was not available. Various communities felt free to hold their Old Harp Singings on those days. They would pick a Sunday of a month every year to hold these Singings. The visit by these preachers and ministers were scheduled around these annual events. People from nearby communities would trek in and join as well.

People improvised by singing those good tunes, with the "lessons" from the great hymn and sermon writers of early America. Many young people also started court'n at these singings, many a family was created with these harmonies, many a newborn or 80-year-old



was buried to these tunes especially after the Civil War and during the flu epidemic during WW II. Singing those "good old songs," was a way to cope, a way to show grief.

As areas became more populated, many churches were able to sponsor a minister or a preacher of their own full time. Denominational services would be on Wednesday, Saturday and Sundays. The local churches were taking over much of the everyday spiritual needs in a formalized manner.

Many of the new Old Harp Singers are loosely affiliated with local churches of worship. The sense of community, and well being for them can be found in the giving and harmonizing of people and voice at these singings. Mixed with this is a strong blend of second to tenth generation Old Harp Singer who feel duty bound, to give these young, new singers, a strong influence, or reminder of how it was when they started singing.

As areas became more populated, many churches were able to sponsor a fulltime minister.

by Larry Olszewski

## OLD HARP NEWS AND INFORMATION

An Old Harp singer, Jim Franklin, cousin to Martha Graham and Henrietta Sharp, passed away this winter. You will remember him playing the piano at times when we sang *Amazing Grace*. He played piano by ear and worked at the Carriage shop in Dollywood.

The Old Harp singers received "Thank You's" from the National Park Service for the Sugarlands Singing, Dollywood, and Museum of Appalachia.

Through Jubilee Community Arts and Brent Cantrell, we are creating an instruction singing tape/CD. Doug Barber is the coordinator. More information will be available later this

year and in the 2002 newsletter.

Marion Hatchett turned in his "Companion to the New Harp of Columbia" to UT Press. The University of Tennessee Press expects the re-printing of the hard cover *New Harp of Columbia* to be available in July 2001. If you want to be notified about the new book, please check the box on the back cover.

Our mail lists, phone lists, and e-mail addresses need to be updated. Please help us keep expenses down by letting us know if you change addresses. Thank you!

**Old Harp Newsletter**

(865) 522-585; larryoharp@sol.com

**A STORY OF HOW NEW SINGERS GET COMFORTABLE**

As a beginning singer in the early 1980's, I can remember going into Helen Hutchinson's house and trying to learn how not only to sing the shapes but how to sing and sing in harmony. The bass was a good place to put me in the beginning. Gideon Fryer was singing bass, usually alone. Sometimes I sat in a chair and moved my head forward so Gideon would sing towards me. After a couple sessions I sat down on the floor in Helen's living room and let Gid sing into my ear. Soon, the two of us would reverberate, be in perfect tune. The two of us singing the part would sound as strong as four.

It was wonderful. I would sometimes play the music back in my head until two or three in the morning. The intonals of the harmonies were fascinating. Remembering where I had missed a note and ruined them left me chagrined, made me more determined to get the notes right.

The neat thing about all of this is that that I was so intent on this spiritual elixir of The Old Harp, I found that I could memorize the notes being sung into my ear. Trying to sing the poetry was not an accomplished feat until I learned the shapes or memorized them. Oddly enough missing notes was as not as bad a disgrace, as not showing up for the next Sunday Singing. We were missed, new singers and old alike. There were no commitments to showing up at Helen's. Just a good way to wind down a week and start another.

Tolerance was a big part of the singing at Helen's place. In between singing the tunes or "lessons," discussions often erupted on the text of the music. Where did it come from? How was it used? Gideon Fryer even gave a sermon on the "Year of Jubilee," once at church.

Every once in a while, a potluck would be held at

Helen's place, there on Highland Ave. Everyone would bring a covered dish. After the first time I decided to bring Gwumpkie or cabbage rolls. Questions as to ingredients, trading of various recipes were always in progress. Singing sometimes became an interlude to discussions. If there were visitors who wanted to listen it would be reversed, discussions would be stifled for a song or two, but we quickly would revert back to the easy natural setting that we had begun. People new and old were made to feel at home and partake of the music, discussions or the spirit. It was a recipe for harmony with everyone added into the pot and everyone taking out what they needed at that time.

I found out there were traditional singings being held. I wanted to find out about them. The first one was not a sing at a church but at Silver Dollar City, now Dollywood. I figured it was a good way to get a taste of the traditional ways and be unobtrusive. Wrong! I did not get a chance to sit down before I was called up to lead by Martha Graham and Reford Lamons. I had a book and, therefore, I was family. Since I was new, I did not know enough to refuse to lead. The first shall be of the least was never more true. Burl Adams another year later said that he was glad to see new people taking up the Old Harp. He was glad to see me. He was glad to see all who came. Mimicry was a sincere form of flattery. The new singers and the traditional singers have influenced each other and have melded in the spirit. I imagine that is what happened when the Germans and Swedes moved into the area in the 1840s, quickly assimilating in a generation to the culture of East Tennessee. It is no difference with us. The circle is not broken.

Larry Olszewski

Please fill out this form and return to: Jubilee Community Arts, c/o Old Harp Newsletter, 1538 Laurel Ave., Knoxville, TN 37916-2016. Your donation of just \$2 will cover our printing the newsletter you are receiving for an entire year (issue). Make checks out payable to Old Harp please. Please consider donating your old book, the spiral-bound, floppy cover New Harp of Columbia if you purchase one of the newly revised hard-cover books which should be ready by July. We will make them available at singings or to groups.

- I need more information on Old Harp and maybe starting up a new group.
- I would like to be notified about singing for funerals in East Tennessee
- I want to receive a newsletter
- I am interested in an Old Harp instructional tape
- I am interested in the New Harp of Columbia, revised edition 2001 (will you be at any singings to get one?)

My name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

My address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ St: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

I am enclosing \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Comments: \_\_\_\_\_