

Sacred Harp Colorado

June 2010

Who We Are and What We Do

The Rocky Mountain shape note singers exist to preserve and promote the music and the traditions of American shape note harmony along the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains. We sing principally from the 1991 Denson revision of the Sacred Harp (Red Book), but use some songs from the Cooper Book (Blue Book). From time to time we will sing from other traditional books such as the Missouri Harmony and Norembega Harmony depending upon the spirit and the occasion. We welcome any and all to join us at our monthly singings held in the cities along the Front Range. Loaner books are available for use or purchase. Our monthly singings are usually held to the schedule supplied at the end of this newsletter, but holidays or special circumstance may dictate that we move a singing date. If you are new to us, please contact one of our members listed below for current location, day/date and time of a singing in your area.

Editorially Speaking

As this issue is coming together Susie and I are out on the road for this year's Sacred Harp vacation – The first in quite a few years. The first week has taken us across Texas and Louisiana to tour the Civil War battlefield at Vicksburg, Mississippi and then down to Hoboken, Georgia to attend their monthly singing Saturday evening. Sunday brought us church at New Hope, in Nahunta, Georgia with Johnny and David Lee. Our stay at Hoboken was a lovely campground at the top of the Okefenokee swamp [for those of you who remember Pogo] where Buster remained on his leash because of the alligators there present. The following week was spent in the Beaufort, South Carolina/Savannah, Georgia area seeing historic antebellum homes and the coastal sea islands in those areas. The second weekend now finds us in Stroud, Chambers County, Georgia [home of Benjamin Lloyd compiler of Lloyd's Primitive Hymns] to attend the 18th annual session of the reconstituted Mt. Pisgah Singing Society. Don and Karen Clark have graciously arranged for us to pitch our camp at the church and it has been a great day at one of the hallmark Cooper Book singings followed by food and front porch singing with Don and Karen, David Lee, Sybl Adams, Claudine Wootten-Townsend, Gaylon Powell, Karen Willard, Laura Densmore and others singers from the area. I took pictures at Mt. Pisgah, but nowhere near as comprehensively as James Chambliss who documents most of the area singings so here is the link to his efforts at Mt. Pisgah: <http://picasaweb.google.com/james.chambliss>. If you have seen Matt Hinton's Awake My Soul, you should recognize some of those in attendance. Today, more singing at the Darian Church homecoming. Tomorrow we will move south and west to Pensacola, Florida to spend some time on the Gulf Coast and then close out the journey with a stop at the Southwest Texas Convention at McMahan, Texas another jewel in the crown of Cooper Book singings. The journey has had its mechanical casualty moments an near catastrophes in driving, but is shaping up to be one of the best trips ever.

Then a specific reminder of Karl Dise's excellent Aspen Park Singing which makes its 2nd annual appearance on Saturday 5 June in beautiful Aspen Park, Colorado. For additional information see the flier attached to this newsletter. Also, see the enclosed flier/attached.pdf file for information on Mike Hinton's Coker Singing in San Antonio next month.

Quote of the Month

"When in doubt, sing loud." -- Robert Merrill, American operatic tenor

Rocky Mountain Convention 2010

I had earlier mentioned the Shrine of the Stations of the Cross in San Luis, Colorado which is an important thing to visit if you are taking the back roads to the Rocky Mountain Convention in September. Conveniently, Lynda La Rocca has written an excellent article describing the shrine and the surrounding area in the 2 May edition of the Pueblo Chieftain which is provided this month as part of our ongoing effort to whet your appetite for a casual drive to Los Alamos. Relax and enjoy the drive.

Spirit of San Luis - Lynda La Rocca

SAN LUIS — I've wanted to climb this hill for a long time.

Formally known as La Mesa de la Piedad y de la Misericordia (The Hill of Piety and Mercy), this tranquil slope of tumbled volcanic lava overlooking the oldest town in Colorado is the site of the Shrine of the Stations of the Cross.

And I'm here to follow its winding footpath and reflect upon a series of free-standing, open-air bronze statues that dramatically depict the final hours of the life of Jesus Christ — his judgment, sufferings, and death on the cross.

The bronzes are the work of local sculptor Huberto Maestas, who has enhanced the traditional 14 Stations of the Cross by adding a 15th statue atop the mesa representing Christ's Resurrection. But the sight of this mesmerizing bronze of a life-size Jesus who seems to literally swirl upward from the cross toward heaven is not all that awaits pilgrims completing the mile-long walk to the summit.

Also rising from the mesa is La Capilla de Todos los Santos (The Chapel of All Saints), a multi-domed, Spanish Colonial Revival-style meditation chapel built with 2-foot-thick adobe walls and surrounded by landscaped courtyards and gardens.

Inside, a small "tesoro" chapel off the main sanctuary holds dozens of prayer cards, statues of saints, framed religious pictures and touching, handwritten notes and letters from supplicants requesting help or expressing gratitude.

Near the chapel stands another place of prayer, the Grotto of Our Lady of Guadalupe. This natural-rock grotto holds pink-sandstone images of the Virgin Mary and Indian peasant Juan Diego, recalling Mexico's 1531 "Miracle of Guadalupe," when Juan Diego received a vision of a dark-skinned Madonna who requested that a church be built on the site where she appeared.

A secondary trail leads to a separate outdoor exhibit dedicated to the "Mexican Martyrs," a

group of devout Roman Catholics executed by the Mexican government during the early 20th century.

And while the entire hillside and mesa seem permeated by an almost-tangible sense of sanctity, the appeal of this site is both spiritual and secular. Nature-lovers can admire the shrine's wealth of plant life, from spiky yucca and prickly-pear cactus to juniper, sagebrush and multihued lichen, and savor the sweeping views of the southern San Luis Valley and the 14,000-plus-foot peaks of the Sangre de Cristo mountain range.

History buffs will easily locate the 1863 San Luis Vega, communal grazing land still in use today, and the 1852 San Luis People's Ditch, Colorado's oldest community irrigation ditch. Sharp eyes may even spot the 1857 R&R Market, the state's longest continuously operated business.

And art aficionados will marvel at the craftsmanship of the remarkable bronzes illustrating the Stations of the Cross. Cast using the "lost wax" process (which involves coating a wax model with heat-resistant ceramic material to create a mold, heating the mold until the wax melts and runs out, then refilling the mold with molten metal and breaking it open to reveal a solidified sculpture), each statue is meticulously detailed, down to the folds of cloth, curls of hair and ominous-looking thorns protruding from the "crown" on Christ's brow.

But what is most memorable, to me at least, are the expressions on the faces of Jesus, his followers and his tormentors. Those condemning Jesus appear fiercely determined; a Roman soldier stripping the savior of his robe looks both eager and cruel. The anguish contorting the features of Christ's mother Mary is almost frightening in its intensity, while the incarnations of Jesus' face as he struggles toward Calvary reflect sorrow, grim determination, and finally, agony. Conversely, the visage of the resurrected Christ glows with rapture.

The statues are about two-thirds life-size, with the exception of the life-size Crucifixion and Resurrection; bronze plaques beside each one display the station's title and related Biblical verses in English and Spanish. Benches along the mostly unpaved trail allow visitors to rest, ponder and absorb the emotional impact of every scene.

While the bronzes are the work of an individual artist, the shrine itself is a true community effort. And that's no surprise given the close-knit nature of this town, where nearly 90 percent of the approximately 650 residents are Hispanic, many of them members of devout Catholic families who can trace their roots back to the farmers and ranchers who settled here even before San Luis was founded in April 1851.

The shrine was built by volunteers from San Luis's Sangre de Cristo Parish, which commissioned the sculptures. Parish volunteers also assisted with the chapel's construction; funding came from private donations and Knights of Columbus organizations throughout Colorado. The Knights of Columbus Education Building on the shrine trail highlights these contributions and also houses nature displays and exhibits relating to local Hispanic history, culture and religious traditions.

The Shrine of the Stations of the Cross and La Capilla de Todos los Santos are symbols of a renaissance that began here more than 20 years ago when San Luis blossomed into an artistic oasis under the leadership of Rev. Patrick "Father Pat" Valdez, former pastor of the Sangre de Cristo Parish.

Unfortunately, his vision of sustained cultural and economic prosperity has dimmed somewhat, judging from the vacant downtown shops and currently shuttered San Luis Museum and Cultural Center.

“The town’s broke,” a visitor center employee says when my husband Steve and I ask why the museum complex is closed. “But we’ll get things up and running again.”

It may be broke now, but the faith and determination of the residents of San Luis promise a brighter future.

Looking Ahead

Camp Fasola - Sunday, June 13 (5:00pm) through Thursday, June 17 (8:30am) – Programmed for Adults – Camp McDowell near Double Springs, Alabama (<http://campmcdowell.com>).

Camp Fasola - Monday, July 5 (4:00pm) through Friday, July 9 (8:30am) - Programmed for Youth (ages 10 and up) and Adults under age 30 and families who wish to accompany their Youth – Youth will have priority – Camp Lee near Anniston, Alabama (<http://camplee.org>). Registration will begin January 1st.

3rd Annual Coker Sacred Harp Singing 24 – 25 July 2010 [Denson Book] Coker United Methodist Church 231 E. North Loop Road San Antonio, TX 78216. For additional information contact: Mike Hinton 201/545-2246 or phnxmike@aol.com

Rocky Mountain Convention 25 – 26 September 2010 [Denson Book] Fuller Lodge 2132 Central Ave, Los Alamos, New Mexico 87544. Other details TBA.

Arkansas Valley Harvest Singing – Saturday 23 October 2010 [Denson and Cooper Books] Harmony Hall #13 5th Street, La Junta, CO 81050. 24 October singing from the Harp of Ages Location TBA. For additional information, contact: Pete Mathewson [719]469-5241 or 71mgbgt41@gmail.com.

Where We Sing and How to Find Us

In Colorado

Arkansas Valley Regular singings are 4th Mondays of each month from 6:30 – 8:30 pm at the home of Pete and Susie Mathewson 417 Carson Ave. La Junta. Contact Pete at 719/383-9056 or 71mgbgt41@gmail.com.

BOULDER Regular singings are 2nd Friday of each month 7-9 pm, at the home of Peter and Mary Lou Van Laanen. Contact Mary Lou for details at 303-447-9379 or e-mail her at ymarylou@indra.com

COLORADO SPRINGS - Sings regularly on the 2nd Sunday from 1:30 to 3:30 pm at the Pikes Peak Primitive Baptist Church 12th and Pikes Peak on the Westside. Please bring a dollar donation to the book fund. Pete Mathewson is the contact at 719-469-5241 or e-mail him at 71mgbgt41@gmail.com.

DENVER Sings weekly each Monday except the first Monday from 6:40 – 8:40pm at St. Mark's Orthodox, 1409 S. Vine, Denver. Special singings may be arranged [in addition to the regular Monday evening singings] for out of town visitors to the Denver/Boulder area. Out of town singers should call Sharon Kermiet at 303-931-8445 or email her at skermiet@goodwilldenver.org and at coral96@indra.com to arrange a special singing. Bring a dollar as a contribution to the book fund. For the location of any specific singing,

please contact Pat Dolan at 303-778-6297 or e-mail him at ruralplain@aol.com or Sharon Kermiet at skermiet@goodwilldenver.org.

FORT COLLINS - The singing is normally the first Monday of each month 7-8:30 pm at St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 2000 Stover Street. Contact Hill Grimmett for specifics at 970-231-1197 or e-mail him at hill@sacredharpcolorado.org

Elsewhere in the Southwest

Albuquerque, NM - Second and fourth Sundays, 2:00-5:00pm at the Immanuel Presbyterian Church 114 Carlisle Blvd. SE Albuquerque, NM 87106 For general info, contact Nancy Nortz (505)281-0267, nnortz@nmia.com

Las Cruces, NM - Meets every 2nd and 4th Thursday at 6 pm, remember 2 - 4 - 6. They meet at the Universal Unitarian Church building on Solano Street in Las Cruces. From I-25 South, take the University exit (exit 1). Continue on University through 3 stop lights at Triviz, Locust, and Jordan. The 4th light is Solano. Turn right (north) and go about 1/2 mile. The church is just after Wofford street on the left. We park on the north side of the church and use that entrance. For additional information please contact Janet Morgan at 505/795-9614.

Tucson, AZ - First and Third Saturdays - 2-5 pm Sonora Co-housing Common House 501 E. Roger Rd. just west of First Ave. in Tucson. For additional information please call: call Erika Roush (520) 887-0589 or Paige Winslett (520) 743-1268

Sacred Harp On The Web

Our local websites are Sacred Harp Colorado at www.sacredharpcolorado.org and the Rocky Mountain Shapenote Singers at <http://lamar.colostate.edu/~dakspk>. The national web site is www.fasola.org

Sacred Harp Colorado Newsletter Editor:

Pete Mathewson
417 Carson Ave.
La Junta, CO 81050
719/469-5241 cell
71mgbgt41@gmail.com

**Join us at the
Aspen Park Community Center
for an all day sing
with dinner on the grounds.**



Bring A Dish To Share

Saturday, June 5th, 2010

9:30 am to 3:30 pm

South on U.S. Highway 285 about 12
miles from C-470 to mile marker 238.
Park in the RTD park-n-ride lot and walk
up the stairs at the back to the green
one-room schoolhouse.

Google Map: 26225 Sutton Road, Aspen Park, Co.

Info: Karl Dise 303-670-8945

Denson and Norumbega Harmony

