

Christ Mass Carols

Presented December 5, 12, & 19, 2004

Jason Allen Anderson, presenter

*A three-week series exploring the histories of our favorite
Christmas hymns, carols, and spirituals.*

PREFATORY REMARKS

From the start of the holiday shopping season through Christmas Eve, you will hear on average, the same 25 holiday songs about 700 times. Sound odd? Well, who wants to hear “Once in Royal David’s city” over the audio system at The Gap? No one. But they do want to hear “Jingle Bells” and “Silent Night.” Go figure.

What is a carol? Carol is derived from the Middle English *carole* and was originally a short, choral dance. The subject matter of carols goes well beyond Christmas. There are New Year, Epiphany, Holy Week, Easter, Summer, Spring, Harvest, and Winter carols. The trouble is, we just don’t like to hear those much!

Our three-week journey begins with pre-Victorian Christmas carols (12/5), continues with Victorian carols (12/12), and ends with distinctly American carols (12/19). If you enjoy this, let me know. If there are parts that just don’t work for you, let me know that as well. If I mention a term with which you’re not familiar, pop up your hand and ask me to explain.

PRE-VICTORIAN CAROLS

Until the Puritan revolution in England, Christmas was not simply a single feast day in the church year, but a season spanning from Christmas Day to the Feast of the Epiphany (the famous 12 Days of Christmas). 12 Days of celebration required many carols, most of which were passed on orally. Musicologists date the first carols to the 15th century. However, the first printed book of carols appeared in 1521. Wynkyn de Word, that’s the name of an English printer, produced the book entitled *Christmasse Carolles*. Only two pages of it exist, but one of the carols that survived is “The Boar’s Head.” Obviously you won’t find that in our hymnal, and most of the Christmas melodies dating to the 16th through mid-17th century weren’t carols at all, but were plainsong chants borrowed from the Sarum and Roman rites (see “Creator of the stars of night”).

[Sing “Creator of the stars of night” - Hymn 60]

While that hymn is certainly beautiful, it isn’t what we have in mind when we think of Christmas carols. If we want to hear that, we have to jump forward 200 years.

O come, all ye faithful - Hymn 83

The history of *Adeste Fideles* was shrouded in mystery for many years. Finally, in 1946, Rev. Maurice Frost, Vicar of Deddington, Oxford, discovered a new manuscript of the hymn (written in Latin). Regrettably, it’s cover—and the possible signature of its

author—was missing. The next year, Dom John Stéphan, OSB, published his 32-page monograph, *The “Adeste Fideles”*: *A Study of its Origin and Development* (Buckfast Abbey Publications: Devon, 1947) concluding that the hymn and the tune were both written by the same man:

John Francis Wade was born circa 1711, possibly in England. A Catholic layman, he fled religious persecution in England, settling in France near a Catholic college established by Phillip II of Spain in 1559. Wade made his living “by copying and selling plain chant and other music.” He also taught “the Latin and Church song” at the English College there, and produced beautiful copies of plain chant and hymn manuscripts for local chapels and private use. His famous “Adeste Fideles” appears to have been produced by at least 1743, and possibly as early as 1740. Both the words and the music appear in five existing manuscripts (four of which were signed by Wade) including:

The “Jacobite” manuscript was written circa 1743 or 1744 according to Dom Stéphan—and possibly as early as 1740 according the editors of the *New Oxford Book of Carols*. This is said to be the earliest known copy in Wade’s hand; a facsimile was reproduced in Dom Jean Stéphan’s “*The Adeste Fideles: A Study On Its Origin and Development*” (Devon, England: Buckfast Abbey Publications, 1947). It was this copy found by Rev. Frost in 1946, and is the only one lacking the signature of Mr. Wade.

At Stonyhurst College, Lancashire, 1750. This is the version found in Wade’s *Cantus Diversi pro Dominicis et Festis*. In that volume, the name of this carol is *In Nativitate Domini Hymnus*. According to the curator of the library at Stonyhurst College, the first line is spelled *Adeste Fideles* (and not *Adeste Fidelis* as some have asserted). This copy was written for the English College at Lisbon, Portugal.

At the Henry Watson Music Library, Manchester, England, around 1751.

Two copies at Edmund’s College, Old Hall, Ware, England, 1760, a *Graduale* and a *Vesporal*.

Dom Stéphan argues that Wade wrote both the words and the music, pulling together many facts concerning the manuscripts themselves, as well as the history of the time. There is, for example, a remarkable similarity to a tune from a comic opera, *Acajou* by Charles Simon Favart (1710-1792) (Paris, March 18, 1744; based on *Comte d’Acajou* by Devos). Dom Stéphan quotes G. E. P. Arkwright (*The Musical Antiquary*, Vol. I., April, 1910) to the effect that the song *Rage inutile* from *Acajou* was a transcription of the original tune from which the first part of *Adeste Fideles* is derived. The tune was called *Air Angolis*. The quotation from Arkwright concluded with the following: “This adaptation, by which a really fine tune was compounded out of rather incongruous materials, may have been made by some choirmaster (probably between c. 1740 and 1750), for the use of a Roman Catholic choir.” Since the tune was used in Paris in 1744, the date of the composition would have to have been prior to that time.

In examining the “Jacobite” manuscript, Dom Stéphan went so far as to examine the watermarks, which were identified by an expert as being dated between 1720 and 1750. Dom Stéphan also examined other manuscripts, known to be by Wade, and concluded that they were by the same hand. He also examined other texts within the “Jacobite” manuscript and found a prayer for King James, whom he concluded was probably James III (James Francis Edward Stuart, a.k.a. “the Old Pretender,” son of James II). The hopes by James III to gain the English throne were crushed in 1745 when a Jacobite uprising (led by his son, Prince Charles Edward Stuart, “the Young Pretender”) was crushed. Dom Stéphan noted that in a subsequent copy (the 1750 Stonyhurst copy), the “Prayer for the King” omitted James in favor of Joseph, the son of King John V of Portugal, who ascended to the throne in 1750.

Finally, Dom Stéphan noted that the version of *Adeste Fideles* in the “Jacobite” manuscript differed in some material respects to the other known versions, especially in the chorus which is changed from “Venite adorade” to “Venite adoramus” (the correct liturgical phrase in the Invitatory Response at Matins according to Dom Stéphan). In addition, the “Jacobite” manuscript is written in 3/4 time, while all subsequent versions are written in 4/4 time. Finally, the earlier versions are written in a 5-line stave, while subsequent versions were written in a 4-line stave.

The lyrics were printed in France in 1760 in the *Evening Offices of the Church*; according to Elizabeth Poston, previous editions did not contain them. In England, the hymn and tune first appeared in the *Essay or Instruction for Learning the Church Plain Chant* in 1782 in London (Keyte and Parrott state that this was anonymously published; Poston and Dom Stéphan indicate that the author was Samuel Webbe). Ten years later, in 1792, the hymn and tune were repeated in a four-part setting of the tune in Samuel Webbe’s *Collection of Motetts or Antiphons*. Regrettably, Webbe did not give any attribution of the composer of the tune. It was likely this version which Webbe, a prominent organist, was playing three years later, in 1795.

The hymn has often been called “The Portuguese Hymn.” This is because a 1795 performance of the hymn by Samuel Webbe was first heard by the Duke of Leeds at the chapel of the Portuguese embassy in London, one of the few strongholds of Catholic culture in the country at that time. The Duke was so impressed that he commissioned a fuller arrangement by Thomas Greatorex. This arrangement was performed at a “Concert of Ancient Music” (a.k.a. the *Ancient Concerts*) on May 10, 1797. According to Vincent Novello, the hymn was identified as “The Portuguese Hymn” since the Duke erroneously assumed that Portugal was source (Novello also wrote a popular arrangement). Soon the carol became very popular throughout England, Europe, and the United States.

Concerning this misunderstanding, William Henry Husk noted in 1863:

... accompanied of late years by an English translation of the Latin Christmas hymn, “Adeste, fideles,” under the title of the Portuguese Hymn, or as one worthy printer calls it “A favourite Christmas Hymn, *translated from the Portuguese*,” ignorant of the fact that its title of “Portuguese,” was given to it by an English nobleman who was a director of

the Concerts of Ancient Music and introduced the hymn there, having previously heard it sung at the Chapel of the Portuguese embassy in South Street, Grosvenor Square, and assuming it to be a Portuguese composition.

By the eighteenth century, *Adeste Fideles* was popular in Germany and France. There it was called “The Midnight Mass,” because monks changed it into a Christmas Eve processional. In the early eighteenth century, it was possibly used by wealthy French Catholic families in their private chapels.

Originally, Wade wrote a four-verse lyric, but later additions increased the number to eight verses (although only 7 have any contemporary currency). In 1751, Wade was back in Lancashire, but he appears to have lived primarily in Douai. He died there on August 16, 1786, at the age of 75. The hymn has been translated into English many times. The earliest known, from 1789, opened with “Come, faithful all, rejoice and sing.” By 1892, there were over 38 translations according to John Julian’s *Dictionary of Hymnology*. William Studwell estimated almost 50 translations by the late 1990s. But the most popular is that by an English priest:

Frederick Oakeley was born September 5, 1802, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, England. His father was Charles Oakeley, governor of Madras. Oakeley attended Christ Church, Oxford, and took Holy Orders with the Church of England in 1828. By 1839, he was preaching at the Margaret Street Chapel, London. It was there in 1841 that Rev. Oakeley translated the Latin hymn *Adeste Fideles* into English. Originally, the first line was “Ye faithful, approach ye.” It wasn’t published at that time, but its use in the Margaret Chapel led to widespread popularity.

In 1852 - the same year he became canon at Westminster Cathedral - this revised version of the hymn was printed in F. H. Murray’s *A Hymnal for Use in the English Church*.

For many years Oakeley worked among the poor of Westminster. His poetry collections include *Lyra Liturgica: Reflections in Verse for Holy Days and Seasons* (1865). He died January 29, 1880, at Islington, Middlesex, England, and was buried in St Mary’s Catholic Cemetery, Kensal Green, England.

Originally Wade created the four verses in the 1740s. But, as noted above, three additional verses were added in 1822 by Abbé Étienne Jean François Borderies (1764-1832) when they were printed in his *Office de St Omer*. It has been suggested that Abbé Borderies heard the hymn sung while exiled in England in 1793 and wrote the three additional stanzas after he returned to France in 1794. Another Latin verse was written by an unknown author but of possibly Gallic origins and printed in Belgium circa 1850 and in Paris circa 1868.

Oakeley didn’t translate these verses, but another hymnologist did:

William Thomas Brooke was born January 9, 1848. He was educated at the City of London School and after entering commercial life, he became interested in hymnology,

learning much from Daniel Sedgwick. Originally a Baptist, Brooke converted to the Church of England in 1867.

Inspired by the three Latin verses written by Abbé Borderies, and the other anonymous Latin verse, Brooke first translated the four new Latin verses, and then inserted these after the first two verses of the Oakeley translation. This new version was printed in the *Altar Hymnal* in 1884.

In his lifetime, Brooke contributed hymns to many Victorian periodicals. One of his other works was titled *Churchman's Manual of Private and Family Devotion* (1882). He died in 1917.

During the 19th century the melody was set to many texts, including "How Firm A Foundation" (Ira Sankey, *et al*, eds., *Gospel Hymns: Nos. 1 to 6 Complete*, New York: Biglow & Main, 1894, #613).

The hymn has been translated into at least 125 languages and is one of the most popular of all Christmas hymns.

According to J. F. Gannon, "The erstwhile chapel of the Portuguese Embassy associated with the hymn is still there on Warwick Street between Regent Street and Golden Square, but it is now simply a Roman Catholic church unconnected with any Embassy."

Alternate Second Verses:

2. True God of true God, Light from Light Eternal,
Lo, he shuns not the Virgin's womb;
Son of the Father, Begotten, not created; *Chorus*

2. God from God, Light of Light begotten
Lo, he abhors not the Virgin's womb;
Only begotten Son of the Father. *Chorus*

2. Sing, Alleluia, all ye choirs of angels;
O sing, All ye blissful ones of heaven above;
Glory to God in the highest, glory! *Chorus*

2. The Brightness of glory, Light of light eternal,
Our lowly nature He hath not abhorred;
Son of the Father, Word of God Incarnate! *Chorus*

2. The highest, most holy, Light of light eternal,
Born of a virgin, a mortal he comes;
Son of the Father, Now is flesh appearing! *Chorus*

Hark! the herald angels sing - Hymn 87

See William Studwell, *The Christmas Carol Reader*

Composition of this hymn spans two centuries, with the words in the 18th century and the music in the 19th century. The words to this carol were from some of nearly 9,000 poems written by Charles Wesley (1707-1788), one of the co-founders of Methodism. Inspired by the joyous sounds of London church bells heard during a walk to church on Christmas Day, Wesley first published this carol in a 1739 hymn collection issued by his brother John Wesley (1703-1791).

In its original version, however, it was markedly different from what we are familiar with now. Even its title, “Hark How All the Welkin Rings,” varied drastically from the ultimate form. (“Welkin” means “sky” or “heaven”). In 1753 George Whitefield (1714-1770) published a revision of the first two lines. Seven years later, in 1760, Reverend Martin Madan (1726-1790) revised lines seven and eight. Here is how the words originally appeared.

Hark, how all the welkin rings,
“Glory to the King of kings;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!”

Mild He lays his glory by,
Born that man no more may die;
Born to raise the sons of earth;
Born to give them second birth.

Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
Universal nature say,
“Christ the Lord is born to-day!”

Come, Desire of nations, come,
Fix in us thy humble home;
Rise, the woman’s conquering seed,
Bruise in us the serpent’s head.

Christ, by highest Heaven ador’d,
Christ, the everlasting Lord:
Late in time behold him come,
Offspring of a Virgin’s womb!

Now display thy saving power,
Ruined nature now restore;
Now in mystic union join
Thine to ours, and ours to thine.

Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see,
Hail the incarnate deity!
Pleased as man with men to appear,
Jesus! Our Immanuel here!

Adam’s likeness, Lord, efface;
Stamp Thy image in its place.
Second Adam from above,
Reinstate us in thy love.

Hail, the heavenly Prince of Peace!
Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
Risen with healing in his wings.

Let us Thee, though lost, regain,
Thee, the life, the inner Man:
O! to all thyself impart,
Form’d in each believing heart.

[Note: Do not sing the carol until 12/12!]

VICTORIAN CAROLS

The bulk of what we sing at Christmas dates to the reigns of two Georges (III & IV), one William (IV), and Victoria, as well as the presidencies of John Quincy Adams through William McKinley. This was the age of revolution, which began with the political upheaval of the French & American revolutions and ended with the industrial revolution.

Other works, influential in our Christmas celebrations, and dating to this period include: (1) Washington Irving *Dietrich Knickerbocker's History of New York* mentions the Dutch and Saint Nicholas and dates to 1806.

(2) Clement Moore *A Visit from St. Nicholas* (AKA "Twas the Night before Christmas") dates to 1822 and was published in New York.

(3) Charles Dickens *A Christmas Carol* published in London on December 19, 1843. The carol in question is most likely "God rest you merry, gentlemen."

(4) Truro Cathedral *Christmas Lessons & Carols* dates to 1878 and was taken up by the now famous King's College, Cambridge group in 1918.

Hark! the herald angels sing - Hymn 87

See William Studwell, *The Christmas Carol Reader*

Just as it took three eighteenth-century poets to produce the lyrics, it took two nineteenth-century musicians to supply a suitable tune. The first tune used with this carol was probably the superb one commonly affixed to Wesley's celebrated Easter song, "Christ the Lord is Risen Today"—a poor fit at best. In 1855, William Hayman Cummings (1831-1915), an English organist, adapted Wesley's hymn to some music by the brilliant German composer Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847). Cummings discovered the melody in a relatively unknown June 1840 choral work entitled "Festgesant" ("Festival Song"). Specifically, the melody came from the second chorus, "Gott ist Licht" ("God is Light").

This new synthesis was published in 1856 and again in 1857.

The first Nowell - Hymn 109

See William Studwell, *The Christmas Carol Reader*

The usual and typical impression derived is that the carol is of French origin. But such an inference is thoroughly and unequivocally incorrect. "Nowell" is an English word dating back as far as the fourteenth century when Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1340-1400) used the term in his medieval masterpiece *The Canterbury Tales*. The English word is probably a derivative of an old French word, either "Noel" (Christmas) or "Nouvelle" (New).

All the historical evidence points clearly to the carol's being English, and probably from the remote Cornwall region in southwest England. Although the words were not published until 1823 and the tune not until 1833, a sixteenth-century date is reasonably certain. The song as we know it today, however, acquired a crucial alteration during the nineteenth century. When first published, part of the tune of the refrain was different. By

the 1870s the notes for the words “Born is the King” had been changed, thus developing the version we are familiar with now. The person responsible for the inspired modification is unknown, but it is conceivable that Englishman John Stainer (1840-1901) could have been the rearranger. The revised form appeared in some important editions of carols issued by Stainer, the music editor, and text editor Ramsden Bramley (1833-1917). The idea for the alteration may have come from a tune set to lyrics similar to “The First Nowell” and which contained the same four-note pattern for “Born is the King,” as the present version. The suspected melody was first published in William Wallace Fyfe’s, *Christmas, Its Customs and Carols*, in 1860. If Stainer was the creator of the revision—as well as the joiner of “Greensleeves” with the lyrics for “What Child is This?” as is conjectured—he must be regarded as a key contributor to two of the world’s most important carols.

Angels we have heard on high - Hymn 96

In fact the carol is probably a product of eighteenth-century France and is totally anonymous. By 1816, the carol was known in England, for on that date James Montgomery (1771-1854) derived his renowned carol “Angels From the Realms of Glory” from “Les anges.” The same tune was used with Montgomery’s lyrics until the 1867 composition by Henry Thomas Smart (1813-1879).

In 1855 the carol was first published in France, and in 1862 the most familiar of several English translations, “Angels We Have Heard on High.” was published without indication of authorship. The 1862 translation, though, varied considerably from the form now used. In 1916 an American carol collection [Hutchins, *Carols Old and Carols New*] printed the present version, again anonymous, and it is suspected that this was the first appearance of the revision.

God rest you merry, gentlemen - Hymn 105

See Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*:

“Foggier yet, and colder! Piercing, searching, biting cold. If the good Saint Dunstan had but nipped the Evil Spirit’s nose with a touch of such weather as that, instead of using his familiar weapons, then indeed he would have roared to lusty purpose. The owner of one scant young nose, gnawed and mumbled by the hungry cold as bones are gnawed by dogs, stooped down at Scrooge’s keyhole to regale him with a Christmas carol: but at the first sound of—

“God bless you, merry gentleman! May nothing you dismay!”

“Scrooge seized the ruler with such energy of action, that the singer fled in terror, leaving the keyhole to the fog and even more congenial frost.”

What child is this - Hymn 115

This is really a borrowing of a secular melody with superimposition of a sacred text. The tune is called Greensleeves and it appears in print as a carol in 1642. However, the creation was occasionally an unusual matching (at least in the eyes of the

contemporaries). The carol “What Child Is This?” is an example of just such a case. The melody is from the Tudor tune “Greensleeves,” whose bawdy original lyrics filled with anything but holiday imagery. Later, Shakespeare mentioned the song in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* during an execution scene. In 1865, William Dix, an Englishman, wrote “The Manger Throne,” of which three verses evolved into “What Child Is This?” using this tune.

William Studwell, *The Christmas Carol Reader*

The song is a product of the sixteenth century, and was mentioned in Act Two, Scene One of Shakespeare’s *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. The tune was used as the basis for a number of other lyrics. The lyrics for “What Child is This?” were written around 1865 by Englishman William Chatterton Dix (1837-1898), who wrote other carols, including “As With Gladness Men of Old” (1859). It is unknown who merged Dix’s lyrics and “Greensleeves”, but quite possibly it was John Stainer (1840-1901), who made a harmonization.

Like silver lamps in a distant shrine,
The stars are sparkling bright
The bells of the city of God ring out,
For the Son of Mary is born to-night.
The gloom is past and the morn at last
Is coming with orient light.

Never fell melodies half so sweet
As those which are filling the skies,
And never a palace shone half so fair
As the manger-bed where our Saviour lies;
No night in the year is half so dear
As this which has ended our sighs.

Now a new Power has come on the earth,
A match for the armies of Hell:
A Child is born who shall conquer the foe,
And all the spirits of wickedness quell:
For Mary’s Son is the Mighty One
Whom the prophets of God foretell.

The stars of heaven still shine as at first
They gleamed on this wonderful night;
The bells of the city of God peal out
And the angels’ song still rings in the height,
And love still turns where the Godhead burns
Hid in flesh from fleshly sight.

Faith sees no longer the stable floor,
The pavement of sapphire is there

The clear light of heaven streams out to the world
And the angels of God are crowding the air,
And heaven and earth through the spotless birth
Are at peace on this night so fair.

Silent night, holy night - Hymn 111

Verses 1-3 translated by Bishop John Freeman Young (1820-1885), a Maine native who served Episcopal parishes in Texas, Mississippi, Louisiana, New York and Florida. His version was first published in Charles L. Hutchins, *Sunday School Hymnal and Service Book* (Medford, MA: 1876) according to *The New Oxford Book of Carols* (1992). (Most other sources give the date of publication of 1871.) Other sources have placed first publication in *The Sunday-School Service and Tune Book: Selected and arranged by John Clark Hollister*, in 1863.

On 30th December 1854, Gruber wrote the following:

On December 24th in the year 1818 the curate of the newly erected parish-church St. Nicola of Oberndorf, Mr. Joseph Mohr handed over a poem to the deputy organist, Franz Gruber (at that time also teacher at Arnsdorf) with the request to compose a suitable melody for two solo voices with choir and the accompaniment of one guitar.

Gruber did so, and the carol was first performed at the midnight mass on Christmas Eve, 1818. Mohr sang the tenor part, Gruber sang the bass, and the church choir did the refrains of each verse. Mohr played the guitar accompaniment. It was said to have been enthusiastically received by the congregation.

In October 1819, Fr. Mohr was transferred from Oberndorf to Kuchl and somewhere between that time and 1821 he wrote out an arrangement of the carol. This document was discovered in 1995 and, after it was authenticated by handwriting experts and historians, has been proclaimed the earliest known manuscript of "Stille Nacht."

AMERICAN CAROLS

O little town of Bethlehem - Hymn 79

See William Studwell, *The Christmas Carol Reader*

Inspired by his visit to the Holy Land in December 1865 and January 1866, this hymn was written by Episcopal clergyman Phillips Brooks (1835-1893) about three years after the visit. He later served as Bishop of Massachusetts. Reportedly written shortly before Christmas in 1868 for a Christmas program. He asked his friend Lewis H. Redner (1831-1908), a real estate broker who served as the Sunday school superintendent and organist, to supply a simple setting for the poem. However, Redner's muse was slow to inspire. By the time he went to bed the night before the Christmas program, Redner had not produced a satisfactory tune. During the night, he awoke with "an angel strain" sounding in his ears. He immediately jotted down the melody, which he called "a gift from heaven," and the following morning added the harmony. Later that day, on December 27, 1868, the children inaugurated the modest yet soon to be classic of the Christmas season.

Redner's tune is occasionally replaced by other melodies, especially in Great Britain. The principal alternate is "The Ploughboy's Dream" (also called "Forest Green"), an English folk song which was substituted by the eminent English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) in the 1906 collection, *The English Hymnal*. [Williams was also a co-editor of *the Oxford Book of Carols* (1928).]

It came upon the midnight clear - Hymn 89

See William Studwell, *The Christmas Carol Reader*

It was a scene from Currier & Ives: A cold winter's day in December 1849. Outside, snow was falling, and inside the fireplace in the study was erupting with warmth and light. No doubt this picturesque New England scene and the holiday season inspired the frail minister, and his pen scratched out several stanzas of verse about the birth of Jesus

The poem was not the first Christmas poetry by the Reverend Edmund Hamilton Sears (1810-1876). He had written other Nativity lyrics and several books on religious topics. In addition, he was the editor for the Boston-based *Monthly Religious Magazine* from 1859 to 1871. Sears was pastor at the First Unitarian Church in Wayland, Massachusetts.

The poem was published on December 29, 1849 in the *Christian Register*. A year later, in 1850, a tune by Richard Storrs Willis (1819-1900), set to the hymn "See Israel's Gentle Shepherd Stand," was published under the title "Study No. 23" in his *Church Chorales and Choir Studies*. Soon after, possibly that same year, the tune was rearranged to fit Sears' poetry—probably by Willis himself, although some sources state that Uzziah Christopher Burnap (1834-1900) was responsible. The tune was adapted by Willis not later than 1860 to accommodate the lyrics of "While Shepherds Watch Their Flock" as well as Sears' other carol, "Calm on the Listening Ear of Night."

Go tell it on the mountain - Hymn 99

William L. Simon, ed., *Reader's Digest Merry Christmas Songbook* (1981)

To black slaves in the United States, the birth of a Savior who would set all men free was a miracle to be sung about. And when there was something so notable to tell, what better place to tell it from than a mountain, just as Jesus had chosen for His Sermon on the Mount. "Go Tell It on the Mountain," an authentic spiritual that dates probably from the early 1800s, was first popularized in 1879 by the Fisk University Jubilee Singers. This chorus traveled throughout the United States and Europe at the end of the last century, earning scholarship-fund money for Fisk, a school founded to educate freed slaves.

Joy to the world! the Lord is come - Hymn 100

Dr. Isaac Watts, a paraphrase of Psalm 98.

Over a century after Isaac Watts' carol lyrics first appeared, it was printed with a splendid, dynamic tune in an 1839 collection entitled *The Modern Psalmist*. The sole

indication of authorship for the melody was the cryptic notation “from Handel.” Because of this strange wording and some similarities between parts of the tune and parts of the *Messiah*, the superlative 1742 choral work by George Friderick Handel (1685-1759), the melody has almost universally been attributed to the English music master. Yet the links to Handel are very weak and tenuous and scholars have refuted the hypothesis of Handelian authorship.

The probable composer of the tune for “Joy” was Lowell Mason (1792-1872) a prominent American music educator, music editor, and hymn writer. In Mason’s background there are three elements that tend to support the suspicion that he was responsible for the melody. First, he was deeply immersed in the music of such classical composers as Handel, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, and readily commuted between their domain and his own creativity. Second, Mason had a decided tendency toward anonymity and many of his own compositions were unsigned. Supposedly, he was the “arranger” of the 1824 tune which is commonly used with another of Watts’ hymns, “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross,” but various factors very strongly tempt one to believe that Mason actually composed the 1824 melody. Third, Mason was a hymn tune composer of some accomplishment. On top of the strong possibility that he produced the tune for “When I Survey,” he is definitely credited with the composition of the good tunes for “My Faith Looks Up to Thee” and “Nearer, My God, to Thee.” Add to these three characteristics the fact that Mason was the editor of the 1839 collection in which the tune for “Joy” first appeared, and a fairly convincing case for Mason can be assembled. Apparently, Mason was influenced by Handel during the creation of the melody, and quite possibly was sincerely unsure where the dividing line between Handel and himself really was. Hence the misleading notation in the 1839 collection involved, following perhaps predictably by the folklore concerning Handel. (To compound the confusion, recent research has indicated that Mason was not only under the influence of Handel, but may also have “borrowed” the tune from yet another source.)

In spite of the uncertainty about the tune’s origins, there is no doubt that the carol synthesized by the joint talents of the father of English hymnody and the father of American hymnologic anonymity has few peers in quality or international popularity. Both words and music, carried along by extremely esthetic conveyances of term and tone, joyfully proclaim the birth of Jesus. Of all the sacred carols, “Joy” is perhaps the most positive and uplifting declaration of the message of Christmas. The exclamation point almost universally inserted by carol editors after the initial line, “Joy to the world!” powerfully punctuates the exhilarating effect that this carol has had for the past century and a half.

Away in a manger - Hymn 101

Some sources state that verses 1 & 2, anonymous; appeared in *Little Children’s Book for Schools and Families*, by J.C. File (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America, 1885). William Studwell, in *American Christmas Classics*, mentions that the third verse may also be anonymous as the reference was one by McFarland, not of McFarland. Studwell also briefly discusses a Moravian tradition of trombone choirs performing this carol.

Although some believe this carol was penned by Martin Luther, German religious reformer and author of a number of beautiful hymns, it is almost certainly of late- 19th century American origin. Verses 1 and 2 appeared anonymously in *Little Children's Book for Schools and Families*, by J. C. File, Philadelphia, 1885, and verse 3 is by John Thomas McFarland (1851-1913). The tune given here is that most used in England, the 'Cradle Song' by American Gospel songwriter W. J. Kirkpatrick (1838-21). Another popular tune for it in the U.S.A. is 'Mueller', probably written by James R. Murray, 1887.

Looking for the lyrics to your favorite classic Christmas carols, songs and hymns? Simply click on the title that you're interested in below, and you'll be taken to a page that shows all of the words to the carol in question. NEW! We've recently also added midi music players to many of the carols, so that you can sing along to your heart's content, if you so feel the urge. ;) MERRY CHRISTMAS and happy carolling! The 12 Days of Christmas. All I Want For Christmas Is My Two Front Teeth. This Christmas carol originally began as a Thanksgiving song. Published as "One Horse Open Sleigh," it commemorated the popular sleigh races of the 1800s. It became so popular that in 1965 it became the first song broadcast from space as astronauts sent it as a Christmas message to mission control. Carols. Silent Night. Stacey Garratt. Composed around 1818 in Austria, the song went from a small church to a group of traveling folk singers who performed it for Franz I of Austria and Alexander I of Russia.