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Beyond Revival: Composition and Compilation Amidst the Sacred Harp
Revival

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the
degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Music

By

Clinton Ross Davis

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2016

The Dissertation of Clinton Ross Davis is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2016

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Beyond Revival: Composition and Compilation Amidst the Sacred Harp
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by

Clinton Ross Davis

Doctor of Philosophy in Music

University of California, San Diego, 2016

Professor David Borgo, Chair

Since the publication of *The Sacred Harp* tunebook in 1844, families of the rural Deep South have cultivated a tradition of singing that blends written notation with oral traditions and frames them with performance practices and

social rituals that first coalesced in colonial New England. Since the latter 20th century, a revival of their traditions has cultivated a network of singing communities spanning the country. Existing scholarship on this Sacred Harp revival has explored the complex transmissions and negotiations of oral tradition, performance practice, and social ritual from traditional Southerners to a more geographically dispersed and ideologically heterogeneous revival community. Far less attention has been given to the role of printed music in shaping this revival. Throughout the *Sacred Harp* tunebook's century-and-a-half existence, singers have composed new tunes to be added through periodic revision, but the modern revival has inspired a dramatic rise in the production of tunes newly-composed in the book's historical styles, as well as new tunebooks collecting such material. This dissertation will take as its focus this score-centered activity that has emerged from the Sacred Harp revival. Though singers and scholars alike attribute the greatest importance to immaterial dimensions of this tradition, I will argue that the score's materiality serves to structure the community by continually reinscribing the memories of singers within the very aesthetic materials that comprise their tradition. I will examine how scores have structured, negotiated, and reinvigorated the Sacred Harp community in the 20th century, with particular attention given to the revival era. Score-based activity has also vastly outpaced the rate at which new material can be absorbed into *The Sacred Harp* tunebook and therefore Sacred Harp traditions. As a result, singers have organized new forums for the

dissemination and compilation of this material. This activity will be explored as evidence of a new development in the Sacred Harp revival in which primarily revival singers are now using scores to structure communities and traditions standing apart from *The Sacred Harp* and its Deep South heritage.

Chapter 1 Introduction and Review of Literature

The modern Sacred Harp community comprises singers from across the United States who regularly gather to sing from a tunebook called *The Sacred Harp*, first published in Georgia in 1844. The book collects three and four-part acappella hymns and anthems in styles common to the antebellum South set in an arcane notational system known as shape notation. It has survived in use as the object of family traditions in mostly rural communities spanning the Florida panhandle to eastern Texas. Since the late 20th century, Sacred Harp tradition has experienced a dramatic and ongoing revival which continues to transform this once-regional network of families into a national community of singers. “Revival” singers from outside of the South now regularly travel to these rural communities to participate in traditional “singings”. Revival singers in most major urban centers across the country have gone on to organize their own singings modeled after those of the rural South which in turn are frequently attended by “traditional” singers.

This dissertation will concern the proliferation of “alternate repertoire” throughout the modern community including tunes newly composed in the antiquarian styles of *The Sacred Harp* as well as historic material culled from other tunebooks historically and aesthetically comparable to *The Sacred Harp*. An overwhelming majority of singings are organized to sing from *The Sacred Harp* exclusively. However, revival singers have cultivated new social forums through which this alternate repertoire is circulated, sung, debated, and

organized. In many instances this material does not enjoy extended circulation amongst singers, but several communities of Sacred Harp singers have compiled their own collections of this material for use in singings modeled after, complementary to, yet autonomous from Sacred Harp singings.

This study will build on previous scholarship which has analyzed the modern revival and detailed the social and cultural negotiations balancing a pluralistic ethos necessitated by an expanding membership with respect for the integrity of a uniquely southern heritage. Whereas existing work has emphasized the transmission and negotiation of oral traditions, performance practices, and social rituals, I will give greater attention to engagements with scores as agents of socialization and community structuring. I will argue that the increasing engagements with scores are a means through which individuals are socialized into the Sacred Harp community; that these engagements with scores continue to reinvigorate the Sacred Harp community and tradition; and that these engagements with scores are a means of constructing new traditions and communities of practice overlapping with those of *The Sacred Harp*, particularly amongst communities and regions outside of *The Sacred Harp's* deepest traditions. I will argue that, in a peculiar reversal of what is typically expected, oral traditions have served a preservative and stabilizing function within the expanding Sacred Harp community while acts of writing have become a means through which more varied social topographies are structured.

A History of Sacred Harp Tradition: New England and The Singing School Model

Sacred Harp tradition is today an amalgamation of repertoire, performance practices, pedagogical methods, and social rituals that accrued between the American colonial era and the American Civil War. Many of the oldest strains of Sacred Harp tradition are traceable to the New England singing schools of the late 17th and 18th centuries. These earliest institutions of American musical education were founded by Puritan churches desiring to improve congregational singing that, until that time, had been limited largely to practices of lining out¹ psalms. Training included musical literacy, singing in harmony, and singing to a regular pulse.

As composition and musical instruction became economically viable professions in the colonies in the latter 18th century, singing schools became detached from the church and led by itinerant instructors, composers, and musicians. Though the schools evolved into more autonomous secular-social events, they remained dedicated to the singing of psalms and sacred poetry. The singing school has remained a viable means of educating new singers of various shapenote traditions into the present day, and some of its pedagogical

¹Early protestant churches of England organized singing amongst illiterate congregations by having one literate leader recite printed sacred poetry to a congregation one line at a time. The congregation would respond by singing back the line using common vernacular melodies, resulting in an antiphonal structure between leader and congregation. The practice remained common in the American colonies and has survived in amongst a handful of white and African-American churches in Appalachian and Deep South communities.

techniques have become a standard part of all shapenote singing today, even outside of singing school contexts.

Instructors made use of oblong tunebooks which collecting sacred poetry and psalms set to three or four part harmony, and typically included a prefix of rudiments regarding musical notation and group singing. Early tunebooks reprinted repertoire taken from English sources, particularly music of the West Gallery Tradition², however a preference for colonial-born composers over English sources coincided with a rise in revolutionary sentiment in the colonies. In 1770, Boston-based composer-publisher William Billings published his *New England Psalm Singer*, the first tunebook dedicated to colonial-born composers exclusively. Despite its native-born emphasis, Billings and other composers of the so-called First New England School collected in his *Psalm Singer* typically composed in styles and genres modeled after the few West Gallery scores available in the colony, including fuguing tunes, plainsong, anthems, odes, and set pieces.

Colonial music pedagogy utilized a common English solmization comprised of only four syllables: fa/faw, so/sol, la/law, and mi. This solmization is still used today by Sacred Harp singers in their practice of “singing the notes”. When a group of singers, known as a “class,” begins a tune, they will first sing with this solmization before repeating the tune with its printed text.

Early tunebook publishers experimented with adaptations to standard Western

²“West Gallery Music” now refers to composed music of 18th and 19th century English parish churches which was often performed by a select choir typically arranged at the west end of the sanctuary.

notation as pedagogical aides to sight singing, including at least one that affixed abbreviations of fa, sol, la, and mi syllables onto a staff in lieu of noteheads (Jackson, 343). The most lasting of these experiments was a system credited to William Little and William Smith of Pennsylvania. Their system, first used in their *Easy Instructor* (1801) tunebook, assigned four shaped note heads to the fa, sol, la, and mi syllables (figure 1.1). *The Easy Instructor* largely reprinted the popular repertoire of New England composers in this new shape notation, which will be referred to as “fasola notation” for the remainder of this study.

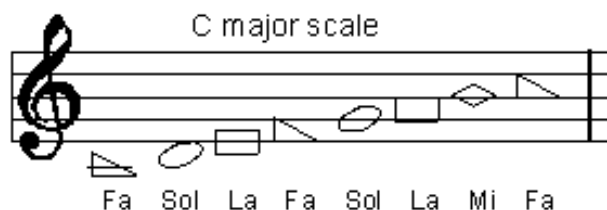


Figure 1.1: Fasola notation and solfege. Though the notation was invented at the turn of the 19th century, the solfege to which it was affixed has been employed amongst the English since at least the 16th century.

The Journey Southward

As fasola notation and the singing school paradigm found acceptance in the Mid-Atlantic and southern regions, publishers continued to reprint New England compositions while contributing new genres of “folk hymns” which drew from regional vernacular sources. Nearly half of Pennsylvanian John Wyeth’s *Sacred Repository* (1810) reprinted repertoire from *The Easy Instructor*, however his *Sacred Repository Part Second* (1813) collected

arrangements of secular melodies set to sacred poetry as well as tunes employed by radical Christian movements leading camp meeting revivals in the state's Western frontier. Each volume found great success amongst varying denominational movements, and Wyeth's example of curation and compilation was taken up by publishers operating further south and in the Midwest (Steel, 1988).

This folk hymnody demonstrated melodic sensibilities, harmonic idioms, and texts distinct from the earlier New England hymnody. Those derived from oral traditions of secular balladry and social music suggest their English, Celtic, and Scottish ancestry with a strong modal quality and a tendency towards pentatonicism or gapped scales (Jackson, 158). Folk hymns derived from the camp meeting revivals of the Second Great Awakening often preserve simple, repetitive texts, and new call-and-response-like forms designed for spontaneous and ecstatic group singing amongst illiterate frontier settlers.

Harmonies, typically invented and arranged by tunebook compilers, are characterized by modal stasis rather than more tonal, functional approaches of the New England School. Additionally, folk hymnody often exhibited organum-like textures resulting from the copious use of open and parallel perfect intervals. There was some precedent for such "incorrect" harmony in earlier New England School and English West Gallery music, however this became a central compositional feature of notated folk hymnody which, in its most

extreme forms, demonstrates a virtually dyadic harmony. Finally, these southern varieties of hymns increasingly abandoned alto lines, favoring three-part textures (figure 1.2).

These Mid-Atlantic developments in singing school culture failed to take a lasting hold in the musical cultures of New England and the Midwest due largely to the efforts of musical reformists such as Lowell and Timothy Mason. Working in Boston and Cincinnati, respectively, they campaigned for the abandonment of the singing school paradigm entirely - New England hymnody, southern folk hymnody and its distinct harmonic idioms, shape notation, amateur composers & instructors - and championed in its place a reformed “scientific” music and pedagogy modeled on urban religious song of Europe. Thus, as the singing school paradigm quickly moved south and inland, reform efforts would later follow, molding public tastes. For example, repertoire of *The Easy Instructor* at the dawn of the 19th century was almost entirely American in origin, but by its 1831 edition, several revisions had made the book’s contents almost entirely European in origin (Bealle, 3). The goals of this “Better Music Movement”³ reverberated throughout the 19th century and nearly extinguished the singing school paradigm by the early 20th century.

³Reformers did not unify or formalize their efforts under any single banner, but often described the music they championed as “scientific” in design. Meanwhile the term “Better Music” and all of its variable terms for reformers (e.g. “Better Music Boys”, “Better Music Boosters”, “Better Music Movement”). seems to have its origins in the 20th century scholarship of George Pullen Jackson who passionately defended fashola traditions. This terminology is widely used today amongst fashola singers, often with a hint of ironic disdain.

252 WONDROUS LOVE. 12, 9, 6, 6, 12, 9 *Christopher.*

What won-drous love is this, oh! my soul! oh! my soul! What won-drous love is this, oh! my soul! What won-drous love is this! That

caused the Lord of bliss, To bear the dread-ful curse for my soul, for my soul, To bear the dread-ful curse for my sou.

Figure 1.2: “Wondrous Love” as it appeared in William Walker’s *Southern Harmony* (1835). Note the three-part setting and gap scale in which the third scale degree, Bb, does not appear in the tenor line.

The Sacred Harp was published in 1844 in Georgia at a time when southerners had become acquainted with reform repertoire and ideology, though they had not adopted them completely. Its co-compilers Benjamin Franklin White and Elisha King continued to reprint New England School compositions and popular folk hymns of other tunebooks. In addition, White arranged new folk hymns and collected those by other composers in his social sphere. However, he also included compositions by reform leader Lowell Mason himself, though he sometimes southernized Mason’s reformed harmonies. Based in Carrollton, Georgia, White successfully cultivated an audience and support network for his book in the surrounding area working as

an educator and publisher and organizing the Southern Musical Convention, an annual singing dedicated to *The Sacred Harp* (Cobb 131).

The Ascendency of Gospel Music

In the postbellum South, the pace of musical reform only accelerated as Gospel music gained popularity. Fully embracing the sound and ideology of the Better Music Movement, the Gospel style formed in the North around disciples of Mason and was taken up by southerners such as Virginia-based publisher Aldine Kieffer, who cultivated a postbellum musical paradigm in the latter 19th century standing in contrast to that of the antebellum singing schools (McNeil, 215) (see table 1). Students of Kieffer such as Anthony Showalter and James Vaughan became celebrated composers of a new southern Gospel music making use of close harmony, tonal-functional progressions, and homophonic textures. The music was promoted and taught in conjunction with new pedagogical models that made use of the seven syllable, do-re-mi solfege. Gospel music texts favored emotional composure and uplifting sentiments over the sometimes cathartic or emotionally distraught texts of Watt's hymnody or camp-meeting tunes. The Gospel publishing industry also developed new economic models for the printing and circulation of their music. Older tunebook compilers preferred to revise their existing works, slowly adjusting their repertoire to sustain interest in their work. The Gospel music industry committed itself to printing smaller books of new compositions each year, to be used at annual "little book" conventions

(Stanley, 1982). Gospel promoters continued rhetorical strategies of previous generations, branding all matter of the singing school paradigm as old-fashioned and culturally backwards. As musical education in America became institutionalized and aligned with standards and conventions of Europe, the amateur, itinerant instructors of singing schools were criticized for peddling a scientifically corrupt music, and their singing schools seen as a breeding ground for morally corrupt youth (Bealle 51).

As the Gospel paradigm gained favor, older shapenote publishers attempted to bridge the gap between old and new. The example of South Carolinian publisher William Walker is revealing in this case. Walker's antebellum *Southern Harmony* (1835) tunebook was the first deep-south publication of fasola singing school music, and its contents suggested an immunity to reform efforts. However, Walker's postbellum *Christian Harmony* (1866) mixed older repertoire with new Gospel compositions, and set all of its material in a new shape notation system featuring 7 shapes corresponding to the do-re-mi solfege system favored by the Gospel industry. The Gospel paradigm found great favor in the urban South by the end of the 19th century, relegating fasola culture and repertoire to an increasingly small number of rural regions of the South.

Fracturing of The Sacred Harp Community

The early 20th century was a crucial period in the history of Sacred Harp culture as singers struggled to respond to the Gospel movement which

siphoned away their numbers. Revising a tunebook to include new material had been the established means by which publishers maintained or revived interest in a singing school tunebook. B.F. White had done so with *The Sacred Harp* on three occasions and died in 1879 before completing his fourth revision (i.e. 5th edition). In his absence, numerous parties intervened, offering distinct revisions with competing visions for how fasola repertoire and singing school culture should or should not be modernized. Rather than discussing these various revisions in full, I will describe only the three revisions which are the sources of continuing singing traditions today, and detail their curatorial and editorial differences.

Wilson Cooper of Dothan, Alabama created the first revision of B.F. White's book in the 20th century. In his editing of antebellum compositions, Cooper seemingly moved both forward and backwards. Cooper modernized the book's repertoire by adding alto lines to all compositions, thereby making the book uniformly four-part in its arrangements. Though this addition of alto lines brought the book more in line with modern Gospel practices, they did not fundamentally alter the antebellum harmonic character of the older tunes. Cooper's most noticeable gesture to the past was the removal of all printed accidentals. Though B.F. White had allowed some chromaticism or use of harmonic minor, Cooper's book was entirely diatonic/modal as had been the case in popular Mid-Atlantic tunebooks preceding *The Sacred Harp*⁴. Finally,

⁴The compiler and publisher Ananias Davisson of Harrisonburg, Virginia, for example, did not permit accidentals in his publications.

Table 1.1: Aesthetic paradigms of southern antebellum and postbellum sacred song.

	Antebellum Paradigm	Postbellum Paradigm
Harmony	Dispersed harmony, dyadic harmony, modal/diatonic	Close harmony, triadic harmony, tonal/chromatic
Arrangement	3 parts, no alto	4 parts, with alto
Texture	Polyphonic	Homophonic
Repertoire	New England School, Folk Hymnody	Gospel music
Notation	Four shape fasola notation	Seven shape do-re-mi notation or round note notation

Cooper admitted many gospel-tinged tunes to his book, though without the chromaticism that often accompanied that style. This book has been continually revised to this day and is the traditional book of communities in the gulf South from Florida to East Texas, who might refer to it as the Cooper Book or Cooper Revision.

B.F. White's son, James Landrum White, made numerous revisions to his father's work that were rejected by the Sacred Harp community, including one set in seven shape, do-re-mi notation. He found some lasting acceptance with a 1911 revision that left more of his father's work in tact (e.g. fasola notation, some chromaticism, some three-part arrangements), and added a supplement of Gospel tunes at the rear of the book. This book has not since

been revised but is still used amongst a small number of southern families who refer to it as the White Book.

Joseph James released a revision of *The Sacred Harp* that same year that similarly retained some older three-part arrangements, added new tunes in fasola styles, and admitted no Gospel tunes. This book has been continually revised into the present day and is today referred to as the Denson Book, named for members of the Georgia family that would later revise James' work throughout the 20th century.

20th Century Revival

A renewed interest in Sacred Harp traditions slowly accrued throughout the nation in the mid and late 20th century after several generations of subsistence or slow decline amongst southern singers. The Sacred Harp revival certainly benefitted from the mainstream revival of folk and traditional musics of the 1960s, though the effects of that broader revival on the Sacred Harp community were felt later. By the time singing conventions first appeared in northern urban regions, the commercial spotlight on folk music had since shifted elsewhere. Nonetheless, the "folk boom" cultivated amongst a generation of urban youth an appreciation of traditional musical practices, particularly those of the rural south.

In New England during the 1970s, a handful of semi-professional choirs began programming shapenote repertoire in their concerts and corresponding with southern practitioners. Members of Larry Gordon's Word of Mouth choir

attended the Georgia State Sacred Harp Singing Convention of 1976. Later that very year, a Word of Mouth concert at Wesleyan University in Connecticut became the impetus for the first Sacred Harp singing convention organized outside of the South. Many Georgian singers travelled to attend including Hugh McGraw, then executive secretary of the Sacred Harp Publishing Company which oversees the Denson Book. A revered singer and singing school teacher, McGraw brought with him a busload of southern singers who would continue to travel north to other singings in the coming decades, powerfully shaping the dynamic of the revival (Marini 83; Clawson 31; Miller, 167).

Conventions in the Midwest began almost a decade later, but scholars have suggested that those organized by Chicago-area singers proved more catalytic, accelerating the pace of the revival. Early attempts to sing shapenote music in Chicago can be traced back to the Old Town School of Folk Music. The founding of the school in 1957 coincided roughly with the rise in popularity commercial folk music, and became a favorite venue for notable performers such as banjoist Pete Seeger. In the early 1980s, local folksingers associated with the school became increasingly interested in shapenote repertoire. In 1985 these Chicago singers organized a Sacred Harp singing convention which again attracted the attendance of McGraw and his fellow Georgian singers. Like the New England singers before them, Chicago singers began travelling south at the invitation of McGraw, cultivating friendships and

pathways through which singing traditions, social identities, and social boundaries have been negotiated.

As the size of the Sacred Harp community has expanded from regional to national, the rooting of its membership has shifted from kinship to affinity. With that shift, the community has grown increasingly heterogeneous with regard to the political, cultural, and non-musical ideologies of its membership. This observation in particular has been a core interest of recent scholarship, which often foregrounds this heterogeneity against a background of mainstream American “culture wars” in the 21st century (Clawson; Miller).

Virtually all scholars and singers of the modern community have adopted the nomenclature of “traditional” and “revival singers” to analyze the modern community of singers. Traditional singers are generally understood to be members of multi-generational singing families or else from the South and therefore more ingrained in the lives and culture of life-long singers more so than revival singers. A “revival singer” is typically one not born into a singing family or the South, and one who learned of singing culture through other revival singers or other mediations such as scholarship or recordings.

Additionally, these labels are commonly understood or intended to be used as shorthands for different cultural and ideological positions. Traditional singers are typically understood to be rurally based, holding fewer or no advanced degrees, politically conservative, and self-described Christians. Revival singers are generalized as urban-based, holding advanced degrees,

politically liberal, and not sharing the same religious convictions of southerners, if holding any at all. There are of course singers in significant amounts whose personal situation and beliefs are split across this dichotomy, but these terms remain useful for the discussion of larger sociological and cultural developments surrounding singing tradition.

These labels, identities, and cultural perceptions are employed by singers and scholars alike, and at times singers have strategically deployed them in the negotiations of authority and the transmission of traditional knowledge throughout the modern community. Traditional singers have asserted their authority as preservers of a 150-year-old tradition, and revivalists have often been eager to accept, acknowledge, and celebrate that authority, sometimes going as far to fetishize southerners as “living ancestors” (Miller, 14). In this way, traditional singers have benefitted from a particular kind of “otherness” that has been assigned historically to rural southern whites in either derogatory terms (i.e. “hillbilly”) or via the “folk boom’s” romanticisation of “folk culture” rooted in nostalgia and counter-culturalism. Southerners, self-aware of this “otherness” at times deploy their “southernness” as a means of asserting their authority, perhaps playfully (Miller, 159).

Early revival singers were typically unaware of the numerous performance practices and social rituals that accompany southern singing. However, amidst reciprocated travels between north and south, revival singers found themselves “amiably but implacably” encouraged by southern

traditionalists to preserve the full spectrum of traditions that contextualize *The Sacred Harp* (Clawson, 46). Chicago singers have often recounted one of their earliest conversations with Hugh McGraw over the phone in advance of their first convention. When McGraw discovered that Chicago singers were not “singing the notes,” he responded, “Well, you’ll learn” (Miller, 105). Numerous exchanges and encounters like this have led to the widespread adoption of southern traditions throughout the revival community.

Singers today gather to sing as a “class” under a few circumstances referred to most generally as “singings”. Many local communities meet regularly and frequently for short “practice singings” to sing, socialize, and prepare for more special occasions. Some may organize annual memorial singings, in which a class gathers for a full day of singing in memory of a particular local deceased singer. Finally, many communities host large annual singing conventions intended to draw from a regional, even national community of Sacred Harp singers for a full weekend or more of singing.

Memorial singings and conventions can last as many as six hours in a day, with a break for lunch, otherwise known as “dinner on the grounds.” Singers arrange themselves in a “hollow square” with bass, tenor, alto, and trebles (the colloquial and preferred term for “soprano”) separately seated and facing inward. Any singer so desiring can come to the center of the square and select a tune to lead the class in singing. Conventions include non-singing traditions such as the memorial lesson. In larger conventions, time will be set

aside to memorialize both singers that have died in the previous year and those whose health has prohibited them from being in attendance. These singers are recognized by having their names read from a list which any singer present can add too. Designated individuals will add some commentary or reflection on the powerful bonds of friendship formed through singing, and the lesson will conclude with a tune sung in tribute to those named.

A Review of Sacred Harp Literature

The first substantial attempt to collect a history of Sacred Harp singing came from within the Sacred Harp community itself. Joseph James, whose 1911 revision of *The Sacred Harp* is predecessor to the most widely used edition today, authored “A Brief History of the Sacred Harp and Its Author, B.F. White, Sr., and Contributors” in 1904. However, it has not been consulted for this study due to its extreme rarity, and the dubious accuracy of James’ scholarship as determined by other scholars (Cobb, 232).

The first account produced by a scholar, albeit one trained in German studies, came in 1933 from George Pullen Jackson and was entitled “White Spirituals In The Southern Uplands: The Story of the Fasola Folk, Their Songs, Singings, and ‘Buckwheat Notes.’” Jackson’s work described numerous survivals of fasola music culture including an annual singing from the *Southern Harmony* tunebook which still continues today in Benton, Kentucky. In his discussion of *The Sacred Harp*, an incidental bias towards Joseph James’ 1911 revision (later to become revised and known as the

“Denson Book”) is noticeable. Though Jackson describes the existence of the Cooper Book community, he was unable to make contact with or visit Cooper Book singers and therefore relies primarily on experiences with Denson Book singers (106). Though unintended, this bias likely informed the direction of later scholarship as well as the social patterns of the Sacred Harp revival in which the James/Denson books become the *de facto* Sacred Harp, and in turn, a focal point for research on the modern Sacred Harp revival.

Jackson devotes a large portion of his book to classic musicological concerns and methodologies such as tune provenance as deduced from comparisons of tune transcriptions. The term “white spiritual” was Jackson’s invention and expressive of his belief, argued in the book, that shapenote repertoire, and camp meeting tunes in particular, constituted an originary source from which the African-American spiritual was wholly derivative. It is not difficult to situate this argument, founded on a presumed lack of creative and cultural agency amongst African-Americans, within the racist ideologies of his time. Though the term and this reading of history has since been abandoned by scholars, it has had some lasting circulation amongst enthusiasts of folk and vernacular musics, perpetuated by its use in other period scholarship and in early commercial releases of fasola field recordings (figure 1.3).

Jackson produced several other works in his lifetime that concerned the Sacred Harp tradition, but it was Buell Cobb’s “The Sacred Harp: A Tradition

and Its Music" (1978) that became a second essential resource for new singers at the dawn of the revival era. Cobb's book was more ethnographic and sociological, seeking to detail "the inner workings, the local variations, and the style of that tradition for those who know it only at a distance" (vii). Implicit in this remark, of course, is the notion that Cobb is an "insider" compared to previous scholars or his audience of incoming revival singers. Cobb began singing during college, and as a native Alabaman, deeply committed singer and researcher, and charismatic writer, his work emerged from a place closer than "a distance" and continues to serve as a valued resource for new singers curious about the tradition. However, with the authority his "insider" status commanded, Cobb's writing likely birthed, lent credence to, or otherwise perpetuated questionable ideas that could come only from a committed Denson Book singer. His characterization of Wilson Cooper as an "interloper" (90) to B.F. White's legacy, his suggestion that the completion of Cooper's revision before James' was "regrettable" (90), and his implication that Denson Book singings are superior in quality to those of the Cooper Book (126), likely indoctrinated many early revival singers.



Figure 1.3: Commercial releases of field recordings of southern hymnody have perpetuated use of the term “white spiritual” amongst some folk music enthusiasts.

Numerous scholarly works have since been produced elaborating on the musicological, social, and cultural history of the James-Denson lineage. Warren Steel’s “Makers of the Sacred Harp” (2010) collects historical essays with a complete directory of biographical information on composers and poets appearing in the most recent revision of that lineage. In 2015, Jesse P. Karlsberg organized a facsimile reprinting of the 1911 James revision with a substantial introductory essay detailing that book’s formation and reception. Comparable research on Cooper and White Book traditions is today lacking.

The historical scholarship which does mention these books typically does so only when exploring the turn-of-the-century revision landscape as a whole (Campbell 1997; Vinson 2006). Rarely does scholarship approach these books or their respective communities as autonomous subjects.

This hierarchy is reinforced by a perception amongst many singers that the Denson lineage has best maintained the integrity of *The Sacred Harp* into the present day in terms of repertorial and aesthetic precedents set forth by B.F. White. In his article on the 1991 revision of the Denson Book, John Bealle writes, “it has been the particular good fortune of the Denson/James lineage, however, to have extended its popularity by protecting the traditional character of the work.”(1994, 27). Though Cooper’s addition of new repertoire demonstrated a greater Gospel influence than the Denson, however his revision of older material compiled by B.F. White appears more faithful to older principles of dispersed harmony compared to similar revisions undertaken by editors of the Denson lineage. Perhaps the most dramatic revision to older material undertaken by Cooper, James, and the Densons was the composition of alto lines for tunes which had previously had only 3 parts. Comparing these, Wallace McKenzie found that those of Cooper’s lineage more often preserved the dyadic harmonies of the antebellum paradigm, while those of James and Denson origins had a noticeable propensity to recontextualize these as triadic harmonies with a more “modern” sound (1989). Nonetheless, the matter of Gospel repertoire has overshadowed the more nuanced matter of alto

harmony in many singers' estimation of the Cooper Book. Thus, claims like Bealle's are typically dubious, existing within a debate that perhaps has no simple or easy answer.

The one noticeable exception to this scholarly aversion to non-Denson Book traditions concerns research on Cooper Book singers of the Okefenokee swamp lands which bridge Southern Georgia and the Florida panhandle. In the 20th century singers here cultivated an exceptionally unique style of singing due in part to singers' membership in radically conservative Primitive Baptist congregations. Restricted from sharing worship practices with those outside of their congregations, Hoboken-area singers' style evolved in an isolated religious context where it absorbed influences of other Primitive Baptist traditions of song. Laurie Kay Sommers created the most thorough documentation of this community's unique singing traditions and performance practices (2010). While her documentation and discussion of unique musical and cultural influences in the region are of great value, Sommers unfortunately does not take great care in distinguishing between Hoboken singers' sacred culture and secular lives, which implicitly and inappropriately exoticizes her central subjects. While amply discussing the Lee family of singers and their unique history as Primitive Baptists, Sommers' accounting of the Lees' secular lives extends little beyond an observation that David Lee had not owned a television until recently, thereby leaving the reader to assume that the

isolationism of the Lees' former⁵ religious denomination extended to their secular lives. Later interviews with the Lees have shown this to be not even remotely true (Miller, 155). While still collecting valuable documentary material, Sommers' work reveals the challenge of appropriately reconciling such seemingly arcane cultural practices as shapenote singing or Primitive Baptist faith with a more "modern" world that often overlaps in the lives of traditional singers.

Robert Vaughan's "Rethinkin' Our Thinkin': Thoughts on Sacred Harp 'Myths'" (2012) stands as the most concise and direct recognition of the Denson Book bias. In this small self-published book written for singers more so than scholars, Vaughn, an East Texas-based Cooper Book singer, compellingly dismantles a series of inaccurate historical and musical "myths" which have privileged regional biases amongst some traditional singers, elevating them to become the canonical lore of the modern revival. For example, he counters Buell Cobb's characterizations of the Cooper Book, its original editor, and its communities described above. Vaughn's work speaks also to the more distributed discursive practices of singers and scholars which construct the modern hierarchy of Sacred Harp books either explicitly or subliminally. In his closing words, Vaughn tellingly laments that "[a]s late as 107 years after Cooper issued his first edition of *The Sacred Harp*, much

⁵ The Lees, as a result of their desire to attend Sacred Harp singings outside of their own congregation, had already left or been asked by the congregation to leave by the time Sommers was conducting research. Singings require entering into prayer with "outsiders", which was not allowed in their congregation.

scholarly research still couldn't get the given name of W. M. Cooper correct. (No it is not William)" (39). Vaughn is currently producing a history of the Cooper Book's contributors to complement Steel's volume on Denson Book's composers and poets (Kahre, 2015).

Sacred Harp singing has been the subject of documentary films which have been consulted in this study. Jim Carnes' "Sweet Is The Day: A Sacred Harp Family Portrait" is a sociological examination of Sacred Harp tradition anchored by the Wootten family of the Sand Mountain region of northeast Alabama. Released in 2000, the film collects footage shot over several decades documenting the family's long history in the region and their connection to the local economy as farmers and operators of a local feed supply store. Discussion of music centers on the affective bonds constructed through singing, and the multiple layers of memories ascribed to repertoire over generations of tradition.

Carnes' documentary avoids discussion of more divisive issues surrounding tunebook revisions and other regional variations in group singing techniques, though these would prove interesting subjects for exploration. Though the Wootens are deeply involved with Denson Book today, their family tradition includes repertoire from all three revisions of *The Sacred Harp* (Cobb 1995, 45). The film's soundtrack is taken in part from a recording of the extended Wootten family, self-made at Terry Wootten's home in Ider, Alabama, and includes some tunes which appear in the Cooper Book but not

the Denson Book. Additionally documentary footage shows members of that family using techniques for “beating time,” or conducting a class, derivative of Gospel music pedagogy and not widely employed in traditional or revival shapenote communities.

Matt & Erica Hinton of Atlanta, Georgia released “Awake My Soul: The Story of the Sacred Harp” in 2006. Made by singers and intended for singers and a lay-audience, it constructs a history of singing tradition and documents its culture in the present. The history presented in the film is largely acceptable considering its purpose and intended audience, however there is one noticeable flaw worth mentioning. In this documentary the English influence of West Gallery music on New England composers is omitted entirely. Nonetheless, New England composers are still praised for compositional practices that “break the rules”. Though it is understandable to limit how far back in history one will go for an introduction to this somewhat byzantine and arcane tradition, the omission of these connections to England results in an typical “American Maverick” narrative, in which native ingenuity and a spirit of defiance are overemphasized and notions of genius are implicit. Awareness of the West Gallery connection, and participation in a revival of that tradition, has increased amongst Sacred Harp singers, however this “maverick” narrative is often circulated in the lore of singers seeking to quickly explain Sacred Harp tradition to those unacquainted.

Revival Scholarship

John Bealle's "Public Faith, Private Worship: Sacred Harp and American Folksong" examines the construction of shapenote music as a "folk" music in the 20th century, an issue which effectively speaks to a ideological and cultural divide between revival and traditional singers. This conceptualization of shapenote traditions like Sacred Harp has become popular amongst modern revival singers, but is sometimes resisted by traditional southern singers who believe the term detracts from or ignores their use of the music for religious worship. Though core questions posed by Bealle are of the modern age, Bealle's work is largely historical and explores how this more secular framing of Sacred Harp was constructed through written discourse. Bealle explores the full history of Sacred Harp tradition from the early New England singing schools into the present day examining the writings of singers, the writings produced through singing culture, and writings of various propagandist and reformists that have shaped Protestant hymnody in American history.

Two books have further explored the ideological divides of the modern community and sought to understand the experiences that bridge them using more ethnographic methodologies: Laura Clawson's "I Belong To This Band, Hallelujah: Community, Spirituality, and Tradition Among Sacred Harp Singers", and Kiri Milers' "Traveling Home: Sacred Harp Singing and American Pluralism."

Clawson's work is comprised of four case-studies of Sacred Harp communities in the traditional regions of Sand Mountain in Alabama and West Georgia as well as the revival communities of Minneapolis and Chicago. Compared to other studies, Clawson's review of the early revival provides a more nuanced discussion of fracturous conflicts amidst the early revival, particularly those concerning notions of authenticity and authority. For example, no scholars have denied that southerners have at times imposed their traditions on northern communities. Whereas other scholars stress that northern singers have often eagerly accepted their authority, Clawson reveals that some early revival singers resented and were alienated by a perceived dogmatism. Chicago singers struggled to decide whether they would continue singing shapenote repertoire as a folk music and following principles locally grown from the broader folk revival, or whether they would re-contextualized their local activity as participation in a living tradition "belonging" to a living southern community. As Clawson puts it, "This represented an early conflict over which authenticity *should* be valued" (Clawson, 122).

By including case-studies of two esteemed, traditional, southern communities, Clawson's provides the most thorough example of variations in culture and priorities amongst southern communities and does well to dispel the notion of a monolithic Sacred Harp tradition in the South, even amongst singers of the same revision. Clawson notes that during the early revival, while singers of western Georgia prioritized national outreach, singers of Alabama's

Sand Mountain region made greater efforts to regenerate their community locally. As a result, the singing community of west Georgia has continued to age without attracting younger locals to inherit and continue their local tradition. Meanwhile, the strength of the local tradition in Sand Mountain now ironically attracts greater numbers of revival singers and garners greater esteem or recognition amongst them.

From this collection of observations, Clawson theorizes difference in practice and meaning amongst singers, though here referring to more general categories of revival and traditional singers. Of particular relevance to my study are her intertwined observations about spirituality and connections to place. Clawson employs Robert Wuthnow's concept of modes of spirituality classified in three categories: dwelling, seeking, and practice. In Clawson's application, southerner communities practice a "spirituality of dwelling," rooted in greater consensus of religious practice and logistical stability of gatherings over generations. This mode is reflected in and reinforced by local churches in which numerous families worship and sing in for generations then to be buried in adjacent cemeteries. For traditional southern singers, these sites are powerful repositories of memory, and visiting them is "not an homage to a distant memory but a visit to loved ones and an ongoing way of life." (Clawson 88).

Revival singers, by contrast practice a "spirituality of seeking" that includes individual negotiations of meaning over group consensus and is born

from an urban culture characterized by a social mobility and dispersion that stands contrasting with the culture of many traditional singing communities of the South. Consequently, the sites of singing in revival regions are less stable, each year the product of bureaucratic decision making and local singers' politics. Consequently, "rather than being a beloved home, the location becomes an object to be assessed" (Clawson 56). These notions of dwelling and seeking will be revisited when discussing new shapenote compilations and the selection of singing sites by their respective publishers.

Millers' work complements Clawson's multiple-case-study by theorizing a transcendent experiences shared by most, if not all, singers in the modern community. Focusing her observations on larger singing conventions in which singers from increasingly far-flung regions repeatedly convene to affirm bonds of friendship and tradition, Miller describes the modern community as a diaspora with its members displaying a "diaspora consciousness". Her use of the term draws somewhat from more conventional uses of the term which includes, among other things, "a self-aware solidarity defined by an ongoing relationship with the homeland" (28). Miller readily concedes that the Sacred Harp community lacks many features of a diaspora as conventionally understood, such as shared ethnic heritage and expulsion or dispersal from an originary homeland, and that therefore her application is partially metaphorical. However, she also cites James Clifford's concept of a "decentered diaspora" in which solidarity is built not necessarily on nationalistic myth inscribed in

geography, but possibly around “a re-invented ‘tradition,’ a ‘book,’ a portable eschatology” (Clifford 1997:269, quoted in Miller, 2008:28). .

If “diaspora” in Miller’s usage is based in claims of affinity or consciousness rather than a literal condition, it is a little bothersome that the term is unused by singers themselves. Nonetheless, the diaspora concept effectively speaks to numerous dimensions of the modern singers’ experience as described in Miller’s decades-worth of observations. “Diaspora” speaks to the strength of social bonds formed through singing ritual as well as the emotional arc that accompanies one’s travels to and from singing conventions where friends from across the country repeatedly convene. Miller describes this as being “at home in transience” (202). “Diaspora” also speaks to the self-consciousness of “Tradition” that is practically palpable at some singings as southern singers seek to preserve their practices and new singers attempt to reconcile themselves to those very practices or else negotiate them.

Miller attempts to theorize a transcendental experience in which the hollow squares becomes a “portable homeland” (47) which exists in “no-time and no-place” (201). This concept does have some relevancy to the travelling singer’s experience. I have had the otherwise peculiar experience flying from California to Alabama, driving hours into anonymous backroads, and opening the door of a rural church only to find a roomful of people I had just left behind three time-zones ago. However, this theorization goes too far in pursuing a shared, universal experience of modern singers. Such a theorization stands

seemingly at odds with Clawson's, for example, which connects the spiritual meanings of traditional southern singers with very specific places and times. For them, the act and meaning of singing is interwoven with personal narratives of religion and family spanning generations that are not-abstractable from place. Furthermore, I will argue in the second chapter that such a theorization seems to ignore the long-standing traditions of self-documenting the names, times, and places of singing that have contributed to the shape, structure, and meaning of singing.

Miller's application of the decentered diaspora suggests that *The Sacred Harp* tunebook itself can serve as a grounding or "centering" force to a dispersed community, however, in her pursuit of a transcendental space and experience, Miller does not adequately explore the role of the book or the printed page in. As I will argue in the next chapter, *The Sacred Harp* tunebook is full of references to people and places of great significance to the modern community, and as such it continually directs a class's attention to particularities of place and membership. However, there is little discussion by Miller of such content. Rather, her discussion of the book's contents is limited to descriptions of the conventional parameters of style and the larger historical narratives that shaped them.

Together, the works of Bealle, Clawson, and Miller articulate two complementary orientations regarding the purpose or meaning of singing: one terrestrial, historical, and social; the other spiritual aspiring towards the

transcendent and eternal. Bealle's work explores these orientations through the somewhat divisive issue of "folk music" and the competing orientations which view singing either as an act of worship devoted to spiritual transcendence, or as an act of folk tradition through which a temporal and spatial continuity is maintained, celebrated, and furthered. Miller prioritizes the transcendental orientation to some detriment of the terrestrial dimensions. Clawson's work provides the most useful means of discussing the work of building and maintaining these terrestrial connections.

Lastly, an article co-authored by Anne Heider and Robert Warner is the sole work which devotes significant attention to the physical body, or singing as a physically intense ritual, as a means of reconciling the solidarity of the singing community with its ideologically heterogeneous membership. Their observations of and as Sacred Harp singers are situated amongst the literature of Durkheimian anthropology, arguing that the sharing of physically intense rituals can "[produce] solidarity in the absence of ideological consensus" (2). In this framework, the hollow square formation structures "bodily co-presence," or a simultaneous awareness of and affectation by individuals coordinating their bodies in the same space.

Writing In Sacred Harp Culture

Ethnographic scholarship on the modern Sacred Harp community has focused on performance practices, social rituals, and the transmission of oral

tradition, while investigations of written material have remained moreso the domain of historians, hymnologists, and musicologists. Most singers today insist that the music's essence lay in acts of unmediated, participatory singing, and particularly in the oral traditions cultivated by southern singers. This can be understood as a sincere expression of reverence for southerners and an appreciation of their sharing of local and family traditions with outsiders. Singers and scholars alike value these oral traditions also as a socializing agent. Whereas training and notation together can potentially objectify musical practice, detaching it from social context and rendering it completely transportable, oral traditions require one to be socialized in a manner that cannot be abstracted from identities of authority and the limitations of space and geography. Singers themselves have maintained this importance, perhaps as a means of protecting the tradition, but this reverence for oral tradition has a way of structuring flows of authority in the revival community. Those who have sung the most with southerners can claim a more intimate knowledge of Sacred Harp's "essence".

Nonetheless, Sacred Harp tradition is made possible by and relies on musical notation, and the modern community's engagement with notation and scores through acts of composition and compilation has grown to become an object of study in its own right. Scholars have made some sociological inquiries into the Sacred Harp community's written or material culture, though not scores themselves. For example, Bealle provides the most thorough

consideration of the Sacred Harp tradition of recording parliamentary-style minutes of singing conventions. Miller devotes a chapter of her book to discussion of how scores structure the experiences of singers. However these observations are limited to canonical tunes as sung in traditional conventions and not the new compositions which circulate in alternative settings, accompanied by different forms of discourse. Furthermore, Miller focuses exclusively on singers' engagement with poetic texts. Revival singers in particular must often negotiate their relationship to religious texts which which they might not sincerely believe (132). All singers, though, can use texts as objects of play, innuendo, code, or commentary in the ritualized singing context. Similarly, tunes, scores, and the tunebook itself serve as a repository of memories accumulated through a lifetime of social singing. Singers certainly engage with texts of tunes as commentaries on their lives, the lives of others present. Considering the community's concern for memorializing past singers, Miller describes the *Sacred Harp* tunebook as a "portable graveyard" in which memories of one's singing life and singers past are inscribed, evoked, and preserved.

Circulation

Scholarship on the Sacred Harp revival often complies with a model of cultural analysis described by Lee and LiPuma in which "performativity has been considered a quintessentially cultural phenomenon that is tied to the creation of meaning, whereas circulation and exchange have been seen as

processes that *transmit* meanings, rather than as constitutive acts in themselves” (2002). Along these lines, revival scholarship has given attention to the transmission of cultural knowledge and practice from families of “traditional” singers based in the South to “revival” singers across the country (Bealle 1997; Clawson 2011; Miller 2008), while singing, or “performance,”⁶ is discussed as a site of profound personal revelation and social bonding (Heider & Warner, 2010). Discussions of transmission have paid special attention to oral traditions, performance practice, and social rituals of the South which have been upheld, and at times fetishized, by revival communities as near-incontestable. While the community is quite inclusive, one’s validity within Sacred Harp *tradition* is often measured by one’s fidelity to these practices traceable to the South.

The discourses of authenticity practiced by singers and scholars alike have naturalized a relationship between Sacred Harp tradition, specific places (i.e. the South), and people (i.e. traditional southern singers), and by doing so, reinforced this notion of circulation and exchange as transmission. However, the community formed around the revival of Sacred Harp singing in the late 20th and early 21st centuries has increasingly engaged with this tradition as a *written* form to a degree not seen since perhaps the late 19th century.

Examination of this engagement with musical media (i.e. scores and their

⁶ Singers intentionally avoid describing their singing as a performance as they typically feel that connotations of that word (e.g. audience/performer divide, commercialism) do not represent the participatory nature of the tradition, as well as its function as worship and fellowship. The use of that word, or the term “performance practice” in this study will refer only to the physical or technical practices involved in singing and coordinating other singers.

compilation into tunebooks) can elucidate the notion of circulation and exchange as “a nexus of cultural *production* that defines the things, places, and practices within its loop” (Novak 18, emphasis mine).

These new works are being produced at a rate far exceeding the few opportunities to have one’s work canonized via the revision of an old tunebook. Therefore most new compositions are excluded from the traditional, ritualized contexts of large singing conventions as described and theorized by Miller and Clawson. Nonetheless, singers have engaged with these scores to form new social “pathways” (Finnegan, 1989) through which people and materials move.

In recent decades, compositional activity in the Sacred Harp community has exploded, with more fasola-style tunes being authored and circulated today since the 19th century, and perhaps ever. Singers have organized in recent years to share, sing, and critique new compositions, and from that activity new social contexts have formed, sometimes as an annex traditional Sacred Harp conventions, and sometimes as a more autonomous activity. With this has come new discourses and new social activity which both feeds back into the Sacred Harp community and also generates new social topographies yet to be discussed in Sacred Harp literature.

This dissertation will document and explore these pathways, the circulatory networks in which the products of writing culture circulate, as do

discursive practices which continually socialize new singers, rebuild the Sacred Harp community, and form new singing traditions. The national community formed through traditions of singing from *The Sacred Harp* is increasingly engaging with “alternate” musical repertoire historically relevant and/or aesthetically comparable to that tunebook. This includes tunebooks associated with other southern communities of unbroken tradition, tunebooks and material from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which fell out of circulation, and tunes newly-composed within the aesthetic parameters of this broader shapenote repertory. This activity is producing what I will call a “lateral” development of the Sacred Harp revival, marked by the definition of new “things, places, and practices” in new “loops” of circulation. Focusing here only on the activity of composing new tunes for this tradition, this study will propose an ethnographic approach to the modern community that is, at times, “adrift in the movement of technologies and media” (Slobin, 1992, 6). Rather than limiting observations of singers to their engagements with an *a priori* canon (i.e. *The Sacred Harp* tunebook), this study proposes a perspective in which we follow singers of the Sacred Harp *community* as they explore an expanding landscape of material. Similarly, it will consider a perspective in which we follow not necessarily individuals, but scores themselves as they circulate amongst singers. Such perspectives can further elucidate the means by which this tradition has sustained itself into the present day, but also how it

continues to remake itself, expanding its own boundaries or spawning new social forms and communities.

Chapter 2 The Score as Monument in Sacred Harp Tradition

“Anything that is good enough to last 120 years will last forever.”

“If you leave anything alone, it will die - I don’t care how good it is.”

“Music will never, never, never die.”

- Hugh McGraw

In this chapter, I will review a fundamental valuation of immateriality over materiality in the practices and discourse of Sacred Harp singers. Amidst conjoined pursuits of spiritual transcendence and social fellowship, forms of material culture, including instruments and the musical score, are seen as, at the least, a distraction, and, at worst, a threat to the essential meanings of singing and the identity of the tradition. Without meaning to contradict the discourse of singers, nor negate the value of existing scholarship seeking to elucidate their experience, I will argue for the importance of material culture. I will discuss the Sacred Harp community as one deeply concerned with the preservation of its traditions through the production of material forms of self-documentation, some of which have always accompanied the act of singing. Singers rely on material traditions to continually situate such singing within narratives of cosmological, spiritual, historical, and social scope that can span an archaic past to an eternal future. I will situate scores within this tradition, theorizing their function within this community as a self-documentary form and a monument through through which individuals are socialized or identified as “singers,” social bonds are structured, and tradition is renewed and revitalized.

Purely Acappella

The Sacred Harp tradition is an acappella tradition, a significant distinction in the history of protestant hymnody which speaks to the age of Sacred Harp tradition and its resistance to modernizing currents of the 19th century. As Gospel music and its attending pedagogy spread in the South, instruments such as pianos and organs became a common form of accompaniment sacred song in the South. Meanwhile, Sacred Harp music found an important refuge amongst Primitive or Old Regular Baptist congregations believing that instruments of any sort are not proper for the purpose of worship. This idea of a purely acappella practice has remained important to the identity of the Sacred Harp tradition even as its membership has grown increasingly secular.

For example, singings traditionally include the appointment of “keyers” to “key” each tune, or determine by ear a “concert pitch” for each tune most appropriate for the class¹. It is a task many singers find difficult and intimidating as a poorly keyed tune can strain singers by asking them to sing too high or too low. As a result, when tunes are keyed poorly, singers’ ability to participate fully and potentially achieve some transcendent experience is greatly diminished. The pressure to key well can be even greater for larger

¹ Most Sacred Harp composers or editors select keys so as to arrange melodies within the staff and avoid the use of ledger lines as much as possible. For example, a tenor melody notated in treble clef and spanning a 4th below tonic to a 5th above tonic might be notated in Bb Major. A melody that ranges from tonic to an octave above, might be notated in F Major. Wilson Cooper’s first revision notably transcribed many tunes to suggest a concert pitch, in an effort to modernize the book.

conventions where it is understood that many have travelled long distances to sing and may have only one opportunity to lead the class.

Amongst traditional Sacred Harp singers, this work is conducted by ear, with keyers relying on an intimate understanding of their own vocal range, skill in scanning a score to determine the range of its composite parts, and an ability to ascertain from these considerations a key that will allow full participation of the class. Amongst revival communities, tuning forks or pitch pipes are sometimes employed to assist in this task. The use of such “instruments” is recorded in the traditions of other shapenote tunebooks. William Walker’s *Southern Harmony*, published nine years before *The Sacred Harp*, advocates for the use of pitch pipes for keying in its prefatory introduction to musical rudiments. Furthermore, George Pullen Jackson described two singings in which personal tuning forks of Walker are used, including the sole surviving Southern Harmony singing in Benton, Kentucky (67).

There is a lack of comparable evidence regarding the historical use of tuning instruments while singing from *The Sacred Harp*. B.F. White’s original rudiments make no mention of their use, there is no lore in the Sacred Harp community comparable to that of William Walker’s tuning fork, and authoritative traditional singers have flatly denied their presence in at southern singings entirely (Cobb, 52). Thus, some singers, whether traditional or revivalist, continue to see the use of tuning instruments as improper, whether

that be understood through the lens of theology or a more secular consideration of “tradition” which distinguishes *The Sacred Harp* somewhat even amongst other shapenote traditions.

Written Versus Oral

The meanings that singers ascribe to singing, or the purposes to which they put singing, all point to immaterial spirituality and communal fellowship. Revival singers in particular may question the personal relevancy of the first in private, but no singer will debate the importance of the second. Towards these ends, singers describe any material culture, including scores, as merely a necessary means. For singers, the essence of Sacred Harp singing lies in aural/orality. An informant of Miller’s went so far as to proclaim that scores represent “one hundredth of one millionth of what actually goes on,” while singing, adding “it’s just sort of ink” (106).

The remainder of “what actually goes on,” at singings according to this informant would likely refer to a wealth of oral traditions cultivated by southerners that embellish and even deviate from their notation. In various communities, melodies and harmonies are altered by ignoring some accidentals and adding others, rhythms can become stylized and exaggerated, and the addition of metric accents can add a remarkable pulsation to group singing. Singers describe these practices as the heart of the tradition, or its essence. The extent to which they are audible in a singer or a community is often times the most powerful measure of “authenticity.”

At times this valuation of the oral breeds an exoticisation of southerners, as was the case with the Sacred Harp singers of Hoboken, Georgia. There, some Sacred Harp singers have preserved a separate tradition of sacred song connected to their Primitive Baptist faith. Like many Primitive Baptists, those of Hoboken set texts from words-only hymnals to melodies preserved in an oral tradition. In their long coexistence, singing styles associated with notated *Sacred Harp* and un-notated Primitive Baptist song have cross-pollinated in Hoboken. Though they traditionally occupy distinct social contexts, Sacred Harp singing there often displays the slow tempi and improvisational embellishments common to un-notated Primitive Baptist singing; Likewise, the melodies and harmonies of *The Sacred Harp* have entered into Primitive Baptist oral traditions, which, in their more traditional form, employ a heterophonic texture (Sommers, 2010).

While the Hoboken community is not unique amongst Southern communities in its preservation of both Sacred Harp and Primitive Baptist singing, the extent of their cross-pollination in Hoboken is singular. For this reason, Hoboken evokes an esteemed, almost mythological aura to some Sacred Harp singers. Singers visiting Hoboken for Sacred Harp singings have had occasion to hear locals demonstrate Primitive Baptist song, and curiously described the experience as “the apotheosis of Sacred Harp singing” (Miller, 103). These two traditions have certainly influenced one another in Hoboken, but it is misleading to conflate them entirely. From a historical perspective, this

conflation is even ironic, as shapenote music emerged from a lineage of religious reforms intended to devalue and replace oral traditions of sacred song such as those preserved by Hoboken's Primitive Baptists (Bealle, 8). Nonetheless, this conflation expresses a common sentiment of singers that the essence of Sacred Harp singing lay in immediate experience, its profundity resides in lineages of oral tradition, and that mediation, including notation, encumbers such things.

This weighting of oral and written structures flows of authority in community. Whereas a notated musical tradition might be, theoretically, completely abstractable and reproducible, this privileging of oral tradition firmly anchors southern singers as keepers of the tradition's sonic essence and creates an urgency amongst revivalists to learn from southerners and become preservers or protectors of the sonic heritage of southerners.

Scores are not only placed on the periphery of the singing experience but are even considered a threat to the potentially transcendental experiences or profound meanings of singing, or the social processes involved in oral traditions. An excellent example of this can be found in "Weeping Mary," a tune composed by J.P. Rees that first appeared in the 1859 edition of *The Sacred Harp*, revised by B.F. White, and still found in all surviving book traditions. Like many older scores, the tune originally consisted of three vocal parts (figure 2.1), but had alto lines added in the 20th century revisions as editors sought to modernize their practice (figure 2.2). Singers of all *Sacred*

Harp revisions have cultivated an oral tradition in which the score's final setting of the phrase, "and descended in a cloud," is repeated as a fugue,² with the notated melodies of each part sung in staggered entrances. Given the ubiquity of this practice across the South, it is possible that it formed sometime between 1859, when the tune was added to *The Sacred Harp*, and 1902, when the southern community began to divide its allegiances amongst competing revisions of the book, forming parallel Sacred Harp traditions that survive today. However, this theory is complicated by the fact that alto lines were introduced with the very revisions that split the community. Thus, it is either the case the singers first developed the tradition with a three-part score, "fugued" accordingly, and later adjusted to incorporate the added altos; or, the tradition developed after altos were added and the community began fracturing, but nonetheless became universally adopted.

In 1992, editors of Cooper Book elected to notate the "Weeping Mary" fugue for the first time in the tune's history (figure 2.3). This decision served a larger editorial mission to accommodate the revival singers increasingly populating traditional southern singings (Smith, personal interview, April 9, 2015). It is possible that variations of this fuguing practice developed in oral tradition, raising the question then of whose tradition should be notated. Editors of the 1992 Cooper Book insist that their notation reflects the only practice they have known in traditional Cooper Book communities (Smith,

² 'Fugue' here is used as it is commonly in shapenote communities to refer to staggered entrances of imitative passages, but not necessarily the more intricate polyphonic traditions of the Western classical tradition.

personal interview, April 9, 2015). While this may be true, a 1955 recording of a quartet of Sacred Harp singers from Roswell, Georgia³ nonetheless provides an example that deviates from what is now notated in the Cooper Book. At the beginning of the fugue, the treble⁴ and alto parts do not sustain over the bass' entrance as is now notated. The voices enter bass, tenor, alto, and treble, rather than bass, tenor, treble, alto as now notated. Finally, the singers restate "and descended in a cloud" homophonically after the fugue (figure 2.4).

Not all singers have found this decision necessary, and some are even perturbed by it. The current revision of the Denson Book, made in 1991, continues to print "Weeping Mary" without the fugue, though the singing of that book's community is accurately represented in the Cooper Book notation. At least one member of the Denson Book community with whom I spoke felt the tradition was never in any peril warranting such an intervention, and that its notation greatly diminished the appeal of the tune (anonymous singer, April 7th, 2015). In addition to the interruption of a century-old tradition of oral transmission, this notation precludes an almost initiatory experience for new Sacred Harp singers continues amongst Denson Book singers. When singing the tune, new singers' eyes often emerge from the book and scan the room with a look of confusion and slight panic as their peers continue on past what is written. After the song has ended, new singers confer with more experienced ones in between songs or at a short recess to learn of this more

³ This recording can be heard at <http://tinyurl.com/n4m3yru>

⁴ the preferred term for 'soprano' in Sacred Harp parlance

peculiar tradition, and oral tradition is further perpetuated.

Ethnographers, given the task of elucidating the meanings of this tradition as experienced and described by singers, have thus focused on the immaterial dimensions of the tradition such as performance practice, oral tradition, social bonds, and spirituality. Miller's work ultimately theorizes the hollow square formation in which singers gather to achieve a transcendent experience of "no-time and no-place" (201).

This is not to say scores have not been studied at all. They have received attention from hymnologists and musicologists, and, consequently, the focus of this scholarship has included scores long-vetted by history, their aesthetic content, and their ability to comment on larger cultural debates of the historical South (Campbell 1997; Vinson 2006). Between these ethnographic and traditional musicological approaches is a question of how scores, or more specifically their production and circulation, contribute to the continual reproduction and structuration of this community. There remains a need to examine scores not as historical objects or for their semiotic or aesthetic content, but as a thing which singers continually engage, debate, and organize towards various ends.

He a - rose, And ascended in a cloud . . . And ascended in a cloud . . .

He a - rose, And ascended in a cloud . . . And ascended in a cloud . . .

He a - rose, And ascended in a cloud, And ascended in a cloud . . .

And ascended in a cloud . . .

**The song ended here in pre-1992 printings.*

Figure 2.3: Ending of “Weeping Mary” in Cooper Book 2012 revision. W.M.Cooper’s alto was composed before S.M. Denson’s appearing in Figure 2 and likely influenced it. In 1992, a notation of the oral tradition fugue was added. The current score includes a footnote specifying the original ending at the end of the fourth measure of the second system.

And a - scen-ded in a cloud. And a - scen-ded in a cloud And a - scen-ded in a cloud.

And a - scen-ded in a cloud. And a - scen-ded in a cloud And a - scen-ded in a cloud.

And a - scen-ded in a cloud. And a - scen-ded-in a cloud - - - And a - scen-ded in a cloud.

And a - scen-ded in a cloud. And a - scen-ded in a cloud And a - scen-ded-in-a - cloud.

Figure 2.4: Transcription of “Weeping Mary” fugue as sung by Roswell Quartet. The following deviations from the 1992 Cooper Book notation are noted: resting treble and alto parts as the bass enters, the ordering of entrances, and the restatement of the final phrase at the end.

Though singers may strive for a transcendent experience of “no-time and no-place” in the hollow square, there is much which singers do outside of it to continually maintain and further the tradition. Outside of the hollow square,

written and documentary traditions have always accompanied and supported singing by demonstrating a concern for experiences of specific times, specific places, and specific people. For this reason, I wish to identify this concern for self-documentation that has always existed in the Sacred Harp community, and situate scores within this tradition. In doing so, I wish to theorize the score as a form of self-documentation, social memory, and monument.

A Self-Documenting Culture

The Sacred Harp community is one greatly concerned with the recovery and elucidation of its own history, the inscription of its present into record, and with the preservation and projection of history into the future through self-documentation. These concerns manifest themselves in the larger institutions of the singing community, the numerous localized organizations of singing, and in the actions of individual singers. Often this history exists as a form of lore shared amongst singers in an oral tradition: anecdotes of historic figures, singing families, and singing cites, for example. However, the singing community has always made deliberate and organized efforts to document its own activity in various forms of material culture.

The recording of parliamentary-style minutes is perhaps the only act of self- documentation that has always accompanied Sacred Harp singing. Minutes are a part of singing convention protocols preserved from the structure of public meetings of civic or social organizations in the 19th century. Among other things, singers volunteer or else are elected to leadership and

committee roles at the opening of a convention, delegating various responsibilities such as preparing a mid-day meal, arranging housing for guests, and selecting the precession of tune leaders. In the present day, such responsibilities have often been assigned long before the convention according to whatever social dynamics shape the host community.

Nonetheless, the procedure of announcing a nominee for a convention's Chairperson and opening a vote remains a nominal gesture to southern tradition. Included in these responsibilities is the appointment of a convention secretary who will record for the entirety of the convention the procession of tune leaders, and tune selections, recesses, and dinner on the grounds with little to no subjective or interpretive information added.

In the 19th century, minutes of Sacred Harp singings were frequently circulated in local newspapers as a form of public record, but also a form of advertisement for annual or regular singing meetings. The book's publisher, B.F. White often published such minutes in his own paper, *The Organ*, based in Harris County, Georgia. As a place for such minutes in local papers diminished by the turn of the century, singing communities increasingly self-published their minutes in minutebooks compiling records from loose associations of regional singings. Today, the largest of such minutebooks, *Directory and Minutes of Sacred Harp Singings*, is issued annually by the Sacred Harp Musical Heritage Association (SHMHA). SHMHA is a non-profit organization based in Alabama with strong ties to the Sacred Harp Publishing

Company, which oversees the Denson Book. Consequently, the SHMHA minutebook collects records mostly from Denson Book singings, though they do not as a rule exclude minutes from other book singings. Those who send minutes to SHMHA must send a small fee to help cover costs and pre-purchase a small number of minutebooks.

The SHMHA minutes are today used by singers to plan singing travels, learning the approximate date and location of annual singings, and also gaining some sense of other singers that might also attend. John Bealle has noted a deeper significance of these minutes, as it is through them that singers have become authors of their own historical record. He even goes as far as to suggest that the extreme aversion to subjective or descriptive accounts in the minute format is a reaction against “outsider” descriptive accounts of the early 20th century. Bealle suggests that minutes, compiled together into these large annual volumes, wield “considerable documentary power” over such accounts (171). By authoring these records, singers give material form to their own histories, and from that materiality draw assurance for the future.

More recently, smartphones have been used to make new use of the high volume of data produced annually in minute reports. In 2013, Atlantan singers Mark Godfrey and Lauren Bock released their FaSoLa Minutes App which digitizes minutes data collected by SHMHA beginning in the year 1995. The app is not meant to augment, rather than supplant, traditional minutes by

rendering their data easily searchable, and offering tools for analyzing and cross-referencing data on tunes, singers, and singings.

Most interesting is the app's profiles of singers, which includes an "entropy score" reflecting the breadth of a singer's repertoire as leader (i.e. singers with a more equal ratio of unique tunes and leading opportunities will have a higher score). Whereas traditional minutes seem to gain their power from their volume, and speak most powerfully to the strength of the collective community, these digitized minutes lend greater emphasis to the individual, or lends a more personal function for the minutes. The entropy score can act as a kind of metric by which one might become a better "Singer" in the sense that a good Singer is one with an appreciation for the full repertorial span of *The Sacred Harp* and/or one who gives greater service to the preservation of that full repertoire through their leading selections.

Scores as Self-Documentation

I would like to suggest that scores, by way of the annotations that conventionally accompany them, serve as a form of self-documentation of singing culture and contribute to a structuration of the community much in the same manner as minutes. The 1911 James revision of *The Sacred Harp* introduced a modern formatting of scores, which has become standard to all modern revisions and new compositions amongst Sacred Harp singers. James added to each tune an attribution of text and tune authors, as well as years of composition for both, insofar as they could be ascertained.

The result contributed to a more modern formatting taken from the Gospel industry, while also giving new emphasis to the historicity, or the age of this tradition at a time when Sacred Harp apologists sought to revive a sense of value in the “old” (Campbell). Such historical information was often not a concern of 19th century publishers who frequently cribbed large portions of repertoire from other volumes. As the tradition aged in the 20th century, and its community grew increasingly self-conscious of the “Tradition” they upheld, the provenance for musical material became a priority for Sacred Harp publishers who have turned to hymnologists and musicologists for assistance. This work has shaped a convention of formatting scores which now is shared across all modern revisions, and is echoed in the works of independent composers.

Additionally, tunes are very commonly (though not always) named in tribute to a person, typically a singer, or place where the tune was composed, imagined, or inspired. Considered alongside the annotations, one can trace the history of a book’s repertoire, with 18th century compositions bearing the name of New England towns (e.g. “Windham,” a 1785 composition named for a Connecticut town), and 19th century tunes naming places in the Mid-Atlantic and Deep South (“Carnesville,” composed in 1844 and named for a Georgia town), and tunes from the late 20th and 21st centuries indicating the tradition’s rapid spread to the Midwest (“Chicago,” composed in 1987), West Coast (“San Diego,” composed in 1987), and back to New England (“Mount Desert,”

composed in 1985 and named for a Maine landmark).

Such annotations are hardly unique in the cultures of western musical scores, but when considered alongside the common practice of dedicating compositions, and framed within the context of modern singing culture, this indexical dimension of the modern shapenote score becomes more apparent. As acts of composition, and sharing compositions have grown to become a constant presence in the singing community, scores stand as markers of the tradition noting when, where, and with whom the Sacred Harp tradition has been engaged, enacted, continued, preserved, and negotiated.

Scores as Social Agent

These annotations would mean little if they were not sung. When scores carry these indexical markings of the past into singing circulation, they act as what Lee & LiPuma would call a performative: “a special, creative type of indexical icon: a self-reflexive use of reference that, in creating a representation of an ongoing act, also enacts it” (195). In other words, compositions document singing fellowship in a manner that allows that fellowship may be continually revisited, renewed, and strengthened.

To stress this point, we could consider the example of the tune “San Diego,” which currently appears in the Cooper Book. The tune was composed in 1987 by Stanley Smith of Ozark, Alabama, who had travelled that year to a small town in east San Diego County to visit a relative. Smith was aware of a group in the city that was singing regularly from *The Sacred Harp* and

arranged to visit and sing with them at a San Diegan's home.⁵ At this time, San Diegans had been meeting to sing for only a few years. Most had not yet travelled to the South, many were not yet fluent in reading shape notation, and the group had not yet established a convention. They sang from the Denson book and one member, Jerry Schreiber, recalls being unaware of the Cooper Book which is the source of Smith's local tradition. After singing in the afternoon, Smith returned to his relative's home and composed a tune that evening which he named for the community. After returning to Alabama, he mailed a manuscript to Schreiber and his wife Carla Smith (no relation) with a more explicit dedication to California's Sacred Harp singers (Schreiber and Carla Smith, personal interview, April 14, 2015).

Flattered by the gesture, San Diego singers arranged to have the tune sung when they hosted one of California's earliest singing conventions. However, it remained sung only in San Diego and only periodically until 1992, when Stanley Smith oversaw a revision of the Cooper Book and added "San Diego."⁶ Though the book has been revised several times since with varying degrees of influence from Smith, the score still appears with the footnote "Stanley Smith, of Ozark, Alabama, dedicated this song to the San Diego Sacred Harp Singers in June 1987" (Lee, Johnny, et al, 2012, 156). Through

⁵At this time, neither Smith nor the San Diego singers with whom I have spoken can recall the means by which one became aware of the other, nor the means by which a meeting was arranged. San Diegan Carla Smith (no relation) has suggested that perhaps an awareness of the San Diego community was spread through their subscription to the National Sacred Harp Newsletter distributed by the Sacred Harp Publishing Company which oversees the printing, distribution, and revision of the Denson Book.

⁶ Also included in this revision was a tune composed the same year dedicated to the revival singers of Chicago. In 2006, Smith again revised the book and added a 2004 composition for the singers of Minnesota.

their relationship with Stanley Smith, Schreiber and Carla Smith attended many more traditional southern Cooper Book singings in the 1990s, including Hoboken, Georgia's first modern convention of 1996, where Carla Smith chose to lead "San Diego" deep in traditional Cooper Book country. Years later, Stanley Smith would be the first of many traditional singers to whom Jerry & Carla introduced me in my first trip to Alabama.

Dedications such as these are common within the Sacred Harp community, and for tunes fortunate enough to be admitted into the a book, their selection at singing conventions can often comment on the singing itself or those in attendance. When I attended the 2014 Sacred Harp convention of Maine, for example, the convention's chairman opened the day by selecting "Mount Desert," a 1985 composition added to the Denson Book and named for a nearby landmark I had visited the day prior. Similarly, many tunes are named in dedication of living singers and may seem to follow their dedicatees as they travel, requested by other singers acknowledging and celebrating their presence. For singers, these can become special moments in which an overlap between social and aesthetic worlds becomes uniquely profound. Jerry Schreiber and Carla Smith spoke to this point by citing their experiences with many other canonical composers in addition to Stanley Smith.

Schreiber: It's very special [to have one's name in a book]...because it's such a small community, we have a connection to people whose names are in the book. It's not like this is some collection of music from Europe and assembled because it's wonderful music. This has something more to it. That is, we know some of the people who are either the composer or

the dedicatees. That adds another special resonance...We've been honored to have these people share this tradition with us.

Carla Smith: We've met Raymond Hamrick and sang at singings where John Hocutt was there.

Schreiber: And I've sat next to Dan Brittain and sang all of his songs. (personal interview, April 14th, 2015)

Through such use, scores lend themselves as undeniable markers of inclusion amidst a revival in which entwined anxieties of inclusions, authenticity, and longevity have been of paramount importance to new singers. When read, the score recognizes a relationship, and at times, a particular moment of importance to that relationship. At the very least, they are gifts between two parties. If the composition becomes popular and accepted amongst the extended Sacred Harp community, a composition can seem to enshrine that relationship, that person or place, within the lore of the community. If the community's institutions decide to canonize it in a tunebook, the tune becomes part of a historical record of the Sacred Harp community that seems bound to project that memory into the distant future. Whatever the circumstance, with each performance or reading, the score recognizes that relationship and continues to authenticate it to the extent that it is circulated.

Considering the great concerns of death, spiritual eternity, and earthly remembrance that permeate Sacred Harp tradition, the inclusion of one's name in these books bears resemblance to the "Lamb's Book of Life," as described in the Biblical book of Revelation. Whereas inclusion in that book guarantees an eternity in paradise, one's inclusion in *The Sacred Harp* seems

an implicit assurance that one's memory will be preserved well into the future in the minds and voices of singers and perhaps into eternity. In the discourse of southern singers in particular, the sound of Sacred Harp singing is described as a temporal conduit through which the voices of singers past can be heard. At smaller southern singings, leaders might begin their turn with an anecdote of a deceased singer and often remark that whenever the class starts singing "I can almost hear their voice." These memories or auditory "visions" are inscribed within music, a medium thought to be imbued with a divine permanence. In the preface of the 1991 Denson revision, Ruth Denson Edwards writes: "God himself, in the beginning, set all things to music, even before man was made, and it has continued from that time up to the present and will continue throughout eternity" (McGraw, et al, 1991). Speaking more specifically of Sacred Harp singing, Hugh McGraw remarked: "Anything that is good enough to last 120 years will last forever...Music will never, never, never die" (<http://tinyurl.com/zp58s8y>, accessed 10 April, 2015). Sacred Harp tradition lends itself as a covenant to singers, in which they might invest their lives and memories in tradition, and in return their memory, and the memory of their loved ones might be preserved forever.

Scores as monuments

Narratives operating on numerous temporal and spatial scales intersect in scores. Personal memories, social experiences, historic traditions, and

spiritual ideals are woven together in a form that is both a material thing - a piece of paper with identities inscribed within - and a prompt for an experience that is ritualized, embodied, and social. It is both this materiality and its ritualized use that lend scores to become monuments to these variously overlapping identities.

The memories and identities of these inscriptions and dedications rarely inform the aesthetic content of scores in any explicit way. For example, there is no noticeable effort to aesthetically represent or evoke San Diego - the place or its singers - in the tune or text of "San Diego." Rather, compositional genres and techniques, text sources, and textual subjects remain limited to the precedents of *The Sacred Harp* tunebook. However, it is the case, and it also seems more appropriate, that the aesthetic content of scores can comment upon the the dedications and bibliographic inscriptions which frame it.

Shapenote music often achieves a monumentality that is physical and aesthetic as well as textual. Rehding's accounting for aesthetic monumentality is strikingly appropriate to shapenote singing: "More often than not, the musical effects we commonly associate with monumentality are achieved less by rhetorical finesse or compositional intricacy than by a combination of straightforward musical content and sheer overwhelming sonic force" (2009, 3-4). Indeed, the "overwhelming sonic force" of a full-throated singing style, common to shapenote singing, is fundamental to an "authentic" sound that is rough-hewn and, in some respects, common rather than finessed and trained.

Singers often employ rhetorics of purity, directness, and simplicity to account for the appeal of shapenote music. However, lest Rehding's language seem like a backhanded compliment in this context, singers and composers still find "finesse" and "intricacy" to admire in their favorite tunes.

I propose that singers enlist the monumentality of Sacred Harp aesthetics and singing to use scores as monuments. Functionally, the point of monuments is to structure some continuity in a manner that suggests permanence. Monuments identify a shared past that is either valued by a community or deemed by some authority to be worthy of a certain value. By creating some material form in which that past can be inscribed, monuments imply that some value of that past is transcendent and will therefore persevere into the future. Rehding suggests that "aesthetic monumentality answers the question of identity by reassuring us of our greatness and our lasting ability to overcome the challenges of others, but suggesting that we will go far. It tells us to look around ourselves and to have confidence in the everlasting future" (28). Appeals to such assurance are found throughout the texts of the Sacred Harp canon, which often dwell on themes of death and transcendence. However, a desire or concern for such assurance still echoes in the discourse of singers in a tradition that faced a near-extinction in the early 20th century.

An example of a modern tune "monumental" in its affect and function might be "Cobb," (figure 2.5) composed by Missouri-based singer Dan Brittain (credited as "P. Dan Brittain" in his compositions). A revival singer trained as a

COBB, C.M.

"I will bless the Lord at all times: His praise shall ever be in my mouth." -- Ps. 34:1.

A Minor Isaac Watts, 1st 1707, 2nd 1719. P. Dan Brittain, 1971.

1. Rise, rise, my soul, and leave the ground, Stretch all thy thoughts a-broad, And rouse up ev-'ry tune-ful sound To praise th'e-ter-nal God.

2. Crea-tures with all their end-less race, Thy pow'r and praise pro-claim; But saints that taste Thy rich-er grace De-light to bless Thy name.

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Figure 2.5: “Cobb” by P. Dan Brittain. Note the texture at cadences spanning measures 5-6, 9-10, 14-15, and composed ritard at the end.

WINDHAM, L.M.

"Wide is the gate, broad is the way that leadeth to destruction." -- Matt. 7:13.

E Minor Isaac Watts, 1707. Daniel Read, 1785.

1. Broad is the road that leads to death, And thousands walk together there; But wisdom shows a nar-row path, With here and there a trav-el-er.

2. "De-ny thy-self and take thy cross." Is the Re-deem-er's great command; Na-ture must count her gold but dross, If she would gain this heav'n-ly land.

3. The fear-ful soul that tires and faints, And walks the ways of God no more Is but es-teemed al-most a saint And makes his own de-struction sure.

4. Lord, let not all my hopes be vain, Cre-ate my heart en-tire-ly new, Which hyp-o-crites could ne'er at-tain, Which false a-pos-tates nev-er knew.

Figure 2.6: “Windham” by Daniel Read. Note the same textural device employed at cadences spanning measure 4-5, 8-9, 12-3, and composed ritard at end.

classical composer, Brittain became involved with Sacred Harp singing while serving in the army and stationed in Augusta, Georgia in 1970. After learning of a singing convention through a local newspaper, Brittain began singing

weekly in the region. A year later, he dedicated a composition to his friend and frequent singing companion, Buell Cobb of Alabama. The tune was later added to the Denson book's 1991 revision.

“Cobb”, sets a text by Isaac Watts with a common theme of spiritual transcendence, or mindfulness of an eternity beyond Earthly existence :

Rise, rise my soul, and leave the ground
Stretch all thy thoughts abroad
And rouse up ev'ry tuneful sound
To praise th'eternal God.

Creatures with all their endless race,
Thy pow'r and praise proclaim;
But saints that taste Thy richer grace
Delight to bless thy name.

The text is set syllabically to phrases constructed almost entirely of half notes. The harmony is minor, diatonic, and modal, opening and closing with the open perfect 5ths which are a hallmark of minor-key composition in *The Sacred Harp*. It is a combined aesthetic idea that is expansive and immersive, and that idea is made into literal experience in the hollow square where it is sung slowly and loudly. Combined aesthetic effect is one of awe and sublimity, or sacred or non-mundane time, which resonates with and amplifies the text's themes of transcendence towards eternity.

“Cobb” also evokes and situates itself within the terrestrial history of Sacred Harp composers and compositions through reference to distinct gestures and techniques. Most noticeable is the textural device employed at cadence points. Like many Sacred Harp compositions, “Cobb” was composed

for strophic poetry containing four lines per stanza, and thus provides four musical phrases. The first three phrases of “Cobb” end with a sustained chord in which tenor and alto parts halt midway while the bass and treble parts continue to hold. It is a device found in numerous 18th century *The Sacred Harp* compositions including “Wells” by English composer Israel Holdroyd (1724), and several by Connecticut-based Daniel Read.

Of the Sacred Harp compositions employing this gestures, the corollary between “Cobb” and “Windham” (1785) (figure 2.6) is particularly striking. Both are minor-key compositions demonstrating a similar harmonic profile of mostly triadic harmonies with open, perfect intervals reserved for cadences. The final phrases conclude each piece with a written-out ritard in which the final three syllables of text are set to chords with rhythmic values that slow the motion of their preceding phrase by half: The final phrase of “Windham” begins with a series of quarter notes leading to a cadence built on half and whole notes; The final phrase of “Cobb” moves in half notes to a cadence built on whole notes.

The tune “Cobb” implicates many intersecting lines of continuity. It strives to evoke a sacred or sublime time that spans the archaic and reaches into an everlasting future. In its aesthetic and textual matters, it strives to evoke or represent the transcendent, unbreakable continuity that is part of the sacred. It simultaneously quotes from the the history in which it seeks to partake, and thereby present itself as a continuity of terrestrial tradition. As a gift to a fellow singer, it presents itself as a continuity of fellowship and

community, the purpose to which the tradition is put. Through this “monumental” force, friendships and identities as “singers” are acknowledged or validated. Conversely, a musical tradition concerned with bonds of fellowship is renewed through acts of giving and sharing, and the future of such fellowship is implicated through the aesthetic impression and materiality of scores. Scores structure social bonds, and social bonds structure tradition through a material form that mediates an eternal narrative bridging the archaic past and divine afterlife.

Chapter 3 Old Paths: Renewal Through Composition in Sacred Harp Tradition

The short preface to *The Sacred Harp: 1991 Edition*, or “Denson Book,” describes the history of that book’s revision and claims that “each revision and each appendix was done to put new life into the books, each time adding new or present-day authors. This is the main reason it has lasted so long and will continue to survive” (McGraw et al, 1991). This chapter will investigate and elucidate this claim of the tradition’s “life” as it exists on and through the page. It will explore the context of “new and present-day authors” in the Sacred Harp history, how editorial process have changed to mediate concerns of the revival in the present day, and lastly, this chapter will discuss compositional pedagogy as it exists at Camp Fasola, a week-long camp dedicated to the dissemination Sacred Harp tradition.

The Construction of “Old Paths”

Though Sacred Harp tradition has relied on newly composed material to sustain interest in singing, its stylistic parameters have remained fairly set since the early 20th century when Sacred Harp singing found itself completely out of step with mainstream southern musical culture. When *The Sacred Harp* was first published in 1844, much of its material was already several generations old, yet the book remained conversant with a broader musical landscape of the rural South. While continuing to reprint popular pre-Revolution tunes of the New England School, the book followed the example

of previous tunebooks published in the South and Mid-Atlantic by arranging melodies from vernacular sources and camp meetings.

The book drew from an active shapenote musical culture that extended beyond tunebooks as well. After publication, B.F. White, the book's original co-compiler, edited a small newspaper in Harris County, Georgia, *The Organ*, that occasionally circulated new compositions, some of which were admitted in his later revisions. Likewise, White's student E.T. Pound, edited *The Gazette* in nearby Barnesville and sometimes featured new compositions (Steel, 169). Both White and Pound would serve on revision committees of the mid-late 19th century and added to *The Sacred Harp* tunes previously published in their periodicals.

Still, when *The Sacred Harp* was published, American musical culture was in the midst of a shift away from the compositional styles, pedagogy, and participatory model of the American singing school tradition and towards musical practice and pedagogy as imported from the modern European academy. The rise of Gospel music divided singers of *The Sacred Harp* and other older tunebooks in their efforts to either resist or incorporate such influence into their traditions to varying degrees. Newspapers like White's *The Organ* were often used to defend the merits of older styles like those included in *The Sacred Harp*, and its accompanying pedagogy. Nonetheless, newer tunebooks like *The Christian Harmony*, featuring 7-shape notation, do-re-mi solfege, and early examples of Gospel music (printed alongside many older-

style compositions) found some favor amongst Sacred Harp singers. In response, B.F. White wrote in the preface to his 1869 revision of *The Sacred Harp*, the last completed before his death, “We [the editors] have been especially vigilant in seeking musical terms more appropriate to the purpose than the four names used in this book [i.e. the fasola system of shape notation]; but candor compels us to acknowledge that our search has been unavailing...We scarcely think that we can do better than abide by the advice - ‘Ask for the old paths, and walk therein’” (Cobb).

White paraphrases here the Christian Old Testament book of Jeremiah, in which the titular prophet warns the Jews of Jerusalem to live righteously or else face destruction and enslavement at the hands of invading Babylonians. Without knowing how far into this Biblical subtext White intended his followers to read, his comments announced a conservative stance that would guide the book and its traditions into the present day. The phrase now appears in the dedication of 1991 revision of the Denson Book: “Dedicated to: All lovers of Sacred Harp music, and to the memory of the illustrious and venerable partriarchs [sic] who established the Traditional Style of Sacred Harp singing and admonished their followers to “seek the old paths and walk therein” (McGraw, et al., 1991).

Nonetheless, at the beginning of the 20th century, after B.F. White’s death, numerous individuals, including B.F. White’s son James Landrum White, left the “old paths” and attempted to modernize *The Sacred Harp* in the

late 19th and early 20th centuries with various combinations of Gospel tunes, modern reharmonizations of old Sacred Harp tunes, and/or seven-shape notation. The most extreme of these attempts were quickly rejected by Sacred Harp singers. In direct response to one of these revisions, Buell Cobb notes an Alabama singing convention of 1910 which, in addition to rejecting the new work, urged via public resolutions that future revisions limit their repertoire to the styles of the older editions, and decisively proclaimed “all the new compositions to be composed by old Sacred Harp singers only” (1989, 107-108). Thus, the Sacred Harp community recapitulated B.F. White’s earlier plea for aesthetic conservatism, but added to that a social conservatism, reflecting the Sacred Harp community’s increasing disjunction from mainstream protestant music culture.

Narrowing Paths

Throughout the 20th century, new tunes by traditional Sacred Harp singers were being written, but remained outside of the ritualized realm of singing unless canonized. Whereas singing conventions of the early 19th century had fashioned themselves as forums of sacred singing culture generally, by the turn of the century, they had increasingly settled upon single tunebooks as the object of tradition and preservation (Cobb 130). A handful of smaller, annual, local singings in the South continue to employ multiple revisions or tunebooks where traditions have overlapped within a community. Still, it remains the case that tunes not canonized in a tunebook have had little

public forum for singing. Of the elder southern Sacred Harp singers who compose and/or knew previous generations of composers, none I've spoken with could recall a moment prior to the revival in which a new work by a singer was sung within a formal public convention. At most, composers might share a new tune with an ad hoc collection of singers during a convention's lunch break, outside of the ritualized context of singing and not recorded in the minutes. Otherwise, new works might have been shared privately amongst friends.

For much of the 20th century, the only means by which a Sacred Harp singer could have a Sacred Harp-style composition sung publicly was to have it admitted into *The Sacred Harp* through its periodic revisions. While it was first co-compiled by B.F. White and E.J. King, revisions of *The Sacred Harp* have always been undertaken by committee. Through the 19th century these committees were sponsored by singing conventions and formed from their membership. B.F. White founded the Southern Musical Convention in Upson County, Georgia, which sponsored three revisions during White's lifetime. The United Sacred Harp Musical Association was co-founded by Joseph James and James Landrum White in Atlanta in 1905. Ironically, it would sponsor and supply committee members for numerous competing revision efforts by its co-founders which further splintered the Sacred Harp community. In the twentieth century, the brothers Thomas and Seaborn Denson bought the rights to James' revision and founded the Sacred Harp Publishing Company, which

has continued to revise by committee.

Committees of the Denson lineage have been connected through a series of Alabaman and Georgian families. The 1911 James revision employed Denson brothers Thomas and Seaborn. The brothers' 1936 revision committee included three McGraw brothers of Georgia. Their cousin, Hugh McGraw would later chair the book's most recent revision completed in 1991. Historically, committees served as the primary source of new compositions. B.F. White's last revision in 1869, sponsored by the Southern Musical Association, added an appendix with 71 tunes with composers credited. Of those, 34 were composed by committee members, with nearly all of the remaining composed by family and close associates. When bibliographic annotations to scores became standard in Sacred Harp publications starting with James 1911 revision, it became clear that new material was being produced during the revision process itself. For example, in the appendix added in the James revision of 1911, 28 original tunes were added (not counting older tunes "re-arranged" or "re-modeled" by the committee). All but one tune was composed after 1906, when the United Sacred Harp Musical Association first commissioned a committee to revise *The Sacred Harp*. Nineteen were composed by board members and seven were composed by the wives, children, or in-laws of board members Thomas and Seaborn Denson. Members of the Denson family would go on to lead another revision effort completed in 1936, and they contributed nineteen more tunes, eighteen

of which had been composed within the two preceding years.

Thus, throughout much of the 20th century, the revision of the Sacred Harp reflected its increasing disjunction from mainstream musical culture. With its slowly dwindling numbers, revision, and the “life” of the tradition that stems from new composition was entrusted to a small number of respected and influential singing families and undertaken only as a direct intervention into the book’s “life”.

The Path Broadens

The Denson Book’s revision in 1991 was the first to reflect and respond to the impact of a still-blossoming revival that was bringing new attention, new eyes, and new ears to Sacred Harp traditions. Though matters of style continued to remain fixed, other aspects of the book including its curation, design, and notation speak to modern reconciliations between traditionalists and revivalists as they have negotiate bounds of membership and frame the tradition as simultaneously historic and alive in the present. More importantly, we can find in the revision a covenant with a new generation of singers, and new communities of singers, that have become caretakers of tradition.

Under the leadership of the Sacred Harp Publishing Company’s then Executive Secretary, Hugh McGraw, the fundamental role of the music committee in the 1980s. Rather than providing a bulk of the book’s new material, the revision committee designed a process by which the expanding community might become engaged and inscribed within the book. In 1985 the

revision effort was announced via the SHPC's national newsletter, which, at its peak circulation, was sent to at least 1,000 homes across the country. The committee received approximately 140 submissions, which were then narrowed to a shortlist of at least 60 tunes. To arrive at a final selection, a special singing session was arranged in which members of the SHPC's board of directors each invited three singers, mostly esteemed lifelong southern singers, to sight sing through this material. Singers convened in December of 1990 at Samford University in Birmingham, with composers of the shortlist invited to attend and lead their work. The singing was recorded and then circulated amongst the music committee with no identifying marks so as to protect the integrity of the committee's final judgement of musical content.

The process resulted with 36 newly-composed tunes added: six credited to as many composers from Alabama, sixteen credited to eight Georgians, and the remainder credited to seven composers from revival contexts including Connecticut, Illinois, Massachusetts, and New York. This latter group comprised the first works of composers from north of Alabama and Georgia to be admitted since the 19th century.

These compositions continued a tradition of inscribing lived memory, shared social experience, and recent history into the book through dedications. Going as far back as the 1859 revision of the Sacred Harp, composers and committee members Edmund Dumas and J.P. Rees each added an original composition titled in tribute to the other. Likewise, 1991

committee chair Hugh McGraw composed tunes “DeLong” and “Wootten” in honor of fellow committee members Richard DeLong and Terry Wootten, and their families who have sung in northern Georgia and Alabama, respectively, for several generations. Revivalists also composed in honor of southerners who had mentored them: Chicagoan Ted Mercer composed “Sheppard” in honor of Jeff and Shelby of Alabama, and Dan Brittain composed the previously mentioned “Cobb” for Buell as well as the tune “McGraw” in honor of the book’s revision chair.

Dedications like these memorialize affective bonds between families, peers, friends, and mentors that are the very fabric of the community. Being canonized in the book and thus eligible for use in organized singings, conventions become opportunities to ritually celebrate these bonds. For that reason, in addition to affinity for the purely aesthetic content of scores, those that were subject or witness to these social bonds can become powerfully connected to their books. Robert Vaughan, a traditional singer based in Texas remarked, “I am a ‘Cooper Book’ singer. It is *my* book. It is my heritage. I grew up in a community that used the Cooper Book. My Dad’s [sic] uncle has a song in the Cooper book [sic]. That song, written by a young man who died an untimely death, emotionally anchors our family to one book more than the others.” (Vaughan, 27).

The honor of having one’s name in *The Sacred Harp* is so great that the rules of the 1991 music committee’s review process were sometimes skirted.

Though the committee limited the number of compositions by a single composer to be admitted, it is a poorly-kept secret amongst singers that a small number of tunes admitted were not composed by the person named on the score. Rather, these false namings were a gift on the part of the actual composer or composers, whom I have decided to leave unnamed in this dissertation.

Book Design

The 1991 revision involved a cover-to-cover re-typesetting of content, replacing a patchwork of heterogeneous printing plates accumulated over numerous revisions with a single, uniform digital layout. Singers praised the new layout for its primary purpose of improving the readability of scores, but they attributed different meanings to the the old and new visual aesthetics. Jesse Karlsberg notes that some southern singers, recognizing the power of the book's visual aesthetic to represent the tradition, hoped that a cleaner, modern, digital typesetting would help purge the book of a visual aesthetic that could contribute to an aura of quaint "otherness" that has at times accompanied the influx of urban revivalists (<http://tinyurl.com/glslevq>, accessed 20, September, 2015). What traditional singers may have seen an unprofessional-looking, undesirably dated, and perhaps slightly embarrassing piecemeal visual aesthetic, newer revival singers sometimes admired as a nostalgic emblem of a romanticized, rural, pre-modern past. Such a reading is hinted in scholar Ron Pen's his academic review of the 1991 Denson revision,

in which he remarked that “The new edition's pages are decidedly cleaner and less cluttered, but they also seem somewhat less ‘homey’ and engaging” (1992).

More to this point, the 1991 revision removed annotations to each tune originally added by Joseph James in 1911 containing historical notes on composers and tunes. Their colloquial tone, anecdotal content, and glaringly dubious historicity won many fans, but the notes also lent themselves to the same interpretations as the older printing plates. Perhaps the most quintessential of these concerned the composer John Leland. Of him, James wrote,

born in 1754 and died in 1844... The farmers of Cheshire, for whom he was pastor, conceived the idea of sending the biggest cheese in America to President Jefferson. Mr. Leland offered to go to Washington with an ox team with it and preach along the way, which he did. The cheese weighed 1,450 pounds. He died with great hope of rest in the glory world (James, 2015).

Such content could easily be admired for its quaint quirkiness, or resented for its invitation to romanticize the tradition on account of its “homey” tone. Speaking specifically of James’ notes, Pen went on to lament that “fact will replace fancy and utility will supercede eccentricity, but it will be difficult to replace the charm of the Denson edition’s ‘folk musicology.’” The Sacred Harp Publishing Company decided to remove these notes, which were then the best historical record of Sacred Harp composers available, with the understanding that they would be replaced by a separate volume of modern, professional scholarship. This volume, authored by Warren Steel, a shapenote scholar who

proofread the 1991 revision, was finally published in 2010.

The music committee's process demonstrate how the page, or the score, and its compilation in the book continues to serve the life of Sacred Harp tradition. First, and perhaps foremost, the book must preserve an aesthetic integrity that is seemingly transcendent. That aesthetic is framed by or inscribed with the lived memories and social history of new generations of singers in the form of dedications. Because the book's visual aesthetic is itself less an object of reverence and tradition (aside from shape notation itself, of course), it must continually reaffirm that the book is conversant with and therefore relevant to the modern evolving world. When done successfully, as the 1991 revision undeniably was, revisions structure and reinforce social pathways through which the tradition might be renewed and revitalized for another generation. The book lends itself as a powerful totem through which affection can be communicated at an individual and group level. In doing so, books are revitalized with new aesthetic content, and a new imperative to sing it.

Notation

As shown earlier with the example of "Weeping Mary" in the Cooper book, scores have been a site negotiation between traditional and revival singers, particularly with respect to the bounds between oral and written singing traditions. That example represented an effort by the leadership of that book's revision committee to accommodate a rapid influx of new singers and

protect the integrity of class singing.

The Denson Book's modern revision presents a complementary example in which revival singers notated oral traditions of southern singers for the first time. Though not notated in older scores, many southern communities have preserved a tradition of singing minor-key folk hymns with the 6th scale degree raised a semitone such that the tune is sung not in an Aeolian mode as notated, but in a Dorian mode. The tendency is not universal to all southern communities. Furthermore, communities that do practice this vary in their application amongst distinct sets of tunes, and even apply this raised sixth inconsistently within a single tune.

The revival of Sacred Harp singing has constructed new pathways and patterns of circulation such that larger conventions now bring together singers, both traditional and revival, into contexts in which no single local tradition might guide singers. This can result with the natural and raised 6th being sung with near equal force, producing a conspicuous dissonance that represents neither the score nor southern practice. Since the beginning of the revival, there has been ongoing discussion amongst revival and traditional singers attempting to settle when and where this practice is appropriate, and what theoretical principles might guide its application.

No consensus has been reached on this matter, and it seems that the community has tired of the debate altogether in recent years. At the 2013 California All-State singing convention in San Diego, an Alabamian of a well-

admired traditional singing family, was in attendance and gave a short “singing school” lesson, intended for newcomers unfamiliar with the notation and oral tradition of *The Sacred Harp*. When discussing the rudiments of singing a minor scale, he demonstrated by singing a natural minor scale notated on a large diagram on display for the class. After doing so, he pointed to the 6th scale degree and said, “I could talk for a whole hour just about this one note,” then paused dramatically before concluding, “but I won’t.” His remark drew enthusiastic applause from the many experienced singers in attendance. It seems that some have become resigned to let the collective or emergent agency of the community and history sort out the matter.

In the revival era, revival singers composing new tunes have at times chosen to notate a raised 6th to evoke the sound of “authentic” oral tradition. Of the tunes admitted in the 1991 revision, “Wood Street” by Chicagoan Judy Hauff is notated with all sixths raised, and today remains the only canonized tune to do so. According to data compiled by the SHMHA since 1995, it has become the sixth most-commonly sung tune of those added in the 1991 revision, the most sung of those composed by revival figures. Furthermore, it has become the 98th most sung in the entire book, rendering it likely to be sung at most all-day singings.

Compositional Pedagogy at Camp Fasola, and the Ethos of Composition

Camp Fasola¹ is an annual summer camp initiated in 2003 by the Sacred Harp Musical Heritage Association (SHMHA), an Alabama-based nonprofit organization that works very closely (and shares some board members) with the Sacred Harp Publishing Company (SHPC) to promote Sacred Harp traditions associated with *The Denson Book*. Camp organization is led by Alabamian David Ivey, lifelong singer, board member of SHMHA and the SHPC, and recipient of a 2013 National Endowment for the Arts Heritage Fellowship honoring his work preserving Sacred Harp traditions.

Camp Fasola enlists the help of well-admired traditional singers, revival singers, and scholars to lead classes on nearly all aspects of singing history, practice, and culture. This would include technical matters like reading music, social traditions and etiquette relevant to organizing singing conventions, and history ranging from scholarly accounts of 18th and 19th century singing culture to more anecdotal accounts of 20th century singing families. Curriculum does not cover physiological concerns of singing such as diaphragm control, diction, or vocal timbre, as most singers maintain there is no ‘correct’ singing technique beyond concerns of singing words loudly with the correct pitch.

Since 2008, SHMHA has organized annually two sessions of Camp

¹ Camp Fasola, pronounced Fa-So-La, takes its name from the common name for the four-shape notation system, sometimes called “fasola notation.” “Fasola” as a term is sometimes used to refer to the broader repertoire historically published with this notation, but Camp Fasola remains singularly dedicated to repertoire of *The Sacred Harp* Denson revision lineage.

Fasola: an “Adult Camp” currently held near Double Springs, Alabama, which caters more to older and more experienced singers, and a “Youth Camp” held near Anniston, Alabama. While curriculum and activities at either session are designed with different age groups in mind, and while Youth Camp attracts more families, each camp attracts singers of all ages and backgrounds eager to learn from such a high concentration of traditional singers and authorities.

I attended the adult session in 2012 and a youth session in 2013. Instructors and curriculum overlapped greatly between each. However, a difference in the geographic distribution of campers between the two sessions was noticeable. I was one of seven San Diegans to attend the adult session, which also attracted singers from every major West Coast city. At the youth session, however, I was the only person from west of the Mississippi in attendance.

Camp Fasola has become an important part of the revival landscape, serving as the only institution of its kind in the fasola community.² This has powerful implications for the dissemination of traditional knowledge throughout the revival community. As described before, the southern singing community is not monolithic in its use of repertoire (i.e. there are different lineages of revision), nor in its oral or performative traditions. Given the strong social connection between the SHPC and SHMHA, Camp Fasola’s curriculum is

² It should be noted that a Camp Do-re-mi in North Carolina has been founded by singers of *The Christian Harmony*, a late 19th century tunebook featuring 7-shape notation, do-re-mi solfege, and many gospel tunes. This book is also the object of unbroken traditions in the South and Mid-Atlantic and is currently enjoying its own revival as newer Sacred Harp singers gain interest.

firmly tied to the Denson Book. Attendees often enjoy singing from other revisions of *The Sacred Harp* and other repertoires of sacred song in between activities, but camp curriculum rarely devotes extended discussion to these. This need not be understood as a slighting of other books and other regional practices, but is perhaps better understood as a matter of propriety: Instructors may not want to speak for a community or tradition in which they do not participate, nor advocate their own more uniquely local traditions, lest their efforts appear divisive.

For example, southern communities sometimes differ in their techniques of conducting a class, or “beating time” as it is most often called. Rudiments of the first *Sacred Harp* tunebooks, authored by B.F. White, suggested that classes should be led with patterns of hand motions that move only up and down with no lateral motion. Thus, it remains today that tunes are typically led in patterns of two (down-up) or three (down-down-up). However, some southern communities supplement these patterns with a four-beat pattern more closely resembling that of conventional, western classical conducting and involving vertical and lateral motions of the hand. This pattern, known as “beating in four” or “leading in four,” is likely the influence of early reformist and Gospel pedagogy, as it is described in the rudiments of other tunebooks. Because it is neither as common as other not-in-the-book practices (e.g. raising the sixth scaled degree in minor-key tunes), it was discussed only briefly, with instructors encouraging great thoughtfulness or even trepidation

regarding its use in singings. While I did not see it used by any instructors or campers during my camp sessions, I did see it employed by traditional southern instructors at local singings unaffiliated with camp and falling in the days before or after camp. Thus, instructors and the curriculum of Camp Fasola navigates the patchwork of local traditions by respectfully acknowledging all variations but instructing only on the most universal techniques.

Still, Camp Fasola has contributed to a process of consolidating the patchwork of varying traditions as patterns of travel amongst singers expands to ever-broader regional and national levels. By the mid-1990s, singers of Hoboken, Georgia, who sang in isolation from other Sacred Harp singers for many generations, were already abandoning many of their unique local practices and adopting what they termed “Alabama style” singing by the mid 1990s as they became increasingly involved with the national community and revival (Chicago Sacred Harp Newsletter, 1996, volume XI, no.5).

Since 2007 classes in composition have become standard in camp curriculum and have been held every year except 2010. Instructors in these courses have consistently come from revival backgrounds and entered the southern community primarily through communities involved in the social sphere of northern Alabama, Georgia, SHPC, and/or SHMHA. Judy Hauff, whose compositions were included in the 1991 revision of the Denson book, taught courses the first two years it was offered, but since 2009 these courses

have been led by composium founders Jesse Karlsberg and Aldo Ceresa.

I attended a session of 'Adult Camp' in June of 2013 and a session of 'Youth Camp' in July of 2014 where I was able to attend composition workshops and composiums led by Karlsberg and Ceresa, respectively. At the center of each class was a pedagogical exercise called "Team Tunesmith" designed to encourage the exploration of melodic and harmonic possibilities in Sacred Harp composition, and the development of distinct melodic sensibilities for each vocal part. In this exercise, an identical score is provided to all in attendance containing a tenor melody while staves for bass, alto, and treble³ parts are left blank. Participants will assemble into groups of three, ideally with each singer accustomed to singing a different part. Each composes a bass line on their individual score, then exchanges their score with another on their team, compose a treble line, exchange again, and compose an alto line.⁴ The writing of parts in this circulatory manner stresses horizontal, melodic thinking over vertical harmonic thinking. There are limited examples of Sacred Harp melodies composed by one individual and remaining parts composed by a second person, but few, if any, tunes composed by three or more individuals as in this exercise.

Teams are given until the end of Camp to complete the exercise, at

³ The preferred term for "soprano" in this tradition.

⁴ This ordering of part writing - tenor, bass, treble, alto - has become common amongst new composers owing in part to the few primary sources describing 19th century practices in shapenote contexts. John McCurry's 1855 tunebook *The Social Harp*, published in Georgia, suggests writing the tenor first, followed by bass and treble. Much of his book contains tunes in 3-parts with no alto, thus possibly explaining their absence in his instructions. Nonetheless, his book also has 4-part tunes with altos.

which point each person on a team has composed a bass, alto, and treble part, each in response to a different arrangement of team member contributions, and the team has together produced three harmonizations of a single melody. Depending on the total number in attendance, a dozen or more harmonizations of the same melody can be produced by one class. At the end of camp, all participating singers convene for a compositium where all harmonizations are sung, and their unique qualities assessed by the class.

Ceresa finds the Team Tunesmith exercise valuable because “it makes you think differently, because you can’t change what other people have done” (personal interview, Nov. 6, 2013). While this may seem a simple observation, it neatly sums up an ethos of composing and of the revival community in general. This comment seems almost a paraphrase of B.F. White’s plea to walk within old paths. Participants in the exercise must acknowledge and stay within the confines of what their teammates have contributed before them. Ceresa’s comment applies to the entire project of composing new music for the Sacred Harp community as well. The most reliable rule of Sacred Harp composition, repeated frequently by instructors today, echoes the comment of early 20th century singers who rejected new compositional styles. This rule could be closely paraphrased as “if it’s not in the book, don’t do it.” For example, the instructor of a 2008 Camp Fasola composition course instructed students to “never write a third [mediant] into the closing chord of a minor song—this never appears in the Sacred Harp” (Sacred Harp Singings 2008

and 2009, 175). Edicts such as these are given with the tacit assumption that one is composing for the Denson book community and its tradition. As each revision in use today provides some aesthetic precedents unique compared to the others, such an approach subtly limit the aesthetic range of new compositions.

We can also find a pluralistic ethos inscribed in this pedagogical exercise which recapitulates observations about the fundamental nature of the modern Sacred Harp community. Many scholars of the revival have in some way expressed bemusement and wonder that the national singing community encompasses ideological divides often portrayed as irreconcilable and the source of conflict and breakdown in modern American society (e.g. religious/secular, conservative/liberal, rural/urban, heteronormative/homosexual, “blue state”/“red state”)(Clawson 2011; Miller 2008). Nonetheless, the traditional decorum of singing conventions dictates that such differences are strategically avoided in conversation or else tolerated during the singing context such that social bonds can be formed through the intensely physical rituals of singing (Heider & Warner, 2010). We can find a more symbolic, but comparable situation playing out in miniature in the Tunesmith exercise. As scores circulate through the team loop, one finds that learning happens by accepting other perspectives, decisions, and levels of ability and experience. Composing a treble or alto line, for instance, one often find one’s options increasingly limited by the decisions made by earlier

contributors to the score.

This idea speaks to an intentionality, or sense of purpose shared by most “successful”⁵ composers wherein social experience is prioritized over self-expression. Within the aesthetic confines of *The Sacred Harp* discussed earlier, there remains little room for “self-expression.” New composers certainly have their own proclivities, but these all remain within the realm of an aesthetic universe with borders that are quite clear. The most successful compositions often quickly elicit comparison to some canonical composer or tune. Rather than self-expression, social utility is commonly cited as the primary purpose or intent of composers. Along these lines, composer Steve Helwig of Eugene, Oregon described an important epiphany regarding his own work:

I think my songs got better when I realized that this was not composer’s music but this is singers’ music. So I’d write a song and think that I’d have it good. I would give it to some people. We would sing it and they would give me feedback, and then I would change it according to what they said, because I can write the best thing in the world but if nobody likes it, it doesn’t matter. They’re not going to sing it (personal interview, 16 April, 2015).

Most composers will quickly suggest that there is no need for new tunes in Sacred Harp tradition as singers so admire the canonical repertoire. Still, they insist that the value of new compositions lay in their potential to comment upon and structure the very social bonds of the singing community.

⁵ “Successful” in this context would typically refer to a tune that both is both judged to be aesthetically aligned with *The Sacred Harp* and enjoyed by singers.

Many composers describe compositions as a gift to other singers or the tradition generally, or strive to compose something other singers will enjoy singing. They rely on their relationships with singers of other parts to understand what a “good” alto part is, or what a “fun” treble part is. Composers often name tunes in honor of fellow singers, perhaps molding their compositions towards the dedicatee’s tastes. In this way, composition is understood not just as working within a set of compositional rules, but also situating oneself within a social network and becoming socialized within the desires of one’s singing peers and friends. Helwig shared his experience of composing his 2011 tune “Gosia”, which was molded in such ways. Helwig began with the intent of writing for a fellow singer named in the title. As she was an alto, Helwig, wrote an alto part first. As evidenced in the methods advocated by the Team Tunsmith exercise, this is an unconventional method which reflected Helwig’s desire to compose in tribute to a particular singer. Alto lines are often the final line to be composed, after the harmonic outline of a composition has largely been determined. For this reason, alto lines are often characterized by greater limitations of range, contour, and embellishment compared to other voices, and carry greater risk of boring singers than other parts. After completing the composition, Helwig submitted it to the named alto for her feedback, which Helwig then used to refine the piece. When it was later considered for admission into the Cooper Book, Helwig further revised the piece to conform with the aesthetic precedents of that book. Most notably, the

Cooper Book lineage has never printed accidentals as Wilson Cooper removed even those printed by B.F. White. Therefore, Helwig elected to remove an accidental from his original “Gosia” manuscript for the tune.

Examples like “Gosia” demonstrate that while confinement within aesthetic “old paths” is a prerequisite for inclusion in this tradition, we might better understand composition in terms of the social energy that animates the composer down those “paths.” The act of composition is an inherently social one in which composer, community, and tradition are profoundly entangled. To compose is to submit oneself to the service of the community and celebrate the traditions which have structured it, but re-validating those very structures and aesthetic precedents, just as a path must be continually trod in order to remain a path.

Chapter 4 New Paths: Scores Apart From *The Sacred Harp*

For most of the 20th century, compositional activity waned as the Sacred Harp community resisted the currents of contemporary musical culture, becoming concentrated around revision efforts and undertaken by small numbers of families in a limited geographical region. Since late 1980s, the Sacred Harp revival has catalyzed a huge growth of compositional activity that has only accelerated into the present, particularly amongst revival singers outside of the South. As shown in the previous chapter, this activity has contributed to the rejuvenation of *The Sacred Harp* tunebooks and traditional singings utilizing it. However, compositional output has been so great that new works have spilled out beyond the borders of traditional, ritualized singing.

The structures and strictures of Sacred Harp tradition, though uniquely and profoundly meaningful for singers, have not been able to provide a sufficient forum for this work. For this reason, singers of the revival have constructed new pathways of dissemination and forums for discourse about composition. While this activity is derivative from and reverent towards Sacred Harp tradition and southern practice, it is not completely beholden to it. The purpose of this chapter is to document these new social forums, to detail important social and aesthetic precedents that have accrued through them, and grasp how this activity continues to be discursively grounded in “Sacred Harp tradition.”

Local Tunebooks

Over the course of the modern revival, a small number of revival communities have produced supplementary volumes compiling some combination of historical shapenote repertoire or original compositions. In 1987 the singers of Chicago produced their own modest compilation of original works by local singers and tunes from other shapenote sources, *A Midwest Supplement*. In 2002, a singing group based around Oberlin University produced *Oberlin Harmony: Songs We Like To Sing* and similarly combined old and new works.

As their names suggest, these books were intended and curated for local use and did not have enjoyed sustained use into the present. Nonetheless they introduced repertoire that has since been recompiled in other volumes and continues to be popular amongst singers. As described earlier, many tunes from the *Supplement* would be admitted into the 1991 revision of the Denson Book - not only newly composed works but also historical compositions. William Billings' 1770 tune "Africa" had been included in early revisions of *The Sacred Harp* but was removed by B.F. White. However, the *Supplement* brought new attention to the tune, which is now a favorite of the revival era. Several modern compositions included in the Oberlin book have found lasting use through newly-compiled tunebooks such as *Shenandoah Harmony* discussed in chapter 5.

These locally-produced, supplementary collections were not without

precedent. Comparable volumes remain in use in a small number of annual southern singings. Southern supplements often collect local or family favorites preserved from previous revisions of *The Sacred Harp* or other tunebooks once used in the region, and are used in smaller memorial singings which celebrate the lives of specific individuals and families. Nonetheless, few, if any, of these early revival supplements have achieved sustained use into the present as the national community has negotiated a proper context for alternative repertoire.

Pushed to the Fringes

At the earliest conventions in revival regions, during late 1980s and early 1990s, it was not uncommon for singers to return from a recess to find placed on their chairs photocopies of a new composition to be sung. Through the early 1990s, as newer singers strengthened social bonds with the South and became more self-consciously engaged in a “revival,” such “alternative” repertoire was increasingly excluded from public singing. Revival singer Carla Smith recalls attending a singing school taught by an esteemed southerner who discouraged the unannounced circulation of uncanonized tunes during Sacred Harp conventions to preserve their traditional structure and function. Though Smith had done so previously, with the previously described tune “San Diego” for example, she has since ceased and has furthermore excluded such practices from conventions she has since chaired (Smith, personal interview, April 14, 2015). Similarly, singer Stephen O’Leary, who sang in

Chicago during this transitional period recalls, “One day someone showed up [to a local singing] with a new score, and another singer just said, ‘Oh, we don’t do that anymore’” (personal interview, July 18, 2014).

Thus, new compositions often found themselves in a precarious position as the revival blossomed. Though cited as the “life” of a living tradition, they were nonetheless excluded from the tradition’s social rituals, and during the tradition’s most robust moment in a century, no less. In the current community, the sharing of new compositions during regularly-scheduled Sacred Harp conventions has become understood as an imposition on the class, improper, or at the very least, “not how they do it down South.” As a result, modern singers and composers have cultivated new pathways for circulating their compositions and contexts for performance. In doing so, they are expanding the activities and institutions of the Sacred Harp community.

Alternative Singings and Tunebook Companions

Though conventions of the North and Midwest became increasingly concerned with preserving and upholding Sacred Harp tradition, interest in alternative repertoire including music of other tunebooks and original compositions was never abandoned entirely. As Sacred Harp conventions grew from regional affairs to national affairs pulling in larger numbers of revival singers, new forums for the sharing and exploration of alternative repertoire quickly coagulated. Various forms of American psalmody, new and old, may have been shared in an informal or ad hoc fashion, perhaps at an evening

social hosted by a local singer on the first night of a convention, or at a hotel meeting room where numerous travelers were staying. By the mid 1990s, such activity began to be formalized as “alternative singing” sessions scheduled in the evenings after regularly-scheduled singing from *The Sacred Harp* had ended. Such sessions have become a common feature of conventions outside of the South, excepting the National Sacred Harp Singing Convention, held in Birmingham, Alabama, which attracts a substantial revivalist constituency.

Concurrent with the emergence of formalized “alternative singings,” supplementary compilations have emerged which catered to a national, rather than local, community. *The Sacred Harper’s Companion*, published in 1993 collected the works of living composers from across the country. In 1999 and 2001, two volumes of *An Eclectic Harmony* were published, the first collecting material from earlier *Sacred Harp* revisions and other fasola tunebooks, and the second collection compiling works from various seven-shape tunebooks.

Each of these efforts were born from the growing community of Denson Book singers and curated its efforts accordingly. The *Companion*, which benefitted from the support and submissions of numerous SHPC and SHMHA members, gathered composers canonized in the Denson Book. The *Eclectic Harmony* made clear its intended use and audience with its lengthy subtitle “A collection of four-shape tunes, old and new, in a great variety of styles and metres from sources additional to the Denson Revision of The Sacred Harp, submitted for the spiritual upliftment and enjoyment of the discerning public.”

These volumes fell out of sustained use, but each has brought new precedents, and formed new pathways for compositional and social activity in the national community. Through them singers have gained reputations as capable composers by travelling these pathways that do not necessarily involve canonization within *The Sacred Harp*. In 2001, Lisa Grayson of Chicago published *The New Millennium Harp* collecting revival-era compositions. Many of its tunes were collected in person at conventions, however she did reach out to composers collected in *An Eclectic Harmony* and *Sacred Harper's Companion* (iv). Many of its composers and some of its compositions would later be featured in *The Trumpet*, an online periodical dedicated to new compositions discussed later in this chapter.

Managing Commerce

Superficially, the growth of fasola publishing resembles the formation of “revival industries” as described by Tamara Livingston. Included in her framework theorizing modern musical revivals is the formation of “non-profit and/or commercial enterprises catering to the revivalist market consisting of concert and festival promotions, sales of recordings, newsletters, pedagogical publications, and instruments and supplies” (1999). Livingston suggests that the growth of commercial enterprises within revival movements risks becoming a source of dissonance and embarrassment as members may find such efforts crass and tainting an otherwise “pure” tradition. Consequently, Livingston suggests this development in modern revivals often catalyzes the

fragmentation and dissolution of revival communities through internal disputes regarding the propriety of such activity.

The Sacred Harp revival presents a particularly interesting exception to Livingston's theorizations as this tradition has always been, to some extent, a commercial enterprise. Because the tradition is founded on notation, and therefore the print medium, its community has always been engaged in the economic concerns of printing, distribution, and marketing. Furthermore, musical material of *The Sacred Harp* has always existed as intellectual property and it has been defended as such in court. In the early 20th century, as *The Sacred Harp* was split into competing revisions, its three competing editors - Joseph James, Wilson Cooper, and James White - each became embroiled in legal disputes of plagiarism with one or more of the others¹. From the beginning, this music and the books into which they have been compiled have been sold and marketed in competition with other material, though this competition has largely ceased today.

In the present, singing institutions and singers work to continually manage or minimize the infringement of commercial or economic concerns into the singing experience. Publishing companies operate largely through volunteer efforts, with no salaries or compensation for board members.

¹In 1914, Cooper sued James for the plagiarism of alto lines as those added in James' revision were often similar, if not identical, to those composed by and first printed in Cooper's revision. The court conceded that James did in fact use Cooper's alto lines in many instances, but concluded these parts alone could not be subject to copyright protection in the same manner of the compositions to which they were added (<http://mcir.usc.edu/cases/1910-1919/Pages/cooperjames.html>, accessed 29, August, 2014). Later, James sued White for copyright infringement as well, though this case was also dismissed (Karlsberg, 2015, xii).

Specialized labour such as typesetting is typically funded by private donations of individuals, often more affluent members of organizations such as SHMHA or SHPC. Virtually no money is spent to promote or advertise shapenote tunebooks of any publishing company or tradition. Tunebooks remain sold at cost, ranging from \$15-25. To further remove any economic barriers, most revival singing communities have invested in a collection of “loaner books” available to new singers until they are able or willing to purchase their own. Such practices have become common and expected even for new publications as a means of preserving the noncommercial nature of singing as a sacred and/or social ritual while addressing the economic realities of a print medium. While singers may question or critique new volumes on the basis of repertoire and editorial decisions, they do not question or criticize the intention or integrity of new compilers and publishers.

Composiums

Since the latter 2000s, composition production and demand have continued to grow such that more exclusive forums for composition have taken root in addition to alternative singings and the supplementary volumes of the 1990s and early 2000s. Most important in this respect “composiums” which emerged in the latter 2000s organized by aspiring composers seeking to improve their work and rapidly spread across the national community. My discussion of this contemporary sphere of activity will focus on the experiences of two singers who together co-organized the first composium,

and have remained committed to the work of new compositions as teachers: Jesse Pearlman Karlsberg, an Atlanta-based post-doctoral fellow researching Sacred Harp community's early 20th century history and currently Vice-President of the Sacred Harp Publishing Company, which oversees the Denson line of revisions; and Aldo Ceresa, a New York City-based rare book dealer, independent scholar of shapenote history, and member of the Sacred Harp Publishing Company's Alternate Board of Directors.²

Karlsberg and Ceresa had each begun their attempts to compose in Sacred Harp styles in the early 2000s by seeking the mentorship of composers published in the Denson Book: Raymond Hamrick, a Georgian singer who was at that time the community's eldest composer³; Judy Hauff, a Chicagoan composing since the 1980s; Dan Brittain of Arkansas, a trained composer who began composing Sacred Harp-style music in the 1970s; and Neely Bruce, professor of music at Wesleyan University and chairman of the first New England Sacred Harp convention in 1976.

Outside of these valued mentorships, both Karlsberg and Ceresa described frustration in the lack of opportunities to have new works sung by Sacred Harp singers in the early 2000s, which they felt were crucial to improving their work. Both described a climate of polite reluctance regarding new compositions, though they could empathize with fellow singers in their

²According to the publishing company's website, "The Board of Directors is supplemented by an Alternate Board, whose members are appointed in even-numbered years by the Board of Directors, attend Board meetings, and may be called upon to vote in a Director's absence" (<http://originalsacredharp.com/about/board-of-directors>)

³ Sadly, Mr. Hamrick passed away in January, 2015.

reluctance. Karlsberg and Ceresa readily offered that their respective first attempts to emulate the styles and sounds of *The Sacred Harp* were not successful. Furthermore, they suggested that attempts by many aspiring composers to share “first tries” not unlike their own, combined with the general difficulty of sight-reading new material, bred an association of new composition with bad singing throughout the early revival community. Thus, the community grew reluctant to give valuable time during conventions to such work when many present had likely travelled long distances expressly for the purpose of singing canonical Sacred Harp material.

In response, Ceresa and Karlsberg co-organized with singer-composer Allison Blake an event which Ceresa named a “composium,” combining the words “compose” and “symposium.” Held in 2006 in Columbia County, New York, the composium collected over a dozen singer-composers to sing their compositions. As a symposium, the event’s primary function was to provide composers an opportunity to share and receive feedback on their work. It did not treat itself as a traditional singing convention guided by protocol serving functions of worship or fellowship. Singer-composers led their own works to be sung by all in attendance, and received feedback from singers immediately afterward. Furthermore, the event was recorded and these recordings distributed to composers to further assist them in their work.

In the following years, Karlsberg and Ceresa led other composiums in New England and the Midwest attached to Sacred Harp conventions, and

attracted larger audiences of composers and singers interested in new work. Today, composiums have been held throughout the Sacred Harp community, often attached to conventions and held after a normally scheduled day of singing exclusively from *The Sacred Harp*. Under varied leadership the events often maintain the purpose and structure designed by its founders, but might simply carry on as a regular singing: a rapid procession of tunes with little to no public feedback offered. Composiums have become common across revival regions, but, as with alternative singings, they have not become common in the South. To this date, the only composium-like events held in the South are those held in conjunction with Camp Fasola described in chapter 3.

The Trumpet

The most recent, substantial development in field of new compositions is the *The Trumpet*. An internet-based periodical, *The Trumpet* has become an important means of regularly connecting singers and composers on a national and increasingly international level. Just as importantly, it has become a forum of discourse on the craft of composition as well as its place within the tradition of Sacred Harp singing.

An idea for a periodical dedicated to modern fasola composition was first conceived by Sacred Harp singers Tom Malone and Will Fitzgerald during a long drive to Camp Fasola circa 2010. Deciding to move ahead with the project, they approached Robert Vaughan to join them in forming the publication's editorial board. This invitation was extended partially out of

respect for Vaughan's work as a composer, but his selection also served their desire to promote the publication throughout the national community. At the time, Malone was based in New England, Fitzgerald split his time between the Midwest and West Coast, and Vaughan remains based in the Cooper Book-singing regions of East Texas.

In organizing *The Trumpet*, the trio took some inspiration from the work of B.F. White's newspaper *The Organ*, a local newspaper in Harris County, Georgia which also printed new compositions. However, a greater influence was another 19th century publication known variously as "The Musical Million and Fireside Friend" and "the Musical Million and Singer's Advocate." The *Million* was published in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia in the late 19th century by Aldine Keiffer whose Mennonite ancestors printed shapenote music in the valley before him. Whereas White's *Organ* was a local newspaper through which White supported and promoted fasola music, Keiffer's publication was a musical periodical. Furthermore, it was one of the the last mouthpieces voicing support for shapenote pedagogy, though it did print more "modern" repertoire that at the time was being rejected by Sacred Harp singers. Like the *Million*, the new *Trumpet* prints newly composed pieces in fasola notation as well as essays on shapenote history, defenses of its pedagogical merit, and personal testimonies ruminating on the meaning, purpose, or need of compositional work.

The Trumpet nominally supports the full spectrum of historical fasola music as evidenced by its subtitle: “*A periodical for singers and writers of dispersed harmony & fasola music*”. However, its leadership, submissions, and readership clearly emanate from Sacred Harp contexts are evidenced by allusions to “our tradition” that repeatedly appear in its essays while referencing Denson and Cooper books. Submissions do reference the full range of precedents displayed in both books, including some of the Gospel-derived techniques such as call-and-response textures used in the Cooper book which might not be taught or advocated in Denson book contexts such as Camp Fasola.

Over five years of publication, submissions have shown a greater willingness to explore unconventional texts. The texts of *The Sacred Harp* have largely consisted of English evangelical poets such as Isaac Watts (by far the most popular) and Charles Wesley, as well as poetry of American frontier preachers whose circuit-riding shaped the Great Awakenings of the 18th and 19th centuries. This latter category may have included texts by an solitary author, but often were assembled from local oral traditions with the aim of encouraging spontaneous and widespread participation amongst the largely illiterate populations that congregated amongst the frontier. For this reason, texts of the camp meeting often possess a vernacular quality markedly distinct from earlier English poetry.

Modern Sacred Harp composers have often elected to remain within these precedents, however a notable number of *Trumpet* composers have explored texts from more modern traditions of sacred song, secular sources with biblical overtones, or texts self-composed in the style of conventional poetry. For example, a 2015 issue features compositions utilizing the poetry of Herman Melville, “The Ribs and Terrors In The Whale” which references the biblical story of Jonah, and poetry originally composed and circulated within the gospel music industry.

The Trumpet has offered a rare composition which references national and political events. Bruce Randall’s “Sandy Hook” was composed shortly after the mass shooting in the elementary school of Newtown, Connecticut in 2012, and is named in memorial to its victims. The tragedy became a flashpoint for highly polarizing national debates about gun rights. The composition does not explicitly take sides on the issue of gun control, but speaks through very conventional 18th text by Isaac Watts which meditates on the mortal condition, and furthermore, is already set to two compositions in *The Sacred Harp* Denson revision. In this way, fasola tradition was enlisted to offer a means of emotional catharsis, as is so common to Sacred Harp tradition with respect to questions of mortality, while avoiding more divisive questions of political and social response. This tact was carried by the *Trumpet*’s editors, who in their issue’s introductory article acknowledged the tune and its dedication while refraining from commenting further.

Sacred Harp tradition has rarely been used to comment upon current political issues, which is not to say that political matters are entirely absent from the book. Older New England repertoire re-printed since the book's first edition contain strong allusions to the American Revolutionary War ("No more beneath th'oppressive hand of tyranny we groan," in Stephen Jenks' "Liberty" of 1800) as well as the pacification and removal of native populations ("No more shall the sound of the war-whoop be heard...The tomahawk, buried, shall rest in the ground" in an unattributed composition c.1835). However, there are no comparable allusions to issues of the American Civil War. Between the book's first second and third revision by B.F. White and his Southern Musical Convention, the entirety of the American Civil War was fought, including Sherman's infamous campaign that decimated towns across White's home state of Georgia from Atlanta to Savannah. Numerous Sacred Harp contributors aided Confederate causes during this time, yet texts added to the book in the years preceding and following the conflict appear undisturbed in their tone and subject matter.

In its leadership structure and editorial process, *The Trumpet* seeks to represent equally the full range of genres and styles conventional to Sacred Harp and fasola traditions, and also the full geographical span of compositional activity. This latter point lends a subtle but important distinction in the periodical's mission compared to other organized activities of the Sacred Harp community. Much of the excitement and energy of the revival was

founded on acts of participatory singing and in particular a fascination with oral traditions firmly rooted in the South. Meanwhile, the craft of composition, and works of notation are by their nature and necessity, transportable, and the craft of composition perhaps more convincingly attainable than oral tradition or the prestige of southern heritage that has so powerfully shaped the revival community in the final decades of the 20th century. This is not to say that the works of southerners are not especially valued in *The Trumpet*. Its editors very intentionally selected the collaborative work of two Alabamans to appear first in its inaugural tradition. Nonetheless, compositional output in revival regions has largely overwhelmed those emerging from traditional singing families, and the leaders of *The Trumpet* have not positioned themselves as interventionists in this state of affairs. Furthermore, whereas revival singers have expressed fear of diluting the integrity of southern oral tradition through their participation in southern singing (Miller, 201), no comparable anxieties seem to surround acts of composition as revivalists output increasingly eclipses that of southerners.

It is noteworthy that all editors selected the tunes for their inaugural issue around the theme of dedications. Each of the 14 selections is named in honor of other singers through use of singers' names, towns, or some other reference to a singing location such as "Lincoln Street". At least two pay respect to southern forebears, but more honor the growing community spanning Vermont to Washington state. Such dedications have continued to

appear in each issue, and through them, *The Trumpet* has served to articulate growth of the burgeoning European shapenote communities of Ireland and particularly in Poland, where SHMHA has organized sessions of Camp Fasola in 2012 and 2014. Sacred Harp singing was introduced to Poland in 2008 when Tim Erikson, a New England-based singer and professional musician, and Jesse Pearlman Karlsberg led a workshop in Jaroslaw at the invitation of Erikson's now-wife, a Polish university instructor. Within a matter of months, a local group had formed, and enthusiasm was such that American singers have periodically returned for additional workshops (SHMHA actually organized sessions of Camp Fasola Europe there in 2012 and 2014).

In 2009, Allison Blake Schofield, a co-founder with Karlsberg of the first American composium, led a workshop for the Polish community, which she commemorated with a composition named for the street of their meeting place, "Freta". This composition was later included in *The Trumpet's* final issue of 2011 along with an essay contributed from Polish singers who shared that Schofield's tune "remains one of our beloved songs, as it is not only a well written [sic] contemporary Sacred Harp composition and a sweet memory of our teacher." Much like the case of the tune "San Diego" described in chapter 2 - composed by a southerner as a gift to Californians and later admitted into the Cooper Book - *The Trumpet's* curation of pieces like "Freta" potentially stands as a powerful act of recognition, acceptance, and appreciation which contributes to the continued dissemination of Sacred Harp tradition and

structuration of increasingly complex networks of communities radiating ever-further from the geographic and social center of Sacred Harp tradition, the American South.

While *Trumpet* compositions shows how far the tradition is spreading, and flirtations with the unconventional, its essays continually frame this activity within the realm of Sacred Harp tradition. Virtually no music theoretical discourse appears in essays of *The Trumpet*. Rather, opinion and testimonial essays show more concern for the intentionality or purpose of composing and singing new compositions.

Two essays stand out in this respect: Robert Vaughan's "Why Compose" and "A Singer But Not A Writer: Why One Non-Singer Sings New Compositions" by Jennie Brown of Oakland, California. Taken together, their essays elaborate upon and weave together many of the ideas discussed in previous chapters. Composition is described as an egalitarian process, the success of which depends on the strength of social relationships across the span of singers (i.e. singers of all four parts and of all levels of ability). Furthermore, as her essay's title suggests, Brown argues for the importance of singing new compositions as a means of reviving an attentiveness amongst singers that can dull even amongst the most fervent: "Since our singings are neither rehearsal nor performance, innovation exists in a narrow space between boring and discouragingly difficult. We seek a happy medium, and non-composers have a unique view to what is both fun and 'singable.'" With

their “unique insight”, singers work as a check or balance to the efforts of composers, and suggest that a transcendent “Sacred Harp sound” is attainable through social emplacement. The attainment of that sound succeeds in the education of the composer as well as the singer.

Chapter 5 From Seeking To Dwelling

This chapter will discuss two newly-published fasola tunebooks which, to varying degrees, mark themselves as objects of tradition autonomous from *The Sacred Harp: The Shenandoah Harmony*, a compilation produced by Sacred Harp singers of Virginia's Shenandoah Valley containing historic and newly composed fasola material; and *The American Vocalist*, a 19th century tunebook published in Maine which fell out of use but was recently republished by a Sacred Harp revival singer. These tunebooks have moved beyond curations based solely on affinity (e.g. *Oberlin Harmony: Songs We Like To Sing, Eclectic Harmony*) to curatorial themes of regionality and place, with annual singings at sites of particular resonance to these curations. This chapter will explore these deliberate pairings of repertoire and region using Douglas Powell's concept of "critical regionalism". I will argue that revival singers are now founding new fasola traditions using the expressive forms and ritualistic templates of Sacred Harp singing to articulate historical narratives, regional identities, and localized communities through pairings of repertoire and place.

Critical Regionalism

The American Vocalist and *Shenandoah Harmony* articulate an interesting development in the Sacred Harp revival, as revival singers begin to construct contexts and historical narratives around these repertoires that resemble those of southern Sacred Harp singers. The curation and/or use of

these books constitute a form of what Powell would term “critical regionalism”: an attempt to cultivate distinct identities of place and community and articulate qualities of connectedness or disconnectedness within a broader network of other places. Each of these books features historical fashola repertoire that emerged from geographic locations and cultural contexts outside of traditional Sacred Harp territory. In marketing these books to Sacred Harp singers, their respective editors take care to identify threads of historical narrative that connect their historical repertoire to that of *The Sacred Harp*, while simultaneously identifying unique aesthetic dimensions that are the product of their repertoires’ particular regional histories.

The *The Shenandoah Harmony* and *The American Vocalist* are being used to construct not only new repertoires, but new localities, new authorities, new identities which in turn are re-situating Sacred Harp tradition. One Mid-Atlantic-based singer of *The Shenandoah Harmony* remarked: “Someone said this to me when the book was published - and at first I thought I was being condescended to: ‘It’s good you have your own regional book now.’ At first I was a little offended, but, when I thought about it more, I thought, well, *The Sacred Harp* is a regional book...” (anonymous singer, January 11, 2014). These comments remind us that though Sacred Harp traditions have now been spread throughout the nation, the historical narratives and cultural imaginaries it evokes still, and perhaps always will, trace back to the deep South. In order to better understand the critical regionalist aspirations of the

Vocalist and *Shenandoah*, it will be necessary to review this essential regional quality of the *The Sacred Harp*.

Region, Place, Locality in Southern Sacred Harp Singing

The “southernness” of Sacred Harp singing is of paramount importance to the revival. The South is the home of this tradition and its greatest stewards. Therefore it is the locus of authenticity and a site of pilgrimage where new singers are urged to travel and partake in the essence of the tradition. Authority radiates from that region, and contact with it imparts cultural capital amongst new singers. Many of the tradition’s “revivers” came of age in the aftermath of the American folk boom which particularly romanticized and fetishized the folklife of the South. It is easy to appreciate then that revival discourse has often reinforced a common trope of the American imaginary in which the South is temporally disconnected from the rest of the country. In the case of shapenote music, or any folklife for that matter, disconnection is often cited as a cultural preservative, mark of authenticity, or a cause for celebration. Consequently the degree of this disconnection can become exaggerated over the course of a revival as more individuals seek to generate more interest in a particular tradition. Such distortions have existed since (and before) George Pullen Jackson described shapenote singers a “lost tonal tribe,” in his landmark early scholarship on shapenote singing (4), and such characterizations continue to appear in contemporary scholarship. In the revival era, Miller suggests that traditional southern singers are often treated

or approached by revivalists as “living ancestors” (14).

While the Sacred Harp revival has been informed by this perspective of the South and southern folklife as disconnected from the American mainstream, at the same time, southern singings command respect and admiration from revival singers on account of the profound interweavings or *unities* present at singing sites. There one finds that patterns of tune selection, performance practice, and oral tradition all conspire to form senses of place or “locality” as Appadurai would define it: a fragile, phenomenological state, or a structure of feeling, the maintenance of which depends on the continued enactment of shared knowledge and beliefs amongst local subjects (1995). Within any one of these things, many of the others have been inscribed over generations of transmission and transformation bound within a limited geography. As a result, singing continues to structure and articulate qualities of place at scales ranging from the regional to the intensely local.

These synchronicities articulate senses of place that are often specific to one locality or singing site. The reputation of these more localized traditions are well-known amongst southerners, who may have grown up travelling between them, as well as revival singers who travel to the South frequently. For singers, these variations testify simultaneously to the aural “essence” of Sacred Harp singing generally, as well as the unique histories bound to specific localities. As I traveled through singings of northeast Alabama with revival singers who had trod the path many times before, they were often

enthused to direct my attention to these unique subtleties (or un-subtleties): “Listen to how they shuffle their eighth notes at this singing”, “get ready, they really like to sing fast here”, “They key really high here, but watch: they’ll key much lower at the singing next week.” Experienced singers, or “locals” in an Appadurain sense, whether they be traditional singers or revivalists, are well-attuned to the resulting topographies of practice and preference, and may adjust their own practices accordingly during travels as a matter of respect. Singing styles and singing selections honor the commitment of past singers and present communities that have preserved Sacred Harp singing and naturalize relationships between place, sound, and community.

Locality is produced through the performance of shared knowledge, but at older, rural, southern singings, it is often inscribed in the landscapes or singing sites themselves. Perhaps the most powerful symbols of locality in this sense can be found in cemeteries often adjacent to southern churches that have hosted singings for generations. There, it is not uncommon to find buried numerous ancestors of present singers. Amongst the more recently deceased, one can often find reference to Sacred Harp or fasola music inscribed on the grave marker such as a musical quotation notated in shapes (see figure 5.1). In these markers, identities of individuals and the singing tradition itself intersect and are projected into an eternal future inseparably. Physical sites such as these are among the most powerful vessels of Sacred Harp narratives because they encapsulate so many concerns of tradition’s expressive forms

such as death, spiritual transformation, and immortality. These gravemarkers of course mark an individual's death, but also identify them as one whose identity was wholly transformed by and associated with *The Sacred Harp*. In other words, it identifies them as a Singer: an individual defined by their love for the tradition and its people. Cemeteries such as these are one of the most powerful symbols of the Sacred Harp tradition's capacity to structure community and membership spatially and temporally, and unify them under aspirations towards spiritual transcendence and eternity.

Dwelling and Seeking

At the same time that such sites contribute to the authentication of the South and its network of localities as a home of specific historical resonance with Sacred Harp repertoire, they can also subtly reinforce a self-consciousness or "outsider" status amongst revival singers. Travelling through smaller singings of northeast Alabama where the family and communal ties of local traditions were very apparent, I have heard numerous such singers share amongst themselves a sense of gratitude, remarking that "they [local and family singers] didn't *have* to invite us into their tradition."

Such qualities of place are rarely, if ever, observed at Sacred Harp singings in revival contexts. Revivalists, of course, typically do not descend from other singers, and their communities have often formed in densely-packed urban areas far from the spacious out-of-the-way rural churches that host so many southern singings. Whereas southerners might have access to

long-standing sites that have housed singings for their families and communities for generations, revivalists must often engage in regular logistical, political, and



Figure 5.1: Johnson Schoolhouse Cemetery, Fayette County, Alabama, site of Aldridge Memorial Sacred Harp Singing. Note the “Fa So La” inscription on the back-right marker. Photo by author, June 9, 2013.

economic negotiations to prepare sites that vary from year to year such as civic spaces which must be rented and insured. Clawson argues that these

realities often deny revivalists a powerful vessel for the accrual and nurturing of social memory: “rather than a beloved home” to which singers might return over a lifetime and between generations, “the [singing] location becomes an object to be assessed” (56). Clawson connects these material or logistical realities to varying interpretations of Sacred Harp tradition through metaphors of “dwelling” and “seeking”:

Southern singers have tended to come from dwelling modes of spirituality, with their singing and their religious practice rooted in small churches often associated with particular families...Northern¹ singers, on the other hand, are often seekers, having been part of spiritual seeking that in various cases encompasses...other types of music, and historical research intended to connect them with their forebears (15).

Southerners inherit repertoires, oral and performance traditions, and sites that in fact connect them to their forebears, and for that reason, they are often less inclined to invest themselves in repertoires other than their revision of *The Sacred Harp*. Robert Vaughan, committed traditional Cooper Book singer from Texas, writes that because of his deep family connection to that book that he cannot be suaded to another book on the grounds of “expert” testimonies regarding “musical technicalities, historic anomalies and various personalities” (ibid., 27). Revivalists communities, on the other hand are engaged in an ongoing process through which they might cultivate such a

¹ In colloquial and scholar’s discourse, ‘Northern’ is sometimes used to mean ‘non-southern’ regardless of a singer’s actual geography. Thus singers from Los Angeles might be included as ‘Northern’ as well as those from Boston.

sense of attachment.

Given the uniquely profound historical depth and cultural synchronicity on display at southern singings, it is noteworthy that some of the more successful fasola publications of the revival era have featured curatorial themes of region and place connected to their respective publishers: singers of New England published *Northern Harmony* featuring historical and new work of New England composers exclusively; singers of St. Louis revised and republished the historic tunebook *Missouri Harmony*; singers of the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia recently compiled a new tunebook titled *Shenandoah Harmony* featuring fasola repertoire from that region; and singers of Maine now annually sing from a historic tunebook *The American Vocalist* that was published in that state in the 19th century, fell out of use, and was republished by a revival Sacred Harp singer. As new fasola publications move beyond eclecticism, the types of testimonies rejected by traditional singers like Vaughan are regularly employed as a means of cultivating an musical, community, and regional identity that is autonomous from *The Sacred Harp* while using that book as a template for the structuration of community.

As such, the singing of these repertoires are constructing new originary places besides the South. I will focus on the examples of *The Shenandoah Harmony* and *The American Vocalist* as striking examples where considerations of place have been cited not only as a curatorial concept, but it has been incorporated into the singing act. In this way, these tunebooks, and

their respective singings further articulate the the search for the kind of profound connectedness or dwelling on display at southern singings, while suggesting that the Sacred Harp revival is entering a new stage in which revivalists are cultivating senses of their own “dwellings” around new repertoire.

The Shenandoah Harmony

The Shenandoah Harmony, is a collection of historic and newly-composed shapenote material published in 2013 by singers living in or near the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. Holding 469 tunes, it is the largest new publication of shapenote music in over 150 years. Admired for its scholarship, curation, and design, its use has quickly surpassed any other recently published tunebook of its kind. As of this writing, the book’s website directory lists 40 annual or regular singings in the United States and Europe which make use of the *Shenandoah* exclusively or in conjunction with *The Sacred Harp* (Shenandoah Harmony Publishing Company).

As in the case of many other tunebooks published during the revival of Sacred Harp singing, the book’s creators have made conscious efforts to maintain a particular image in relation to *The Sacred Harp* and its traditions. Perhaps most importantly to new tunebook-makers is that their efforts not be understood as an intent to compete with *The Sacred Harp* economically or socially. This concern manifests itself in the curation of materials - the two books share only one tune, though printed with different words - as well as the

language used to market the book. Short biographical introductions of the book's compilers, listed on the publishing company's website, often identify them as Sacred Harp singers. Their listing of national singings using the *Shenandoah* explains "Except where indicated, all singings use both The Sacred Harp, 1991 Edition and The Shenandoah Harmony," and thus stresses the latter's embeddedness within the community and traditions of the former.

Nonetheless, the book's reception throughout the Sacred Harp community is revealing of differences in affinity between traditional and revival singers described earlier. As mentioned before, the book's website maintains a list of annual singings across the country, organized by regional categories of Mid-Atlantic, New England, Midwest, West Coast, and the United Kingdom. Noticeably absent is a category for the South, as well as any singings taking place in traditional Sacred Harp regions.

Central to the development of the *Shenandoah's* curation is the composer and publisher Ananias Davisson, who was based in the Shenandoah Valley in the 19th century and influential in disseminating shapenote tunebooks throughout the Mid-Atlantic region. His work preceded that of *The Sacred Harp* and later lent some of its most popular tunes to that book. Though *The Shenandoah Harmony* came to include repertoire from many sources outside of Davisson's influence, the book's publishing company has used Davisson to anchor narratives describing and promoting the book. The publishing company's website clearly states in its first sentence

introducing the book, “The inspiration for *The Shenandoah Harmony* was to create a collection of the best songs published by Ananias Davisson from 1815 to 1825 in the Shenandoah Valley” (Shenandoah Harmony Publishing Company). With Davisson as a “founding father” to their book’s tradition, the compilers have employed a narrative of the Mid-Atlantic region of geographic, cultural, and aesthetic distinction relative to that of *The Sacred Harp*.

The book also looks to other sources from the valley’s rich history of shapenote publishing including Joseph Funk, a Mennonite publisher of shapenote music in the early 19th century whose influence led to the renaming of his hometown of Mountain Valley to Singer’s Glen. His work and legacy were taken up by his grandson, Aldine Keiffer, whose Keiffer-Ruebush Publishing Company would continue to older fasola shapenote and emerging southern gospel musics through the end of the 19th century.

In its curation and design, *The Shenandoah Harmony* simultaneously follows many examples of *The Sacred Harp*, yet demonstrates an increasing removed from that book. Following the example of *The Sacred Harp*, publishers of *The Shenandoah Harmony* included 47 original compositions by living composers. The *Shenandoah*’s compilers made no open call for compositions as was the case with the Denson book. Rather, committee members reached out to composers who had already achieved some reputation for stylistically accurate and enjoyable work through existing avenues of circulation such as alternative singings, composiums, and previous

publications. While this collection of composers includes many who appeared in the 1991 Denson revision, none of them are from traditional singing families or communities. Though some of these composers currently live in Alabama or Georgia, a bulk of this newly material comes from New England, Mid-Atlantic, and Midwestern singers. Many tunes circulated previously in revival publication's, such as Judy Hauff's "Agatite" which appeared in her native Chicago's *Midwest Supplement*, or Ted Johnson's "Boulder" which was included in both *An Eclectic Harmony* and *Sacred Harper's Companion*. In searching for alternative historical repertoire, the *Shenandoah's* compilers likewise relied on a mixture of personal and independent research as well as participation in alternative singings. For example, amidst their compilation, Delre became aware of the *American Vocalist* singing in Maine, travelled to attend, and later included several of that book's tunes in the *Shenandoah*.

Virtually all of the *Shenandoah's* texts are drawn from traditional sources of Christian poetry, though other aspects of the book's design betray the increasingly heterogenous beliefs of the revival community. The frontmatter of historic and traditional tunebooks typically include language explicitly situating its contents within a Christian tradition. For example, the 1991 Denson revision, for instance, includes a short essay by Ruth Denson Edwards (daughter of Thomas Denson, who revised the book throughout the 20th century) which describes music as "a God-given faculty" and situates Sacred Harp singing within a biblical tradition of music reaching "back as far

as Jubal.” The *Shenandoah*’s preface by contrast situates some of the book’s contents within a historical folk narrative: “Many of these songs were composed, but others were arranged from melodies that had been enjoyed for hundreds of years as dance tunes, love ballads, taverns songs, and sea-faring songs by everyday folk” (Dakan, et al., v). Though biblical language and references abound in the frontmatter of *The Sacred Harp*, the *Shenandoah* holds very little beyond the sole verse of scripture appearing on the book’s dedication page “O Lord, how manifold are thy works!”. This combined with the *Shenandoah*’s additional bibliographies of shapenote scholarship and tunebook sources - something never seen in historic tunebooks, even those revised into the present day - further resonates with a tendency for revivalists to identify and personally engage with fasola music as folk music rather than a worship music.

As with *The Sacred Harp*, the *Shenandoah*’s publishers sell their books at-cost with little to no profit being set aside for typical business expenses like marketing. Instead, awareness has spread through word of mouth and through regular channels of correspondence amongst Sacred Harp singers such as online message boards. Awareness has spread as compilers of the *Shenandoah* continue to sing in the Sacred Harp community, but also engage with the community as singing school instructors. Since the revival began in the 1970s, many larger conventions have included in their schedule of day-long singing a “singing school” in which some authority figure instructs

rudiments of traditional singing. Depending on the instructor and the reputation or abilities of the convention group, topics might range from introductions to shape notation, to pedagogic exercises on difficult passages or melodic intervals in the book, to oral traditions of the South that deviate from the notation.

Conventions in revival regions have often sought esteemed southerners to lead these schools, in the hopes of improving or making more authentic their region's singing. However, revival singers themselves have been invited to teach with increasing frequency as their reputations and commitment to southern tradition become established. When attending the Pacific Northwest Convention in Portland, Oregon in October 2013, shortly after the release of *The Shenandoah Harmony*, three of that book's compilers, including Delre, were invited to lead a singing school. Their "school" dealt little with musical pedagogy, but was instead a lecture discussing cultural currents of the 18th and 19th century influential to shapenote repertoire and style. This decision to lead a lecture rather than musical instruction could be attributed in part to the Pacific Northwest's reputation as capable singers perhaps not in need of further instruction of musical rudiments. However, it was also an opportunity to promote the *Shenandoah*. In their lecture, particular attention was given to the cultural history of the Mid-Atlantic region and the Shenandoah Valley. Tunes were selected to illustrate their points, half of which were taken from *The Sacred Harp* and half taken from *The Shenandoah Harmony*. In doing so, *The*

Shenandoah Harmony was presented as a book with some aesthetically distinct content elucidating a historical narrative complementary to *The Sacred Harp*.

Relationships between *The Shenandoah Harmony* repertoire and the Mid-Atlantic region are stressed in discourse promoted by the book's compilers, but also in their annual singing convention. Since 2013, An annual *Shenandoah Harmony* singing has been organized by its compilers at a 19th century meeting hall in Cross Keys Virginia, in the Shenandoah Valley, directly adjacent to a graveyard where Ananias Davisson is buried. Sacred Harp singers have been long been familiar with Davisson if only for his authorship of one of the Sacred Harp's most beloved folk hymns, "Idumea". Since the earliest revival singings in the region well before the *Shenandoah's* publication, local singers and those visiting the region for Sacred Harp singing have visited the site (Delre, interview, Jan. 13, 2014). Immediately following the first annual *Shenandoah's* singing, many singers spontaneously elected to relocate to Davisson's grave across the street and sing tunes authored by him in *The Shenandoah Harmony*, including his folk-hymn rather appropriately titled "Davisson's Retirement," led by del Re.² Singing at Davisson's grave has since become a regular occurrence at the conclusion of this annual *Shenandoah* singing, though they are not scheduled or announced as alternative singings or composiums might be.

² This gravesite singing was taped by a singer in attendance and uploaded to YouTube (a common occurrence of modern singing). It can be viewed here: https://youtu.be/ZazL8_oA110

I attended the *Shenandoah* singing in June of 2015 at Ruritan Hall of Cross Keys, formerly a church built in the early 19th century. The building featured a simple floorplan: single large room with a hardwood floor, plaster walls, and coved ceiling. For singers, rooms such as these are highly desirable for their acoustical properties. Modern spaces designed for large meetings rarely take into account acoustical properties and are therefore too “dry”. Those that do consider acoustics often do so for purposes of concert performance and are too “wet” or include other unacceptable architectural or logistical features (e.g. concert seating). Searches for adequate sites are therefore often steered towards older sites designed to accommodate large numbers in a pre-electric or else pre-amplified era in which a class’ singing can “ring” while not being muddied.

Ruritan Hall is also a place thick with history, in which narratives of great national significance, as well as those more particular to shapenote singing, intersect vividly. The landscape surrounding Ruritan Hall is thoroughly rural, with Cross Keys itself being little more than a “wide spot in the road”. Farms surround the hall, and everything in sight is framed by the Blue Ridge Mountains to the east and the Allegheny Mountains to the west. Like most towns or localities in the region, Cross Keys is a place in which the conflicts of the Civil War have been thoroughly inscribed. The hall itself sits on Battlefield Road, and a panel affixed to the exterior of its front entrance wall describes a battle that unfolded in the field adjacent, complete with a map detailing troop

movements. The cemetery holds many casualties of the war, and groundskeepers continually replenish their graves with small flags of the Confederacy. In the days before and after the singing, I travelled the surrounding valley area and found placards and monuments to battles and skirmishes abounding in nearly every town center. As abundant and evident as this history was, there were no attempts by singers to meaningfully connect the day's singing to the conflicts of the Civil War or its enduring legacy and significance in Southern culture and American society.

Singers were far more eager to connect their repertoire and their singing to the historical figures, places, and singers old and new found in their book, as is often the case with Sacred Harp singings. After an opening song was led to call socializing singers to their seats, a local singer serving as the convention chair offered some welcoming remarks in which he introduced the hall as a space in which several of the *Shenandoah's* historical composers visited, taught singing schools, and worshipped. The chair then led the class in the work of one such composer, Amzi Chapin, an early 19th century composer whose work appears also appear in *The Sacred Harp*. The gesture was then mirrored at the end of the day with the singing of works by Davisson at his gravesite, thus framing the days' singing with explicit connections between repertoire and place.

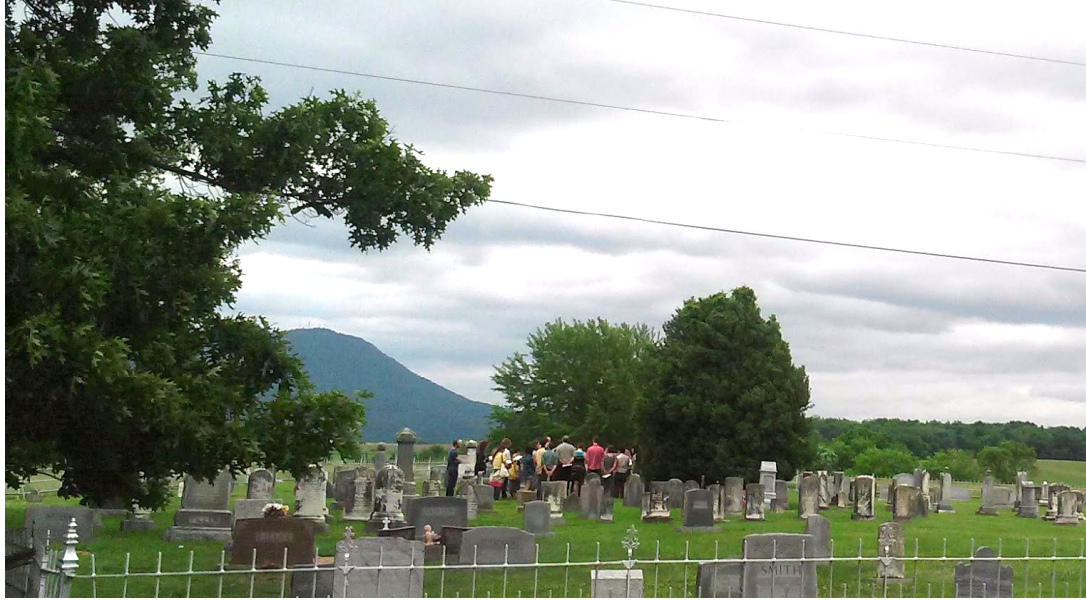


Figure 5.2: Ananias Davisson's gravesite in Cross Keys, Virginia. Singers convened following an all-day singing from *The Shenandoah Harmony*. Photo by the author, 7 June, 2015.

The American Vocalist

Since 2010, Sacred Harp singers of Maine have appended to their annual all-day convention a separate singing convention, called The D.H. Mansfield Singing, dedicated to Mansfield's 19th-century tunebook *The American Vocalist*. Both conventions are held in the small town of Union in a 19th century meeting hall not far from where Mansfield, a lifelong resident of Maine, is buried. Aside from relevancy of the book's history to Maine singers, its aesthetic content holds much interest for Sacred Harp singers generally. *The American Vocalist* was originally published in 1848, four years after *The Sacred Harp*, and circulated in New England, portions of the Midwest, and Eastern Canada for at least twenty-five years, suggesting it was quite popular

(Deacon, 1991). However, use of *The American Vocalist* dwindled throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century and it failed to become the object of a multi-generation tradition as did *The Sacred Harp* (ibid.).

As shape notation was uncommon to the region, the *Vocalist* was originally published in “round notes” or “standard” notation, and thus, strictly speaking, was never a shapenote or fasola tunebook. The *Vocalist* shares much repertoire with *The Sacred Harp*, particularly in its collection of folk-hymns,³ though the vernacular melodic material was arranged according to distinct harmonic idioms of 18th century New England and the deep South respectively. It is this combination of shared repertoire and distinct aesthetics reflecting complex geographic, historic, and cultural dynamics that generates much fodder for Sacred Harp singers.

For example, we could compare arrangements of “Garden Hymn,” a nineteenth century folk-hymn which appears in both books. The arrangement appearing in *The Sacred Harp*⁴ (figure 5.3) features three parts and extensive use of open fifths and fourths on strong beats, both being more typical to southern arrangements of such material. By comparison, the arrangement in *The American Vocalist* (figure 4) features a more typically Northern

³ A genre of sacred song utilizing melodies collected from oral tradition, notated and arranged for part singing.

⁴ It should be noted that “Garden Hymn” was in fact not added to *The Sacred Harp* until the 20th century. Nonetheless, the arrangement appearing in *The Sacred Harp* descends from those that circulated the Mid-Atlantic, frontier, and Southern regions in other nineteenth century tunebooks. The primary point remains that the arrangement appearing in *The Sacred Harp* is prototypically “southern” in contrast to the prototypically “northern” arrangement appearing in *The American Vocalist*

arrangement in four parts, with triadic harmony and part writing more conventional to European common practice, an aesthetic which would ascend to dominance within American protestant hymnody throughout the course of the nineteenth century.

The book's republication and the D.H. Mansfield Singing, the only convention regularly using the book, have been organized by Aldo Ceresa, a highly active singer based in New York City who has also contributed to the Sacred Harp community as composer, pedagogue, and scholar. Ceresa learned of the book after hearing some of its repertoire recorded by the Boston Camerata, an early music ensemble.

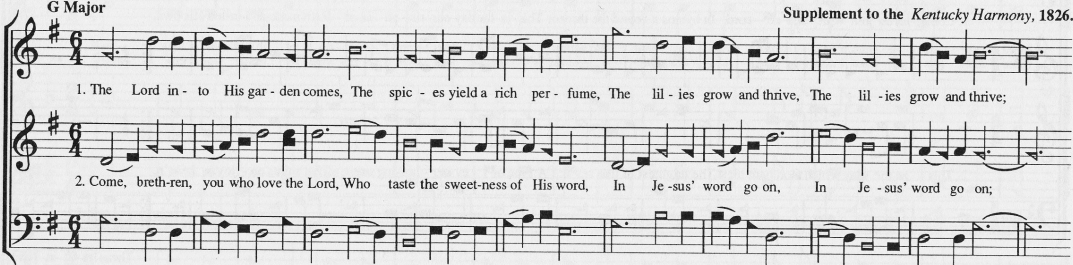
Struck by the historical overlap and aesthetic departures between *The American Vocalist* and *The Sacred Harp*, Ceresa prepared a new edition of the former suitable for use by singers of the latter (personal interview, Nov. 6, 2013). Ceresa selected 138 tunes from two historic editions of the *Vocalist*, re-typeset them in shape notation, re-printed Mansfield's prefatory material, created his own preface, and included indices directing singers'

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GARDEN HYMN. 8,8,6.

"Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions harken to thy voice." -- S. of Sol. 8:13.

G Major Supplement to the *Kentucky Harmony*, 1826.



1. The Lord in - to His gar - den comes, The spic - es yield a rich per - fume, The lil - ies grow and thrive, The lil - ies grow and thrive;

2. Come, breth-ren, you who love the Lord, Who taste the sweet-ness of His word, In Je - sus' word go on, In Je - sus' word go on;

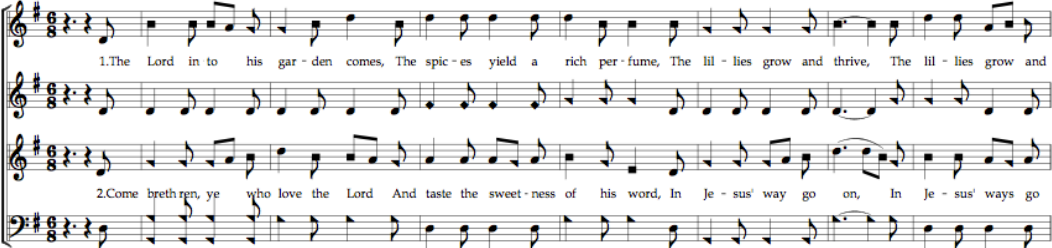
Figure 5.3: Excerpt from “Garden Hymn” as it appears in the “Denson Book” 1991 edition. Note the three part setting in dispersed harmony (i.e. dyadic harmony and polyphonic texture).

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THE GARDEN HYMN C.P.M.

G major Attr. John Stocker, 1777.

Arr. D.H. Mansfield, 1848.



1. The Lord in to his gar - den comes, The spic - es yield a rich per - fume, The lil - ies grow and thrive, The lil - ies grow and

2. Come brethren, ye who love the Lord And taste the sweet-ness of his word, In Je - sus' way go on, In Je - sus' ways go

Figure 5.4: “The Garden Hymn” as it appears in *The American Vocalist 2010 D.H. Mansfield Centennial Compendium Edition*. Note the use of triadic harmony, four parts, and a more homophonous texture.

attention to shared repertory with *The Sacred Harp* and their aesthetic departures. The inaugural singing was held Sunday, July 25th, 2010, the bicentennial year of Mansfield’s birth, and accompanied the the 8th annual Maine All-Day Singing from *The Sacred Harp*. Though the two events are often advertised to the singing community as separate events they essentially

function as a weekend-long “mixed book” convention, with many travellers and locals remaining a second weekend day to sing from the less familiar *Vocalist*.

Compared to the *Shenandoah*, the *Vocalist* project is of much smaller scope and ambition. No publication company was formed, no ISBN number was registered for the book, and there is no website offering online sales. Copies are still produced at office printing shops and sold by Ceresa directly at conventions. The *Vocalist* has found occasional use amongst other shapenote communities that regularly explore repertoire other than *The Sacred Harp*. However, the project was formed with the Maine community in mind, and Ceresa has not actively sought to establish regular singing from *The American Vocalist* in other locations aside from the Maine Sacred Harp convention.

In a new preface, Ceresa seeks to position the *Vocalist*'s repertoire much as the *Shenandoah*'s editors have, emphasizing historical and aesthetic dimensions distinct from *The Sacred Harp*, while using the *Harp* to frame its relevance. In particular, Ceresa seeks to legitimize or authenticate the singing of this material using a rhetoric of kinship to connect the book to the Sacred Harp community, arguing that “Sacred Harp singers, though they are not lineal descendants of Mansfield’s original singing classes, remain the closest living relatives to the original community that sang from the *Vocalist*. As such they remain the best class of people to re-invigorate the music contained herein” (Ceresa 2010, Preface).

Like the *Shenandoah*'s compilers, Ceresa also made deliberate efforts

to emplace the singing of this repertoire. In his prefatory material, Ceresa explicitly connects the *Vocalist's* aesthetic to the landscape when thanking the singers of Maine “for introducing me to the beautiful hidden landscapes of Mansfield’s Maine that no doubt inspired much of the beauty of his arrangements.” Even without Ceresa’s comment, the tradition common to nineteenth century singing schools of naming tunes for their place of composition has left many tunes in the book named for towns and localities near the Mansfield singing itself: Hallowell, Bangor, Newcastle, and Hope, where Mansfield was born and where he is buried, for example. Most deliberate in the attempt to connect this repertoire to the landscape is the morning singing session annually held in Hope, at Mansfield’s grave. Unlike the Davisson gravesite singing, the Mansfield gravesite singing is planned each year and is often mentioned in advance announcements shared via online message boards and social media.⁵

I attended the fifth annual gravesite singing in July 2014.⁶ Using a map provided at the previous day’s Sacred Harp singing, I found a small cemetery tucked away in a rather picturesque setting: at the end of a long dirt road separating a large blueberry field from an even larger expanse with a few rustic New England farmhouses in the distance (figure 5.5). In my company

⁵Many Sacred Harp singers are involved in a pair of online Google Group pages, one of which is used to announce singings, invite others, and share important contact information. At the very least, singers can subscribe to this page and have all such announcements emailed to them.

⁶ Though preparations of *The American Vocalist* were not completed until 2010, singers at the Maine Sacred Harp convention first congregated at the gravesite to sing from Ceresa’s unfinished work in 2009.

were approximately two dozen singers, mostly locals or New Englanders who found it easier to sing throughout a Sunday afternoon than other travelers. The session was conducted not as a convention singing with a hollow square and a procession of leaders, but more as a lecture-performance. Ceresa selected many of the tunes to be sung, introducing or following them with biographical narration of Mansfield's life, or the lives of other composers represented in the book whose lives intersected with Mansfield's and the history of Maine. Towards the end of the morning singing session, singers requested tunes from the book. Many singers had attended all of these gatherings and were familiar enough with the book's contents to have favorites. As the afternoon approached, we relocated to the meeting hall in Union, where the previous day's Sacred Harp singing was held, and continued to sing from *The American Vocalist*.

Throughout the day, talk amongst singers occasionally suggested a mild self-consciousness or ironic disposition concerning the application of the term "tradition" to the event. In the shadow of centuries-old unbroken traditions of Sacred Harp singing, revival singers have at times playfully discussed when that term might appropriately apply to a singing in Chicago or Seattle as well as one in Carrollton, Georgia, whose Chattahoochee convention held its 163rd meeting in 2015 (Miller 2008, 33). In Maine, at the 12th annual convention for Sacred Harp singing, and the 5th annual D.H. Mansfield gravesite singing, many singers described the present singing using such

language unselfconsciously. However, as a photo was being taken of singers who had been in attendance at all previous gravesite singings, a younger local singer, not among their ranks, ironically referred to them as the “venerable fathers of our tradition.” Playful comments such as these, made commonly by revival singers in Sacred Harp contexts, call attention to the fact that their acts of singing do not possess a particular quality of historic depth comparable to Sacred Harp singing of the South (i.e. multi-generational, unbroken). Still, the comment conveys a desire for such historic connection, as well as hope that their present actions might persist into some seemingly more qualified realm of “tradition.”



Figure 5.5: Morey Hill Cemetery in Hope, Maine. Site of D.H. Mansfield's grave. Photo by author, July 27th, 2014.

From Seeking to Dwelling

The emergence and use of tunebooks like *Shenandoah Harmony* and *The American Vocalist* simultaneously speak to the Sacred Harp revivalist's "seeking" condition all while hinting at a new stage of the revival. Singers are

not only reviving the traditions of southern singers, and not only negotiating those southern traditions. They are increasingly using *The Sacred Harp* tunebook and its traditions as a template through which community might be structured in a meaningful, powerful, and lasting way. The traditions of Sacred Harp singing have shown themselves to be a powerful acts which might meaningfully structure space into place, structure time into narrative, and structure singers into a community that exists at their intersection. When aged, preserved, and passed on between generations, as in the south, Clawson describes such intersections as dwellings, or beloved homes where singers regularly return to remember and affirm the memories lives that have been shared and shaped by song.

The printing of fasola collections seems an important step in formation of dwellings both in this profound sense, but also in a very literal sense as well. On the final evening of my own visit to the Shenandoah Valley, I attended an evening social at the home of one of the *Shenandoah Harmony's* compilers. On the property sat an unfinished structure, a future singing hall still being constructed by several singers. After years singings reliant upon tenuous relationships with various churches and rented spaces, Shenandoans had elected to build a permanent home for their local singing. In a warm July evening, Shenandoah singers convened in the covered but unfinished structure to sing from their book.

Chapter 6 Concluding Remarks

This study has argued that the written traditions of the Sacred Harp community, specifically those of composing and compiling, contribute significantly to the structuration and preservation of that community. This assertion challenges the discursive structure of both singers and scholars who identify oral traditions, performance practices, and social rituals as the locus of authenticity and meaning, and situate writing practices at their periphery. With that focus, scholars have discussed the more immediate, centralized, embodied contexts of the tradition, and the varying interpretations or meanings attached to those contexts. This approach has done well to explain how the Sacred Harp community has sought to identify and protect an essential identity and meaning of singing amidst an improbably robust revival. Their privileging of the participatory and experiential preempts the reduction of the tradition to its repertoire or aesthetic forms alone. Furthermore, the privileging of oral tradition in particular asserts a degree of ownership and authority as emanating from southern practitioners, and creates a moral imperative for revival singers to learn from them. In this way, concern for the non-written dimensions of this tradition has served to maintain the integrity of practices cultivated in the South.

Nonetheless, this tradition was founded on the printed page which continues to offers unique affordances in service of the Sacred Harp's shared purposes of spiritual worship and communal fellowship. I have argued that

scores serve this community as a monument through which the tradition and memories of its community are continually re-inscribed into one another such that together they are perpetuated into some undetermined and, it is hoped, unending future. By adhering so closely to the aesthetic precedents of *The Sacred Harp*, new compositions implicate a transcendent Sacred Harp sound emanating from some spiritual or non-mundane plain and spanning eternity. Inscribing the names of fellow singers within this sound, composers and singers continually reinvest themselves in the tradition, binding the memory of friends, family, and loved ones to this transcendent, eternal sound, and renewing their shared sense of purpose in singing.

The second major assertion of this study is that the written page holds the potential not merely to document and memorialize community, but to invent or construct it as well. If individual scores mark the social pathways of singers, there emerges from their compilation rich topographies of community and historical narrative. Over the course of these revivals, newly compiled or circulated tunebooks have curated and announced themselves in terms increasingly autonomous from *The Sacred Harp*, its traditions, and its narratives. Thus, while oral tradition and participatory ritual have served to maintain the integrity Sacred Harp singing throughout its revival community, written traditions are serving as the basis of differentiation.

With this, writing activity has articulated a new phase of the Sacred Harp revival. Enough revival singers have perhaps become sufficiently

enculturated to Sacred Harp tradition, or sufficiently fluent in its expressive forms and social practices, such that they have now use them to construct new narratives of place and history through which new community identities can be take root.

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