

Jeremiah Ingalls – American Composer
By Hill Grimmatt
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Jeremiah Ingalls (1764-1838, although some sources report his death as 1828) is the composer of *The Christian Harmony; or, Songster's Companion*, originally published in 1805 in Exeter, NH. He was born in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts, and then lived in Vermont as an adult.

Like most of the early composers, he made his living apart from his music, and he was a farmer, as well as being at various times a cooper, an innkeeper, a singing master, and a deacon of the Congregational church. He was living in Newbury, VT in 1791, moved to Rochester, VT by 1810, and died at Hancock, VT April 6, 1838.

In the *Sacred Harp* there are three songs composed by Ingalls: New Jerusalem (1796, page 299); Northfield (1800, page 155); and Christian Song (1805, page 240).

Northfield was first published in *The Christian Harmony*. In album notes for a recording by a group of Nova Scotia singers (http://users.auracom.com/dowland/better_book_notes.html), they write:

...it (Northfield) must have been extremely popular in Maritime Canada, as it is included in all the tune books published here before 1900 which we have examined. The poetry is from Isaac Watts' Psalms of David (1719), which was more or less required reading for all singers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Ingalls apparently began his musical career as choir master for the First Church of Newbury, VT in 1791. This choir became locally famous for the time, and attracted people from miles around. According to some reports, Ingalls became a Deacon in 1803, but was later removed, and was excommunicated in 1810. Ingalls had operated a tavern in the Newbury area for a number of years, but reportedly sold it and moved to Rochester in 1810.

A history of the Congregational Church of Rochester, VT says only that it was founded in 1801, and that Ingalls was its first choir director. The same history does state that the Rochester church had 30 members and was led for its first years by supply and visiting preachers, so perhaps its over-all leadership was catch-as-catch-can during its early years.

Thanks to an on-line genealogy, we have some interesting facts about his family life: Ingalls married a Mary Bigelow in 1791. They had 11 children, 9 of whom survived. His third child, also named Jeremiah, joined the Shaker community in Cuyahoga, Ohio in 1831, with his (second) wife and 2 children. Perhaps there was some earlier connection between the Ingalls family and the Shakers: Hancock, Vermont was also the location of a Shaker community.

We also know that Ingalls' father Abijah Ingalls, born in 1739, was a Minute Man, served under various officers during the American Revolution, and died in March, 1777 at Ticonderoga NY. His widow died 1 month later, leaving Ingalls, then 13, an orphan, along with his 5 surviving siblings.

In July of this year, there was an all-day singing at the Methodist Church on the Green, Newbury VT to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the publication of *The Christian Harmony*. You can find downloadable (PDF) version of 4 tunes at:
<http://homepage.mac.com/malonet/connexion2/FileSharing2.html>

Various tunes of Ingalls may found in recordings, although there seem to be few or no recordings of *only* Ingalls' work.