



Folk Hymns and Spirituals of the Early South:

A Bicentennial Celebration
of the Birth
of William (Singin' Billy) Walker
(1809-1875)

BIOGRAPHY:

William “Singin’ Billy” Walker was born in Union County, South Carolina on May 6, 1809, and this bicentennial year of his birth is a wonderful occasion to learn more about this man and his music.

Few South Carolinians understand Walker’s influence upon their lives. Yet if they recognize the hymn “Amazing Grace,” they have him to thank. Walker, a Spartanburg citizen, first brought together the hymn text and the hymn tune for “Amazing Grace” in his 1835 tunebook *Southern Harmony*.

Walker, a “singing school” leader, not only put together four tunebooks of hymns, but also traveled around the South teaching people how to read music using a form of musical notation called “shape notes.” His *Southern Harmony* is still used today in the “Big Singing Day,” a national shape-note celebration held annually in Benton, Kentucky, for more than a century. Walker is also an important figure to Spartanburg because of his involvement in religion and education; he directed vocal music at First Baptist Church and ran a bookstore in the center of town. He also supported the opening of Wofford College and was present when the cornerstone was laid. Walker died in 1875; his grave is in downtown Spartanburg’s old Magnolia Cemetery.

ADDITIONAL CELEBRATIONS AND RESOURCES:

Spartanburg will mark Walker’s birth in a number of ways. This symposium starts a year of celebration. Mark two upcoming events on your calendar:

Saturday, March 14, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. 15th Annual Shape-Note Singing. This event will use the Sacred Harp and Walker’s Christian Harmony. Held at Wofford College in the Burwell Bldg., AAAS Room. Participants are welcome to come and go as they please. Go to www.wofford.edu for more information.

Sunday, March 15, Walker Commemoration Service, Morningside Baptist Church, Spartanburg.

For more information about shape note singing:

- ◆ Go to <http://fasola.org/>
- ◆ Go to www.ccel.org/s/southern_harmony/ (Dr. Eskew wrote the introduction.)

For more information about hymns:

See the Hymn Society in the United States and Canada (www.thehymnsociety.org)

Program

Tonight's concert is being recorded, so a few gentle requests are in order:

- ◆ Please turn off cell-phones and paging devices.
- ◆ Children are welcome, but please take a loud child outside to calm down.
- ◆ Please hold your applause until the concert is complete.

Organ Prelude	Leon W. Couch III*
Welcome	Leon W. Couch III and Laura Feitzinger Brown*
Proclamation	Mayor Bill Barnet
Historical Introduction	Harry Eskew
“Brethren, We Have Met to Worship” (HOLY MANNA)	Arr. John Coates Steve Skinner, Soloist and Director 1) Solo, 2) Men, 3) Women, 4) All in harmony
“What Wondrous Love Is This” (WONDROUS LOVE)	Miller-Rowe Consort Michael Miller,* Guitar, and David Rowe, Hammer Dulcimer
“How Firm a Foundation” (FOUNDATION)	Audience
“Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing” (NETTLETON)	Arr. Mack Wilberg
“My Shepherd Will Supply My Need” (RESIGNATION)	Arr. Mack Wilberg Dorman High School Chorus Lane Moore, Director; Maurice Burgess,* Associate Director; Maddie Jurek,* Assistant Director
“Singing Billy Walker Speaks”	Tom Johnson
<i>Southern Harmonies</i> for Saxophone Trio	Walter S. Hartley Kathleen Coleman,* Lauren Holloway,* and McLaren Boyd*
“I Will Arise and Go to Jesus” (RESTORATION)	Anne Denbow,* Soloist; Michael Miller,* Guitar
“On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand” (PROMISED LAND)	Audience
“Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?” (Negro Spiritual)	Taylor Johnson,* Soprano
“I've Been Boked”	Arr. Hall Johnson
“New Born”	Arr. Frederick Hall
“Ain'-a that Good News”	Arr. William Dawson Heritage Singers, Miriam M. Turner, Director
“Amazing Grace” (NEW BRITAIN)	Audience
Singing School Syllables by Shape-Note Singers	
Stanza 1 by Shape-Note Singers as in <i>Southern Harmony</i> , followed by Organ Interlude	
Stanza 2 by All	
Stanza 3 by All	
Stanza 4 by Taylor Johnson*, Soprano, followed by Organ Interlude	
Stanza 5 by All	

*Participants associated with Converse College

Program Personnel

- ◆ Leon Couch, Assistant Professor of Organ and Music Theory, Converse College
- ◆ The Honorable Bill Barnet, Mayor of Spartanburg
- ◆ Steve Skinner, Minister of Music, First Baptist Church of Spartanburg
- ◆ Harry Eskew, Professor Emeritus, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
- ◆ Miller-Rowe Consort: Michael Miller, Guitarist and Converse (Lawson Academy) Instructor, and David Rowe, Hammer Dulcimer
- ◆ Lane Moore, Director, Dorman Chorus
- ◆ Maurice Burgess, Associate Director, Dorman Chorus
- ◆ Maddie Jurek, Assistant Director, Dorman Chorus
- ◆ Kathleen Coleman, Lauren Holloway, and Boyd McLaren, saxophone students at Converse College
- ◆ Anne Denbow, Lecturer in Voice, Converse College
- ◆ Taylor Johnson, Graduate Student, Florida State University
- ◆ Miriam M. Turner, Director of the Heritage Singers

Hearty Thanks

- ◆ The National Endowment for the Humanities
- ◆ The Humanities Council of South Carolina
- ◆ At Converse: the Nisbet Honors Program, the Department of English, and the Department of Musicology and Composition
- ◆ Melody Boland and Kathy Holt
- ◆ Kathy Worley
- ◆ Jeff Willis and Melissa Walker
- ◆ Ola Jean Kelly, Director, Union County History Museum
- ◆ Nannie Jeffries, Administrative Manager, Spartanburg Regional History Museum
- ◆ Betsy Teter, Hub City Writers Workshop
- ◆ Hannah Brown for creating the PowerPoint show
- ◆ Harold Floyd of the Copy Center for patient, reliable work
- ◆ Jan Barker for publicity help
- ◆ Campus Technology
- ◆ Our symposium scholars and composers: Mel Bringle, Harry Eskew, John Bullard, Sally Ann Morris
- ◆ The students in the Nisbet Honors Program hymnody class: Meagan Kusek, Sydney Sigmon, Elizabeth Lickliter, Kiya Heartwood, Sarah Horback, and Katharine Dudley
- ◆ Deans Jeff Barker, Miles Hoffman, and Scott Robbins

OTHER SYMPOSIUM GUEST SPEAKERS:

- ◆ Panelist and workshop director: **Dr. Mary Louise (Mel) Bringle**, Professor of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Chair of the Humanities Division, Brevard College; President of the Hymn Society of the United States and Canada; author of four books and numerous award-winning hymns.
- ◆ Panelist: **Dr. John Bullard**, Professor Emeritus of Religion, Wofford College. Expert on Singin' Billy Walker, organizer of regular celebration of Walker's music at Wofford. In addition to his work as religion professor, Dr. Bullard is a professional organist who worked part-time as a minister of music for more than two decades.
- ◆ Panelist, conductor of Thursday's concert, workshop director: **Ms. Sally Ann Morris**, composer of approximately 100 published or forthcoming hymn tunes, presenter at national conferences on hymnody and worship.

To be printed in full:

Brethren, We Have Met to Worship, Baptist Hymnal (1991), 379

How Firm a Foundation, Baptist Hymnal (1991), 338

On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand, Baptist Hymnal (1991), 521

Amazing Grace! How Sweet the Sound, Baptist Hymnal (1991), 330