Sacred Harp Singing Research Guide
Center for Popular Music, Middle Tennessee State University

What is Sacred Harp singing? [http://fasola.org/]

Sacred Harp singing is an a cappella tradition that began centuries ago in England, emerging as a unique singing style in America and the American South today. Sacred Harp singers follow Shape notes, a method consisting of four differently shaped notes representing fa, sol, la, and mi.

Sacred Harp is performed without an accompaniment, also known as a cappella. Singers sit in a square, facing each other to sing. A leader taps out a tempo and directs the sing.

This guide provides primary sources in the Center for Popular Music, James E. Walker Library at MTSU, and through outside, comprehensive web sources on Sacred Harp singing. These are examples of primary and secondary sources in the archives, but not intended to be an exhaustive list.

Primary sources in the Center for Popular Music archive

Primary sources related to Sacred Harp Singing:

http://popmusic.mtsu.edu/collections/default.aspx

Search: “sacred harp”

Collection: Manuscript Collections
Accession Number: 88-020
Finding Aid: http://popmusic.mtsu.edu/archives/inventory/alab.html
Collection: Photographs
Item ID: CPM-PR-00001
Accession Number: 88-020
89-098
http://musicman.mtsu.edu/broadsides/Photographsthumbnails/CPM-PR-00001thumbnail.jpg

The Christian Harmony
Collection: Rare Books and Scores
Item ID: SP-050634
Accession Number: 89-017

Collection: Rare Books and Scores
Subgroup: Sacred Vocal (oblong)
Item ID: SP-050174
Evangelical Musick, The Sacred Minstrel and Sacred Harp United.
Collection: Rare Books and Scores
Item ID: SP-050622
Accession Number: 95-053

HARPETH VALLEY SACRED HARP NEWS Tim Reynolds
Collection: Periodicals - Secondary Collection
Item ID: SER-001466
Issue Dates: June 26 - Sept. 25, 1999 (v. 28 nos.2-3); March 20 - Sept.8, 2000 (v.29 nos.1-2);
Mar.21, 2001 - Mar. 19, 2002 (v.30 n.1 - v.31 n.1)

Mason’s Sacred Harp
Collection: Rare Books and Scores
Item ID: SP-050645
Accession Number: 04-013

Shape Notes / compiled and edited by Martha Ham and Herschel Joyner
Collection: Rare Books and Scores
Item ID: SP-002415
Accession Number: 07-018
Song Titles: “Just a Rose Will Do,” “Come to the Light,” “Let Our Light Shine,” …
Primary sources related to shape notes:

American Vernacular Music Manuscripts (AVMM), Digital Collections from the American Antiquarian Society and the Center for Popular Music

http://popmusic.mtsu.edu/ManuscriptMusic/default.aspx

[*The eight items listed below are in the CPM collection. Search “shape note” in the Quick Search bar on AVMM for more items.]

Miss Catharine Feagley’s book: vocal music in two parts.
Collection: Music Manuscripts
Item ID: MUMSS-00065
Date: 1824

The Treble to Pilgrims Farwell
Collection: Music Manuscripts
Item ID: MUMSS-00120
Date: 1820

Uncle Sam’s farm
Collection: Music Manuscripts
Item ID: MUMSS-00129
Date: 1861

Manuscript music book belonging to Wilson Boehm
Collection: Music Manuscripts
Item ID: MUMSS-00131
Date: 1854

Hark! The Cry of Death is Ringing: quartette
Collection: Music Manuscripts
Item ID: MUMSS-00133
Date: 1863

Double Quick: Systematically patented, scientifically illustrated, dedicated and arranged expressly.
Item ID: MUMSS-00134
Date: 1862

Thanks to Our Father in Heaven: Musical Department
Collection: Music Manuscripts
Item ID: MUMSS-00135
Date: 1868
Sorrowing Hearts at Home Weeping Sad and Lonely or, When this Cruel War is Over: Song with Chorus
Collection: Music Manuscripts
Item ID: MUMSS-00136
Date: 1867

Sound recordings:


Primary sources located through the MTSU James E. Walker Library: [http://library.mtsu.edu/](http://library.mtsu.edu/)

Video recordings:


Secondary Sources (found in the Walker Library catalog. Located in Walker Library or the CPM Reading Room): [http://library.mtsu.edu/](http://library.mtsu.edu/)


**Secondary Sources (Web):**


This website run by the Sacred Harp Musical Heritage Association (SHMHA) provides comprehensive information related to the Sacred Harp tradition.


**Secondary Sources on Shape Notes:**

Images Appendix
(all items come from the collections of the Center for Popular Music)

Item ID: SP- 050645
THE CHRISTIAN HARMONY:
IN THE MELODY-SYLLABLE CHARACTER WITH SYSTEM OF MUSIC.

HYMN AND PSALM TUNES, ODES AND ANTHEMS,
SELECTED FROM THE BEST AUTHORS IN EUROPE AND AMERICA.

A LARGE NUMBER OF NEW TUNES, FROM EMINENT COMPOSERS, NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED,

Embracing a Great Variety of Styles

SUITED TO THE VARIOUS HYMN AND PSALM HOSES USED BY THE DIFFERENT DENOMINATIONS OF CHRISTIANS.

THE USE OF SINGING, SCHOOLS, CHOIRS, SOCIETY, AND PRIVATE SINGING SOCIETIES.

COPYING INSTRUMENTS, THE SCIENCE OF VOCAL MUSIC, AND SINGING MILLS, FOR BEGINNERS.

By WILLIAM WALKER.

Author of "Harmonies," and "The Student and Musician's Pocket-Book.

ORIGINAL EDITION, GREATLY ENLARGED, WITH ALL THE OLD TUNES.

PHILADELPHIA:
PUBLISHED BY THE E. W. MILLER COMPANY,
87 W. WASHINGTON STREET.

Item ID: SP-050634

Shape Notes

SONGS OF THE GOSPEL

Item ID: SP-002415
THE TREBLE TO PILGRIMS FARWELL

Fare you well, fare you well, fare you well my friends, I must begone.

A better world in view will take my soul to heaven, till I a better

world can view. III march to Canada land III Land on a happy shore, where pleasures never end and troubles cease no more.

Fare well, fare well, fare well my loving friends: LULON NICHOLS. H.

MUMSS-00120

MUMSS-00133
Sorrowing Hearts at Home
With sad and lonely
dreaming when the war is over
and (singing) musical department

Oh, how do you remember when we last did meet
When you told me that you loved me, whispering in my ear

Oh, how proud you sat before me
When you went to war and I cried to be held
When you saw it was and County Ever to be told

Oh, how proud you sat before me
When you went to war and I cried to be held
When you saw it was and County Ever to be told

Compiled by Emily Boersma, November 2016.