

**THE CENTER FOR POPULAR MUSIC  
MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY, MURFREESBORO, TN**

**HUTCHINSON FAMILY SINGERS  
PHOTOGRAPHS, SHEET MUSIC and PERFORMANCE**

**97-003**

**Creator:**

**Type of Material:**

**Physical Description:**

8 black and white photographs  
3 sheet music  
2 playbills

**Dates:**

1843 – ca. 1901

**Abstract (Descriptive Summary):**

**Provenance and Acquisition Information:**

These items were purchased from the Lillian Caplan Center for Musical Antiquities in New York in March 1997. An original note on one of the performance documents indicates that it belonged to a Dr. Dearborn of Milford, New Hampshire. Further research indicates that Dr. Dearborn was a grandson of one of the Hutchinson Family Singers, namely Judson Hutchinson. Kate L. Hutchinson was Judson's daughter. She married Thomas B. Dearborn and had four sons, Thomas Jr., Jessie, Henry, and Edmund. The four Dearborn boys were also singers and formed the Dearborn Male Quartette. The eldest three later became physicians, and it is probable that one of them owned the materials in this collection, including the scrapbook from which the photographs were taken. (For more information see the accession files and vertical files.)

**Subject/Index Terms:**

**Agency History/Biographical Sketch:**

The Hutchinson family of singers were active from 1840 to the 1880s and originally included the 13 children of Jesse and Mary Leavitt Hutchinson of Milford, New Hampshire. From 1842 to 1849, the most popular Hutchinson Family Singers included Judson, John, Asa, and Abby. They became the best-known and most influential popular music performers in the USA at that time, touring New England, the British Isles, and performing for U.S. Presidents, politicians, poets, and artists. The Hutchinson's repertory included pieces from popular music books of the day, glees, songs of the famous Rainer Family, solo songs and ballads with American themes. Judson and John played violins, Asa cello, and later John played harmonium and Abby occasionally guitar. The Hutchinson Family introduced the central characteristics of mainstream popular music to the genre, namely an informal stage manner, close blend of voices, and "natural" or uncultivated tone with perfect intonation.

Abby's marriage in 1849 ended the group of four, but various combinations of family, relatives, and friends continued to tour the country for several more decades, using names that made clear their connection with the Hutchinson Family.

**Notes:** Information from *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music*, Dale Cockrell, pp. 444-445.

### **Scope and Content:**

This small collection of items was probably owned by one of Judson Hutchinson's grandsons who lived in Milford, New Hampshire. All of the materials have to do with the musical family of Hutchinsons, a famous and celebrated group of singers that made important and lasting contributions to the development of American popular music.

The photographs included in the collection were originally mounted on two pages from a scrapbook. They are duplicates of original photographs that were placed in a scrapbook, presumably by a member of the Hutchinson family. Holograph inscriptions were written below two of the photographs. Subjects include: John Wallace Hutchinson (born January 4, 1821; died October 29, 1908); a lithograph by George Endicott of the Hutchinson Family Singers that was used on sheet-music covers and playbills; three photographs of a "Reunion with Uncle John Hutchinson;" a group shot of ten of the Hutchinson brothers, 1844; and two photographs of Hutchinson boys.

Two performance documents were included in the collection. A generic playbill or poster with a lithograph of Judson, John, and Asa Hutchinson includes spaces to fill in place and time of performance. The original typed caption that came with the poster states, "An original handbill, or poster, of the Hutchinson Family on which, perhaps as an 'autograph' in humorous mood, Judson has penciled, 'The Court of Heaven some (EVENING) in the Future', John has written, 'God Willing', and Asa has concluded, 'Doubted'. This was one of the prized possessions of the Dearborn family of Milford. Dr. Dearborn was a grandson of Judson Hutchinson." Another playbill announces a Hutchinson Family concert "At Mercantile Hall, Wednesday Evening, March 23d, 1859." Performing are John W. and Fannie B. with Henry and Viola Hutchinson. A list of songs and lyrics are included.

Three pieces of sheet music complete this collection of Hutchinson items. Two titles are hand bound together: "I Cannot Sing the Old Songs," and "Mrs. Lofty and I" (1858). "Mrs. Lofty and I" was composed by J.J. Hutchinson. "The Snow Storm," 1843, indicates the Hutchinson Family as performers.

### **Location:**

Photographs are cataloged and filed in the Iconographic files (MAN-PR). Playbills and posters are cataloged and filed in Performance and the sheet music is filed in the Sheet Music collection. All are searchable through the Center's InMagic database. Original scrapbook pages and labels are located in the Manuscript section of the mezzanine.

**Related Materials:**

The Center holdings contain other Hutchinson family materials in the Performance, Rarebooks, and Sheet music categories of the InMagic database. Secondary sources are also available on the subject in the Center's reading room and in the Vertical File.

**MARC:**

**EAD:**

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