



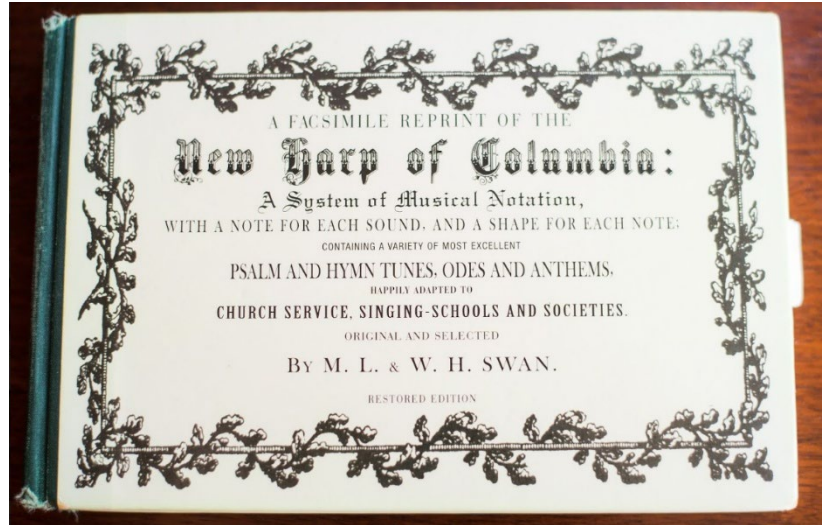
OLD HARP

Number 53
2026

The *New Harp of Columbia*
Newsletter

New Books on the Way!
By: Andrew Whaley

Many of you will be familiar with our recent endeavors to obtain another reprint of songbooks by the University of Tennessee press. The last printing was over a decade ago and the supply of books for sale has been running exceedingly thin.



On a more positive note, the popularity and demand for the book has increased. This is a good problem to have! I'm happy to say, thanks to the arduous work of Joe Sarten, we have reached an agreement to begin the reprint and hope to have books for sale within the year. In the meantime, if you need to purchase a book or have any questions contact Joe Sarten, Andrew Whaley or Claudia Dean.



(Left) Judy Mincey and (Right) Eddie Mash lead an outstanding class at the Sunday session of the 2025 Wear's Valley Convention at Headrick's Chapel (Photos courtesy of Sara Melton)

Remembering Virginia Douglas

By: Claudia Dean

Virginia Douglas, who sang alto with the Epworth Old Harp singers in Knoxville for many years, died in Vermont on October 13, 2025. She had moved to Bristol, Vermont several years before her death to be with family.

I realized I didn't know much factual about Virginia when I started to write a remembrance of her. While driving us on to North Carolina or Alabama sings I learned that she had two daughters, had been married twice, had worked in food service, antique dealing and property management and her sister drove an 18 wheeler for a living. Some of what follows comes from other singers' recollections.

Virginia grew up in Utah and studied at Utah State University's Quinney College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. She moved to Tennessee from the northeast (New Jersey?) to be with family in Oak Ridge. Virginia heard shape note singing and other old-time music at the Laurel Theater and was hooked. She was a valued volunteer at concerts at the Laurel and started singing Old Harp with the Knoxville people who sang at Helen Hutchinson's home before the group coalesced into the Epworth singers.



Longtime Epworth Old Harp alto Virginia Douglas



Luggage tag bequeathed to Sara Baskin by Virginia

Virginia was singing Old Harp when I started singing in 2003. She had strong ideas about the right way to sing which were influenced by her friendship and admiration of Sacred Harp singers on Sand Mountain in Alabama. Virginia travelled to both Sacred Harp conventions and Christian Harmony singings.

Virginia was very particular about our potlucks. She scavenged and donated all our current serving pieces and insisted that food be cut into portions before putting it out for dinner. Robin Goddard, our dinner on the grounds maven, was coached by Virginia. In Robin's words "I helped her for many years with the potlucks and she told me what to do and I did it!"

Everyone who responded to my request for information about Virginia emphasized the same thing—Virginia had strong opinions and did not hesitate to state them. She wanted to see things DONE RIGHT, and that included shape note singing!

"There is nothing refined about Old Harp Singing. Anyone can just go out there and sing, get up and lead a song of their choice, or ask another to lead one for them. It will not get you elected to politics, put the bacon on the table, or get your kids through college. The only thing it will do is uplift your spirit with those around you, letting you and your maker know where you are in preparation for the next world. That is why we are here, isn't it?"

- Larry Olszewski



Larry Olszewski "Larry O" leading at Headrick's Chapel in the early 2000s

OLD HARP ANNUAL SINGINGS 2026

Visit www.oldharp.org or follow Old Harp Singing in East Tennessee on Facebook

Date	Day	Time	Singing Location & Contact
Mar. 20	Friday	6:00	Jubilee Festival Singing- Laurel Theater- Knoxville, TN (6:00 pm-7:00 pm) <i>Jeremy Shipp</i>
Mar. 29	Sunday	2:00	Boogertown Singing- Oldham's Creek Missionary Baptist Church- Sevier County, TN- <i>Hal Wilson & Andrew Whaley</i>
Apr. 12	Sunday	2:00	Tuckaleechee United Methodist Church- Townsend, TN <i>Tom & Nan Taylor</i>
May 3	Sunday (1 st)	2:00	Middle Creek United Methodist Church- Pigeon Forge, TN <i>David Sarten</i>
May 30	Saturday	†10:00	Tennessee Statehood Day- Morning: NHOC at TN State Museum (2 nd -floor Rotunda); Afternoon: Sacred Harp at TN State Library & Archives <i>David Sarten & Jeremy Shipp</i>
June 6	Saturday	†10:00	Franklin Singing- New Bethel Cumberland Presbyterian Church- Greeneville, TN- <i>Jeff Farr</i>
June 13	Saturday	TBD	Great Smoky Mountains Heritage Center- Townsend, TN <i>Robin Goddard</i>
June 20	Saturday	†11:00	Caney Creek Singing- Beech Grove Primitive Baptist Church- Pigeon Forge, TN- <i>Sharee Green</i>
July 19	Sunday (3 rd)	2:00	Little Greenbrier Schoolhouse- Great Smoky Mountains National Park- <i>Robin Goddard</i>
Aug. 16	Sunday (3 rd)	2:00	Cades Cove Primitive Baptist Church Great Smoky Mountains National Park- <i>Robin Goddard</i>
Sep. 26	Saturday	†10:00	Wears Valley Convention- Valley View Baptist Church (Saturday) & Headrick's Chapel (Sunday) <i>David Sarten and Andrew Whaley</i>
Sep. 27	Sunday (4 th)	†10:00	
Oct. 25	Sunday	2:00	Maryville College- Center for Campus Ministry <i>Tom & Nan Taylor & Nancy Olsen</i>
Nov. 25	Wed.	*6:30	Larry Olszewski Memorial- Laurel Theater, Knoxville <i>Claudia Dean, Phillip Pardue & Jeremy Shipp</i>
Jan. 2 (2027)	Saturday (1 st)	†10:00	New Year's Singing- Claxton Community Center- Anderson County, TN <i>Sara Melton, Phillip Pardue and Jeremy Shipp</i>

*Dinner on the ground followed by singing

†Dinner on the ground in between singing sessions

Monthly Singings: (Please contact to confirm as some monthly singings are subject to cancellation)

KNOX COUNTY, TN- Epworth Old Harp Singing at Laurel Theater- 3rd Saturdays at 10:00 AM (Fall singing dates change to Sep. 12th, Oct. 10th, and Nov. 14th) (Jeremy Shipp)

SEVIER COUNTY, TN- Middle Creek United Methodist Church- 3rd Tuesdays at 7:00 PM (David Sarten)

JOHNSON CITY, TN- (Christan Harmony) St. John's Episcopal- 3rd Sundays at 2:30 PM (Jeanie Walker)

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Andrew Whaley: (865) 680-5364, awhaley37@gmail.com

Hal Wilson: (865) 436-2590, (865) 654-9503

SINGING LOCATIONS

Laurel Theater- 1538 Laurel Ave. Knoxville, TN 37916

Oldham's Creek Missionary Baptist Church- 3629 Boogertown Rd. Sevierville, TN 37876

Tuckaleechee United Methodist Church- 7322 Old Tuckaleechee Rd. Townsend, TN 37882

Middle Creek United Methodist Church- 1828 Middle Creek Rd, Pigeon Forge, TN 37863

Tennessee State Library & Archives- 1001 Rep. John Lewis Way N, Nashville, TN 37219

Tennessee State Museum- 1000 Rosa L. Parks Blvd, Nashville, TN 37208

New Bethel Cumberland Presbyterian Church- 90 Cox Rd, Greeneville, TN 37745

Beech Grove Primitive Baptist Church- 625 Caney Creek Rd, Pigeon Forge, TN 37863

Little Greenbrier Schoolhouse- Turn off Wear Cove Gap Rd. onto Little Greenbriar Rd. (The schoolhouse is at the end of the road on the right)

Cades Cove Primitive Baptist Church- Cades Cove Loop Rd, Townsend, TN 37882 (Turn off Cades Cove Loop Rd left onto a gravel road, if you get to the Methodist or Missionary Baptist Churches you've gone too far)

Valley View Baptist Church- 2219 Little Cove Rd, Sevierville, TN 37862

Headrick's Chapel- 4317 Wears Valley Rd, Sevierville, TN 37862

Maryville College Center for Campus Ministry- 211 Maryville College, Circle Dr, Maryville, TN 37804

Great Smoky Mountains Heritage Center- 123 Cromwell Dr, Townsend, TN 37888

Claxton Community Center- 1071 Edgemoor Rd. Clinton, TN 37716

St. John's Episcopal Church- 500 N. Roan St., Johnson City, TN 37601