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The Hutchinson Family Singers and the Culture of Reform in Antebellum America

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate
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requirements for the degree of Doctor of
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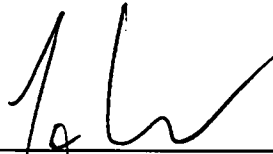
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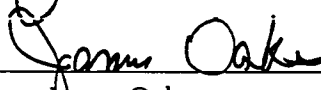
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Prelude



*Mountain minstrels, sweetest singers
Softly float your warbled strains;—
Still the sound about me lingers,
Still the melody remains...*

—“To the Hutchinsons” by Miss L.A. Fiske—¹

The irritating gossip concerning the Hutchinson Family Singers began to circulate once again during the American entertainers’ first foreign tour from the fall of 1845 through the summer of 1846. Their critics waited for the group to leave before launching the assault and, as John, Judson, Asa, and Abby started their trip in the British Isles, rumors commenced concerning the Hutchinsons’ money and principles. The most hurtful accusations came from religious newspapers who had cultivated a fickle rapport with the New Hampshire group. Four years earlier Christian based reform papers turned the musicians into an overnight sensation, yet their coverage of the Hutchinson Family Singers was now fault-finding. Critics questioned the morality of profiting from wholesome songs and also derided the Hutchinsons as immoral simply for being musicians.

Print media dominated the diffusion of information in antebellum America and this particular attention was not welcome in the Hutchinson Family Singers’ camp. One hundred years earlier the local elite in New England were the prime movers of information, but, in the 1840s, an improved transportation network along with the introduction of stereotype printing and steam-powered presses brought about a more rapid and fluid information exchange. The issues that were raised posed questions central to a newspaper’s readership. Occasionally, truth took a back seat. In the Hutchinson Family Singers’ case, the morality of entertainers profiting from both their music and their reform beliefs was put to the test.²

The issue boiled over when reports from England about the Hutchinsons' success reached American shores. The *Western Christian Advocate* maintained that the family collected \$30,000 during their ten-month tour: "We ask, how much of that amount was given by professed christians, merely to hear their irreligious songs, which ought to have been given to the cause of missions, or some other religious object." The musicians, who modeled their career as well as themselves around reform ideals, were stung. Fortunately many supporters came to their defense. "The 'irreligious songs' of the Hutchinsons are more truly christian in their doctrine than ninety-nine hundredths of the pulpit sermons in the land," offered a piece in the *Christian Citizen*. This article continued by discrediting \$30,000 as a ridiculous sum and providing a glowing description of the Hutchinsons' loving, Christian home life. Jesse Hutchinson, Jr., a brother of the Hutchinson Family Singers, endeavored to quiet the dispute by publishing his belief that each member took home no more than five hundred dollars.

There is no record of the Hutchinsons' receipts from this tour, but Asa privately voiced his desire "to earn enough to pay our passage back and have \$1000 each beside." Whether it was \$500, \$1000, or \$7,500 per singer, the entertainers' opponents made a valid point; in a time when laborers were fortunate to earn \$300 per year and middle class Americans brought in roughly \$1000 per year, the Hutchinson Family Singers were clearly wealthy. Six years later John Hutchinson admitted to this fact when he bemoaned that "the reputation of being rich is most trouble to bear." Money, however, was not the root of the Hutchinsons' troubles. Their skeptics were angered that the singers profited from antislavery, temperance, and religious convictions. Ultimately the uproar in 1846 proved harmless and upon their return the Hutchinson Family Singers retained their spiritual sobriquet furnished by Mary Howitt—they remained a "Band of Young Apostles" (see fig. 1).³

THE HUTCHINSON FAMILY

Respectfully announce to their Friends, and the
Citizens of Concord and Vicinity, that they will give a

VOCAL ENTERTAINMENT,

At the Methodist Chapel,

ON FRIDAY EVENING, OCT. 16:

Being their First Appearance in Concord since their
Return from Europe:

When they will introduce a Programme of their New Compositions, with some of their
Old Favorite Productions and Selections, which have been received with approbation
abroad.

PROGRAMME.

PART FIRST.

Quartet.

WE'RE WITH YOU ONCE AGAIN.
We're with you once again, kind friends,
No more our footsteps roam;
Where it began our journey ends.
Ain't the scenes of home, &c.

Quartet.

THE OLD CHURCH BELL.
ARRANGED BY HUTCHINSON.
For full five hundred years I've swung,
In my grey old turret high;
And many a different theme I've sung
As the time went stealing by.

THE INDIAN HUNTER.

WORDS BY ELIZA COOKE—MUSIC BY RUSSELL.
Why does the white man follow my path,
Like the bound on the tiger's track?
Does the flush on my dark cheek waken his
wrath,
Does he covet the bow on my back?
There are rivers and seas, where the billow and
surge
Bear riches for him alone,
And the sons of the wood never plunge in that
flood,
Which the white man calls his own,
Then why should he come to the streams where
none
But the red-skin dares to swim?
Why, why should he wrong the hunter one,
Who never did harm to him?

Quartet.

EXCELSIOR.

WRITTEN BY W. H. LONGFELLOW.

This poem represents the continued aspirations of Gen-
eral. Its motto, "Excelsior" (still higher) is a word
of an ancient tongue. Disregarding the ever and over-
flow of life, the allurements of love, and the warnings of
experience, it presses forward on the solitary path. Even
in death it holds fast its device, and a voice from the air
proclaims the progress of the soul to a higher sphere.
The shades of night were falling fast,
As through an Alpine village passed
A youth who bore, mid snow and ice,
A banner with this strange device—EXCELSIOR!

PART SECOND.

"WESTWARD HO."

WRITTEN BY G. F. MORRIS, ESQ.

A description of the journey of Emigrants across the
Alleghenies.

Drop not, brothers, as we go
Over the mountains westward ho! &c.

Cantata.

THE MAY QUEEN.

First Part.

POETRY BY ALFRED TENNYSON. — MUSIC BY
W. M. DEMETER.

Representing the May Queen full of joyousness and
hope on the eve of May Day.
You must wake and call me early, call me early
mother dear,
To-morrow'll be the happiest day of all the glad
new year.

Quartet.

"THE PAUPER'S FUNERAL"

QUARTET.—THE BRIDGE OF SIGNS.

"Drowned! Drowned!"—Herald.
WORDS BY THE LATE THOMAS HOOD.

One more unfortunate
Went of breath,
Hastily importunate,
Gone to her death.
Take her up tenderly,
Lift her with care;
Fashioned so slenderly,
Young and so fair.

PART THIRD.

QUARTET.—GET OFF THE TRACK.

RAILWAY SONG.

Words composed and adapted to a slave melody ad-
vancing the emancipation of the slave, and illustrating
the cause and progress of the Anti-slavery cause in the
United States.

THERE'S A GOOD TIME COMING.

WORDS BY CHARLES MACKAY.

(The property of H. Russell.)

There's a good time coming, boys,
A good time coming;
We may not live to see the day,
But earth shall glisten in the ray,
Of the good time coming.
Cannon balls may soil the truth,
But thought's a weapon stronger;
We'll win our battle by its aid—
Wait a little longer.

"LET US LOVE ONE ANOTHER."

WORDS BY CHARLES SWAIN. — MELODY BY
DEMETER.

Let us love one another, not long may we stay
In this blank world of mourning;
None droop while 'tis day;
Others fade in the noon and few linger till eve,
Oh there breaks not a heart but leaves some one
to grieve.

The fondest, the purest, the truest that met,
Have still found the need to forgive and forget.
Then, Oh, though the hopes that we nourish de-
cay.

Let us love one another as long as we stay.

FINALE.—OLD GRANITE STATE.

TICKETS 25 cents—to be had at the Bookstores and at Prescott's Music Store.

Doors open at half past Six—Concert to commence at Seven.

Figure 1

HUTCHINSON FAMILY SINGERS' CONCERT BILL FROM 1846

The attacks of 1846 did not stop with the newspapers. The Hutchinson Family Singers' were assaulted from other sources too. Touring far from home in 1845 and 1846 cleared the way for the Hutchinsons' competitors to try their lot. The Harmoneons, the Baker Family, and the Rogers Family were just a few who attempted to capture the eager fans who the Hutchinsons had temporarily abandoned. If there was one thing that the Hutchinsons' absence made clear, it was that they had become the standard for singing families. In 1845, a young Walt Whitman likened a performance of the Cheney Family to the Hutchinson Family Singers. Amazingly, Whitman based this evaluation upon hearsay as he had not yet heard the New Hampshire musicians. Comparisons like Whitman's were pervasive during the Hutchinsons' journey abroad. The Baker Family was declared "a nest of sisters with a brother in it" which was a clear play on Nathaniel Parker Willis's description of the Hutchinson Family Singers as "a nest of brothers with a sister in it." With one exception, no group would near the lofty expectations set by the Hutchinsons before their departure.⁴

The Hutchinson Family Singers expected their cultural competitors to try to fill the void created by their leaving, but the musicians would never have guessed at a rivalry from within their own family. When the group departed, the Home Branch of the Hutchinson Family—consisting of their twin brothers, Joshua and Caleb, along with their brother Zephaniah and their cousin Anne Marvel—debuted. Not only did this faction try to draw attention through their name, they also attempted to recreate the Hutchinson Family Singers' best successes. The Home Branch performed at Sing Sing, the New York prison where only a few years earlier before a visit by John, Asa, Judson, and Abby a huge debate had erupted over the appropriateness of entertaining the delinquent. No doubt to the despair of the Hutchinsons in Europe, prison officials made little distinction between the two visits and

wrote “how grateful they [the prisoners] are for this second blessing.” The Home Branch received critical acclaim, but, in the end, it was generally held that they were “not quite equal to the members of the family now so successfully engaged abroad.”⁵

Totaling all of the praise garnered by the Home Branch, it would not have matched the indignation felt by their more famous siblings. When the Hutchinson Family Singers returned, familial tensions ran high. What Abby and her three brothers did not realize was that the Home Branch supplied them a glimpse of their own future. In just few years, individual members of the Family Singers would clone their own versions of the group by performing with their spouses and children. From 1850 until the end of the century, about four groups—all started by individual members of Hutchinson Family Singers or their offspring—claimed the legacy of the original Hutchinson Family Singers.⁶

On the whole the events of 1845-1846 did not surprise the members of the Hutchinson Family Singers. By this time they were accustomed to the limelight and its accompanying jealousies. Starting in the Hutchinsons’ first full year of performing in 1842 and continuing through the end of the century, every aspect of their lives was scrutinized. Ranging from one line blurbs to articles several pages in length, references to the Hutchinson Family Singers in newspapers and journals were common: “‘What are the Hutchinsons doing?’ is a question which has been asked us repeatedly;” Miss Abby Hutchinson “has a well proportioned and fully developed physical organization...Her phrenological developments are most desirable;” “In short, the entire family possess musical genius of the highest order, both phrenologically and practically;” “Married. In Milford, Feb. 21, by Rev. A. E. Warner, Mr John W. Hutchinson (Aeolian Vocalist) to Miss Francis B. Patch;” “The Hutchinsons had upwards of 1200 persons at their concert in Springfield, last week;” “The Hutchinson Family

instead of having disbanded, as it has been stated, are giving concerts in Boston;" "THE HUTCHINSONS are abroad;" "Madame Rumor says the 'nest of brothers with a sister in it,' the Hutchinsons', is about to lose its bright bud. A son of a New York clergyman is soon to take the hand of 'Abby' in marriage;" "OH, SWEET LITTLE ABBY HUTCHINSON is soon to be married to a rank, crazy abolitionist and thus she will retire to the shades;" "*Abby Hutchinson* is married. 'How many poor hearts she will break!;" "They have become of some note by thrusting themselves into the society of niggers;" "We regret to learn that the 'illness' of Judson Hutchinson, one of the Hutchinson family, is a mind disease;" "Judson Hutchinson, of the Hutchinson Family, has mostly recovered from his insanity;" "The Hutchinson Family—The New York Express says that Judson Hutchinson has not recovered from his insanity. Jesse now is partaking of the same sad calamity. Asa and John are singing in New England. Abby is at home in that city;" "At the foot of the casket stood the old violincello that had for so many thousand times responded to the delicate touch of the fingers now stiff in death;" "Nearly 80, He is said to Have Asked 20-Year-Old Girl to Marry Him—Is Known Nationally as a Singer—Has Much Property."⁷

Today such focused attention on a celebrity's life is commonplace, but the kind of notice that the Hutchinsons, as native born American entertainers, captured in the 1840s was new. Until the emergence of the Hutchinsons Family Singers, foreign-born performers dominated public interest. And even for a popular musician like England's Henry Russell, who toured the United States in the 1830s and 1840s, the increased media coverage in the two decades prior to the Civil War was noticeable. Within the public world of popular entertainers, the Hutchinson Family Singers were in the vanguard of native born American performers. Representing the first truly fashionable group of American family singers, the

Hutchinsons were elevated to fantastic heights by the press. Unlike their rivals in blackface minstrelsy, the Hutchinson Family Singers served as emblems for moral improvement and, to some like Walt Whitman, their stage presence and compositions were infused with an innate Americanness that represented the ordinary people of the democracy. As living symbols of the moral republic in which they were born, the Hutchinson Family Singers were bound to attract much attention. American's fascination with the Hutchinsons went through many phases and did not subside until the group's last remaining member, John, died in 1908.

Toward the end of John's life, attention centered on his status as a relic for singing reformers were an anachronism to music lovers of the 1900s. The new century featured moving pictures, recorded sound, automobiles, and profits in sheet music sales hitherto unseen. Americans were listening to the tunes of "The March King" John Phillip Sousa, to the music of Charles K. Harris (composer of the 1892 hit "After the Ball"), and to Harry Von Tilzer (whose 1905 triumph, "Wait till the Sun Shines, Nellie," became an immediate favorite). It was not unheard of for a popular tune to sell over five million copies. American homes were now filled with musical instruments while enduring cultural institutions supported large orchestras and bands which crowded the nation's concert halls.⁸

John, Asa, Abby, and Judson Hutchinson matured in an entirely different musical era. Besides several blackface minstrels, the only other American-born performer who received widespread appeal was Louis Moreau Gottschalk. Gottschalk, born in 1829 like Abby Hutchinson, was one of the most famous American musicians of the antebellum era. Yet at the age of twelve the pianist left for Paris and proceeded to build his fame in Europe and later, in South America. Gottschalk garnered recognition in the United States only after he caught the attention of foreign audiences. The prejudice of American listeners against performers

without a European pedigree was formidable. Unlike Gottschalk, the Hutchinson Family Singers looked for a way to build and sustain a musical career without leaving their native soil.

Born and raised on farmland in New Hampshire, the Hutchinson Family Singers began their career in earnest in 1841. Eight years later, after the musicians had proved that great fame was possible for American entertainers, the culture industry remained a precarious place to work. In 1849 a twenty-two year-old composer named Stephen Foster, who had already written such tunes as “Oh! Susanna” and “Nelly was a Lady,” failed to make a living from his work. However the Hutchinson Family Singers endured the uncertainty of performing life to capture celebrity and fame. Only Abby’s retirement from the group in 1849 derailed the group’s success. In a time when the majority of Americans lived in the countryside and only urban regions exhibited adequate concert infrastructure, the Hutchinsons blazed a path from the country to the city and delighted their audiences in both places.⁹

IF THE HUTCHINSON FAMILY SINGERS’ decision to tour New England in 1841 was daring, their future success was simply unimaginable. Americans who were successful in music in the early 19th century focused on the production, teaching, and composition of sacred music. A volume of church music first printed in 1822 sold enough copies to make Lowell Mason \$12,000 by 1839. Singing masters and singing schools, virtual spin-offs of the church, proliferated throughout the country, especially in rural New England. Christian organizations represented the first major institutional support of the arts in America and efforts to improve the singing inside church led to significant cultural missions in many communities. The Baptist church in Milford, New Hampshire, for example, sponsored much of the musical education for all of the brothers and sisters in the Hutchinson family. The intimate connection the nation shared

with Christianity bred definitive results. Most importantly, church singing taught Americans how to perform music and even how to read music. Creating a musically literate republic laid the foundation for the musical explosion of the 1840s and 1850s.

The pervasiveness of sacred music ensured that it would largely dictate the form and function of antebellum popular music. Hymn tunes became the foundation for many music styles of the 1830s and 1840s. Henry Russell found he could captivate listeners in the United States by using religious tunes as the basis for his popular songs. He made this discovery while playing organ in a church in Rochester, New York:

It was that sacred music played quickly makes the best kind of secular music. It was quite by accident, that, playing the 'Old Hundredth' very fast, I produced the air of 'Get out o' de way, Ole Dan Tucker,' this was the first of a good many minstrel songs that I composed or rather adapted, from hymn tunes played quickly. Among them are 'Lucy Long,' 'Ober de Mountain,' and 'Buffalo Girls.'

Familiarity with a melody helped popularize a song simply through recognition. Since many religious tunes were ingrained in American minds, sacred music, as Russell discovered, was an accessible source for secular songs.¹⁰

The near universal presence of sacred melodies in American life provided the country with a basic musical language. Any composer who wished to write a memorable secular piece did well if the work was founded upon a church melody. The negative side of the close relationship between sacred and secular music was that the morality of music productions performed outside of church would be severely questioned. Russell recalled that "the cultivation of music for the masses was looked upon, with the exception of sacred music, with distrust and prejudice." A discomfort with entertainment persisted along a secular and sacred division well into the late nineteenth century. There was a tendency for this uneasiness to be stronger in towns rather than in cities. A young woman from Dorchester, Massachusetts,

Anna Quincy Thaxter, attended many performances of music—including those by the Hutchinsons—but when asked by a friend to attend a play in 1846 she declined and recorded in her diary that she was “still somewhat undecided about the theatre.” Living in a city, Margaret Fuller was more bold and scoffed New England’s religious founders: “What would the Puritan fathers say, if they could see our bill of fare here in Boston for the winter? The concerts, the opera dancing, which have taken place of their hundred headed sermons, how would they endure.” As the Hutchinson Family Singers realized, these uncertainties impeded, but hardly prevented Americans from attending cultural functions.¹¹

The fears surrounding entertainment were lifted by strong currents that swept through antebellum America. The first came in the form of revivalism. The Second Great Awakening introduced Americans to music and dramatic acts within a devout setting. Cultural productions, such as singing, were authenticated as wholesome through their association with these grand religious exhibitions. Revivalism set in motion the acceptance of a particular type of cultural offering; pious themes would pervade the cultural landscape whether offered in a sacred or a secular work. It was no coincidence that newspapers found “the marked characteristic” of the Hutchinson Family Singers to be “true refinement, which a pure moral and religious family influence has exerted.” And when boisterous political parades and demonstrations brought another type of mass entertainment to antebellum Americans these events were inundated with talk of God and morality.

Emerging out of the perfectionist impulses of revivalism, antebellum reform movements further validated cultural productions for many Americans. Reforms such as temperance and antislavery infused secular entertainment with sacred elements. The many voices of antebellum reform continued the advance of human perfectionism espoused by

revivalism and created organizations within which artists from poets to musicians gained invaluable opportunities for expression. Without the infrastructure of antislavery and temperance, the Hutchinsons could not have broken into a musical circuit dominated by European performers. The Hutchinson Family Singers' connection to reform also bestowed an air of appropriateness upon their cultural work; New Hampshire's premier antislavery paper claimed that the Hutchinsons' "music would ruin them, but for the chastening influence of our glorious enterprise." Temperance and antislavery provided the Hutchinsons with song material that helped explain what it meant to be a socially conscious American in the 1840s. Much as sermons had functioned at earlier moments in American history, reform rhetoric set the tone for culture in antebellum America.¹²

Despite the Hutchinsons' reform associations there were always critics who whispered in the background of the group's successes about the impropriety of their music. It was a criticism that surfaced from time to time, as in 1846, when it was asked: is it moral to make money by marketing reform messages? Can you rightly be considered a "good" Christian and profit from the sacred overtones of your song? As the Hutchinson Family Singers and many others blurred the divide separating sacred from secular entertainment, the situation was never really clear. Christian themes dominated antebellum culture and the narrowed gap between sacred and secular entertainment made popular cultural endeavors agreeable to antebellum audiences. In literature and music, it was the artists who captured middle class listeners by incorporating the breadth of antebellum reform and its reinterpretation of Christian perfectionism into their works who achieved the greatest success. In this, the Hutchinson Family Singers had no rival.¹³

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CULTURAL PRODUCTIONS in the first twenty-five years of nineteenth century and the next twenty-five is one of range and scale. Concerts in the early nineteenth century were confined to urban areas, although the vast majority of Americans lead rural lives. In the countryside, performance space was limited, travel was difficult, and large, consistent audiences were hard to secure. Here music persisted in churches and in groups like choirs and singing schools, created to develop music for worship. The 1840s hosted a staggering number and variety of entertainments compared to the start of the century. By 1850, whether one lived in the city or the country, concerts, plays, novels, and other cultural activities were easily found.

The veritable explosion in cultural productions was intimately tied to the deepening relationship of urban markets to the countryside. A key to the Hutchinsons' success was their ability to attract audiences in both city and country. Their capacity to bring messages of a moral home life into American parlors made them different from other entertainers, especially blackface minstrels whose initial popularity was based upon the urban working class. As rural Americans negotiated the values and ideas that originated with the development of an urban middle class, the Hutchinson Family Singers performed songs that spoke to this new group of cultural consumers.

The Hutchinsons have been categorized as antislavery singers and as genteel musicians. In reality they were more. The work of the New Hampshire musicians was shaped by ideas concerning nature, family, religion, reform, and sentiment, the very issues and notions around which the antebellum middle class rallied. While their music was shaped by these values, the Hutchinsons also taught northerners what it meant to be a member of the newly formed middle class. By focusing on themes and ideas central to many Americans, the

Hutchinson Family Singers endeared themselves to a nation changed by new means of transportation, new types of industry, and new kinds of social, cultural, and intellectual interactions.¹⁴

The remarkable rise of the Hutchinson Family Singers from the backwoods of New Hampshire to fame and riches indicated the mobility, equality, and opportunity that many believed lay at the heart of the early American republic. As musicians and reformers, they labored at the center of a great phenomenon of their time—the transformation of American culture from a limited urban setting to a Northern (and, perhaps, even national) scale, an unprofitable enterprise to a thriving business, and from the periphery of American society to its contested and vital core. Politicians, revival leaders, and temperance reformers had all used music to broadcast their message. The Hutchinsons picked up where they left off and turned song into a viable force for antislavery and for the middle class. On this journey the musicians from New Hampshire established a new space for civic action, a place for socially active cultural production that stood at the intersection of culture, reform, and the market in antebellum America.

The narrative within these pages traces the Hutchinson Family Singers—John, Asa, Abby, and Judson—through the nineteenth century as they explored and shaped new openings in American cultural life. From New Hampshire to New York, from temperance to antislavery, from revivals to political parades, and from a group of aspiring musical brothers to wealthy entertainers, the Hutchinson Family Singers' saga reveals an important transformation in the nineteenth century. Ralph Waldo Emerson looked at the world surrounding him and recorded the revolution: "We are in a world for culture."¹⁵

“THE HUTCHINSON FAMILY SINGERS and the Culture of Reform in Antebellum America” combines biography, music history, and cultural history. First, it is a biography of the Hutchinson Family Singers and thus depicts the siblings’ relationships with family, friends, and rivals. Stories about the Hutchinson Family Singers were first reported by newspapers and journals in the 1840s. *The Book of Brothers or the History of the Hutchinson Family* (1852) by Asa Hutchinson was the first of several biographical works produced by members of the group and their immediate family. This forty-seven page book was published to correct “statements with no foundation on facts” that had turned up in the press and it was sold at Hutchinson concerts. This rather glowing narrative of the singing family spans their beginnings on the family farm in Milford, N.H., up until 1850. John Wallace Hutchinson published what he felt was the next volume in the series with *The Book of Brothers (Second Series) Being A History of the Adventures of John W. Hutchinson and His Family in the Camps of the Army of the Potomac* (1864). These two publications form the foundation of many of the subsequent works on the Hutchinson Family Singers. A brother of the Hutchinsons, Joshua, added *A Brief Narrative of the Hutchison Family* in 1876 which offers interesting personal insight into all of the family members. John Hutchinson drew upon his brothers’ publications and his own then suspect memory when writing his *Story of the Hutchinsons (Tribe of Jesse)* in 1896. This colossal two-volume memoir, which includes numerous letters and newspaper articles, was also based upon the author’s journal which has been lost for some time.

Continuing along the line of the Hutchinsons as a group from the “land of applesauce and greens” who, due to their natural love of freedom, became singers for antislavery, were two works in the mid-1940s: Carol Brink’s *Harps in the Wind* and Philip D. Jordan’s *Singin’ Yankees*. Both relied heavily upon the interpretations set forth in publications by the

Hutchinson family, especially John's memoirs. Brink held that the Hutchinson Family Singers unflinchingly defended a worthy vision of patriotism that included African Americans, Native Americans, and immigrants. It was not until 1989, with Dale Cockrell's publication of *Excelsior: Journals of the Hutchinson Family Singers, 1842-1846*, that a fresh look at the Hutchinsons emerged. This annotated presentation of the Hutchinson Family Singers' personal accounts over the course of four years provided depth and introduced conflict to the entertainers which had previously been muted. Building upon Cockrell's work, the narrative provided in the following pages offers a slightly different understanding of the Hutchinsons. It explores a group who, in the words of Philip Jordan, "so perfectly represent their times." In doing so, it unveils a far more complex portrait of the four musicians. The members of the Hutchinson Family Singers were abolitionists, temperance advocates, entertainers, musicians, brothers, sisters, fathers, and mothers; more than anything else, they were human.¹⁶

Second, this work is a music history that explains why Americans suddenly valued music in the 1840s. While sacred music dominated in the early part of the century, by mid-century what many would deem a secular sound was a central part of middle class life. Formerly consigned to urban regions and the church, music was now crucial to the rural and urban middle class. I argue that this secular sound was worldly only in that it was music taken out of a church setting. Antebellum Americans preferred moral and Godly themes in their songs; material that helped buttress a growing ideal surrounding the sanctity of domestic life.

Recently, scholarly attention has focused on role of blackface minstrels in antebellum America. Minstrelsy's working class origins along with its racial implications have captured the imagination of Robert Toll, Eric Lott, William Mahar, and even the editor of the Hutchinson Family Singers' journals, Dale Cockrell. These authors have greatly enhanced

our understanding of the social and cultural workings of music within antebellum America, but they have only filled in part of the story with their focus on this type of musical theater. It was popular songs and the various musicians who performed them (which included a noticeable shift toward more genteel offerings by blackface minstrels in the mid-1840s) that captured the majority of American listeners in the decades before the Civil War. In *High-Minded and Low-Down: Music in the Lives of Americans, 1800-1861* (2000), Nicholas Tawa undertook the difficult task of explaining the role of “music in the lives of people.” This dissertation sets out to accomplish a similar task through an examination of one of the most popular groups of singers in antebellum America.¹⁷

Third, the Hutchinson Family Singers’ struggles and triumphs highlight an important cultural transformation that was intertwined with social and economic changes. “Because sound was so embedded in the various fabrics of antebellum U.S. life and consciousness,” writes Mark Smith, “we must listen as much to the economic and the political as to the cultural if we are to begin to recover the principal meanings that lay in their articulation.” During the first half of the nineteenth century most Americans lived in rural regions. Any truly significant transformation in the antebellum era had to resonate in the country as well as the city. By the 1840s music accomplished this on a large scale. A significant body of literature documents the economic and social changes that rippled throughout antebellum America. The Hutchinsons’ rise to fame demonstrates the consequence of one other important transformation that is only beginning to receive its due: the cultural enlightenment of the countryside.

Industrialization, along with the furthering of a market economy, increased the links of the rural north to urban centers, turning many towns into suburbs. This process, intimately

related to urbanization, pushed Americans to redefine their understanding of the world in which they lived. New relations of class developed throughout the nation. The creation of an American middle class, spawned in cities and gradually adapted to the country, brought the finishing touches of a cultural enlightenment to the rural North. Music was integral to this cultural revolution since it was well suited to the wants and needs of rural Americans. Country dwellers preferred songs and novels for their moral messages and welcomed music as a sign of sophistication and as a means to state representative values that were vital to both the rural and urban middle class. Easier to replicate than urban fashion and social gatherings, music was transferable into rural homes. Here, groups of friends gathered around a parlor piano which soon became a domestic symbol central to middle class status.

Americans would have likely found alternative ways to express and shape their new social and economic situations had they not been prepared for mass entertainment by events in religion, politics, and reform. The drama and sounds of revivals, political processions, and temperance and antislavery meetings helped Americans, who were hesitant to embrace music and theater due to their religious conscience, accept that entertainment could be both pious and amusing. The Hutchinsons' lives were touched deeply by all of these events and their story explains how the widespread acceptance of music in the homes of Americans ensured music's status as a national ritual. Using the infrastructure of antislavery and of temperance, the Hutchinson Family Singers were able to make a name for themselves. The group was crafted into truly American musicians by their adherence to these American concerns and then followed a path through New England's countryside already worn by revival preachers and lyceum speakers.¹⁸

By documenting all of these themes as they pertained to the lives of the Hutchinson Family Singers, this is a work of cultural history. Music is a powerful means of communication. The account of the Hutchinson Family Singers that follows explains why this was true for antebellum Americans.

Notes

- ¹ L.A. Fiske, "Letter to the Editor," *Salem Register*, 1845, in Wadleigh Memorial Public Library, Milford, N.H., Hutchinson Family Singers Collection, Box 1, Item 2 (hereafter WMPL 1,2).
- ² Richard D. Brown, *Knowledge is Power: The Diffusion of Information in Early America, 1700-1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 35. Robert Laurence Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 3-39.
- ³ *Western Christian Advocate* cited in "Profitable Singing," *AntiSlavery Bugle (Salem)*, WMPL 1, 4. \$30,000 in 1846 is equivalent to approximately \$693,009.78 in the year 2001, see *Economic History Services*, 3 Oct. 2001 <<http://www.eh.net/ehresources/howmuch/dollarq.php>>. *Christian Citizen*, WMPL 1, 4. Jesse in *Lynn Pioneer*, WMPL 1, 3. Asa Hutchinson, "London—Monday, February 9, 1846," *Excelsior: Journals of the Hutchinson Family Singers, 1842-1846*, ed. Dale Cockrell (Stuyvesant: Pendragon Press, 1986), 343. Stuart Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 109-110. John Hutchinson, "8 Aug 1851," *Excelsior*, 383. Mary Howitt, "To the Hutchinson Family," *Little's Living Age* 9.108 (6 June 1846): 455. *New York Tribune*, WMPL 1, 4.
- ⁴ "N.H. Vocalists," *The Nashua Gazette*, 9 Oct. 1845. Vera Brodsky Lawrence, "Obligato: 1845;" "Obligato: 1846," *Strong on Music: The New York Music Scene in the Days of George Templeton Strong* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1988), 1:347-348, 411. Walt Whitman, "Art-Singing and Heart-Singing," *Broadway Journal*, 29 Nov. 1845, 318-19 in Lawrence, 348. David S. Reynolds, "'I Hear America Singing': Walt Whitman and the Music of his Time," <<http://www.americancomposers.org/whitman2.htm>> 11 April 2002 (1999). *Mirror* cited in Lawrence, 349. Lizzie Chace to Mr. Isaiah C. Ray, New Bedford, 31 May 1846, Slavery in the United States Collection, Box 1 Folder 5, Manuscript Division, American Antiquarian Society. "Letters from the Capital," *The National Era*, 18 Mar. 1852, 46.
- ⁵ "The Hutchinsons," *Home Journal* article in WMPL 1, 2. E.W. Farnham to John Edmonds, *New York Tribune*, April 1846, in John Hutchinson, *Story of the Hutchinsons*, ed. Charles E. Mann (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1896), 2: 316. "The 'Home Branch' of the Hutchinson Family," WMPL 1,1.
- ⁶ *The Original Hutchinson Family: "Tribes of John & Jesse" and Miss Jenniebelle Neal* (n.p.: C. A. Shaw and H. J. Hutchinson, 1881). John Wallace Hutchinson, *A History of the Adventures of John W. Hutchinson and His Family in the Army of the Potomac* (Boston: S. Chism, 1864). *Quarter of a Century's Career of the Hutchinson Family: First Family of Organized Vocalists in America* (n.p., 1865?).
- ⁷ Mary Howitt, "What are the Hutchinsons Doing," *Howitt's Journal*, WMPL 1, 8; "Miss Abby Hutchinson," *Phrenological Almanac* (Jan. 1848), WMPL 1, 8; *American Phrenological Journal* (June 1847), WMPL 1, 7; "Married," WMPL 1, 9; "The Hutchinsons," WMPL 1, 9; "The Hutchinson Family," WMPL 1, 9; "THE HUTCHINSONS," WMPL 1, 9; "Madame Rumor," WMPL Box 1 Item 12; "OH, SWEET," WMPL, Box 1 Item 14; "Abby Hutchinson," WMPL 1, 24; "Garrison's Nigger Minstrels," *New York Sunday*, WMPL 1, 32; "We regret," WMPL 1, 36; "Judson Hutchinson," WMPL 1, 35; "The Hutchinson Family," WMPL 1, 37; "It is Jesse Hutchinson," WMPL 1, 38; "Funeral of Asa B.

Hutchinson," *Glencoe Register*, 4 Dec. 1884, WMPL 2, 88; *Boston Morning Post*, 16 July 1900, WMPL 3, 128.

⁸ David S. Reynolds, "I Hear America Singing." Gilbert Chase, *America's Music From Pilgrims to the Present*, rev. 3rd ed. (Urbana: University of Chicago, 1987), 337-339.

⁹ Ken Emerson, *Doo Dah! Stephen Foster and the Rise of American Popular Culture* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1998), 42-44, 137-139. S. Frederick Starr, *Bam Boula! The Life and Times of Louis Moreau Gottschalk* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 44-96.

¹⁰ Richard Crawford, *The American Musical Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). Henry Russell, *Cheer, Boys, Cheer!* (London: John Macqueen, 1895), 148.

¹¹ Russell, 69. Anna Quincy Thaxter Diary, 26 Oct. 1846, Anna Quincy Thaxter Cushing Papers, 1816-1932, Manuscript Collection, Octavo 4, American Antiquarian Society. Margaret Fuller, "Entertainments of this Past Winter," *The Dial* (July 1842): 46. This sentiment was shared by a number of Transcendentalists. John S. Dwight wrote: "The sublime sincerity of that wintry energy of self-denial having for the most part passed away, and the hearts of the descendants of the Pilgrims having become opened to all worldly influences, why should not they also be visited by the heavenly corrective of holy, enchanting music, which is sure to call forth and to nourish germs of loftier affection." Dwight, "Music," in *Aesthetic Papers*, ed. Elizabeth Peabody (1849; Gainesville: Scholars' Facsimiles, 1971), 64-110.

¹² "Editor's Book Table," *The Lady's Book* 28 (March 1844): 150. David S. Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988). "The New-Hampshire Rainers," *Herald of Freedom*, 1844, in *Quarter of a Century's Career of the Hutchinson Family*, 4. Sacvan Bercovitch, *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975); *The American Jeremiad* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978).

¹³ Reynolds, *Beneath*, 3-11, 16, 92-134.

¹⁴ This is similar to trends in other cultural endeavors as well, see Donald Scott, "Itinerant Lecturers and Lecturing in New England, 1800-1850," in *Itinerancy in New England and New York*, ed. Peter Benes (Boston: Boston University, 1986), 65. Ronald G. Walters, "The Mass Media and Popular Culture," in *Encyclopedia of the United States in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Stanley Kutler (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1996), 4:1462. Emerson, 43. Bluford Adams, *E Pluribus Barnum: The Great Showman & The Making of U.S. Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 2. *The Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformation: Essays in the Social History of Rural America*, ed. Steven Hahn and Jonathan Prude (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1985). Stuart Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class*. Charles Grier Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Knopf, 1992). Catherine E. Kelly, *In the New England Fashion: Reshaping Women's Lives in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999). Robert A. Gross, "Transcendentalism and Urbanism: Concord, Boston, and the Wider World," *Journal of American Studies* 18:3 (1984): 361-381. David Jaffee, "The Village Enlightenment in New England, 1760-1820," *William and Mary Quarterly* 47:3 (July 1990): 327-346.

¹⁵ Ralph Waldo Emerson cited in John Byron Wilson, "Activities of the New England Transcendentalists in the Dissemination of Culture," (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1941), 6.

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- ¹⁶ Asa Burnham Hutchinson, *The Book of Brothers or the History of the Hutchinson Family* (New York: Published by and for the Hutchinson Family, 1852). John W. Hutchinson, *The Book of Brothers (Second Series) Being A History of the Adventures of John W. Hutchinson and His Family in the Camps of the Army of the Potomac* (Boston: S. Chism, 1864). Joshua Hutchinson, *A Brief Narrative of the Hutchinson Family. Sixteen Sons and Daughters of the "Tribe of Jesse"* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1876). John Wallace Hutchinson, *Story of the Hutchinsons (Tribe of Jesse)*, ed. Charles E. Mann, 2 vols. (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1896). Carol Brink *Harps in the Wind* (New York: Macmillan, 1947). Philip D. Jordan, *Singin' Yankees* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1946), iv, 1-21. *Excelsior: Journals of the Hutchinson Family Singers, 1842-1846*, ed. Dale Cockrell (Stuyvesant: Pendragon Press, 1989). For more works on the Hutchinson Family Singers see: *Quarter of a Century's Career of the Hutchinson Family: First Family of Organized Vocalists in America* (n.p., 1865?). *The Original Hutchinson Family "Tribes of John & Jesse" and Jenniebell Neal* (n.p., C. A. Shaw and H. J. Hutchinson, 1881). *The Seventieth Birthday Anniversary of John W. Hutchinson, (Tribe of John and Jesse) at Tower Cottage, High Rock, Lynn, Mass.* (Lynn: The Nichols Press, 1891). *Celebration of the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Incorporation of Milford, New Hampshire, June 26, 1894* (Milford: Cabinet Print, 1894). George A. Ramsdell, *The History of Milford* (Concord: The Rumford Press, 1901) 478-489. Robert Gerald McMurtry, "Lincoln and The Hutchinson Family Singers," *Lincoln Herald* 46.4 (Dec. 1944).
- ¹⁷ Richard Crawford and others, *American Sacred Imprints* (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1990). Crawford, *The American Musical Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); *American Musical Life* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2001). Robert Toll, *Blacking Up: the Minstrel Show in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974). Eric Lott, *Love & Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). William J. Mahar, *Behind the Burnt Cork Mask: Early Blackface Minstrelsy and Antebellum American Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999). Dale Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder: Early Blackface Minstrels and Their World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Nicholas E. Tawa, *High-Minded and Low-Down: Music in the Lives of Americans, 1800-1861* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2000).
- ¹⁸ Mark M. Smith, *Listening to Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 7. Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978). Robert A. Gross, "Transcendentalism and Urbanism: Concord, Boston, and the Wider World," *Journal of American Studies* 18.3 (1984): 361-381. *The Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformation: Essays in the Social History of Rural America*, ed. Steven Hahn and Jonathan Prude (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1985). Michael T. Gilmore, introduction to *American Romanticism and the Marketplace* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 1-17. Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg, *Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1988). John R. Stilgoe, *Borderland: Origins of the American Suburb, 1820-1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988). David S. Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988). Stuart Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990). Charles Grier Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). David Jaffee, "The Village Enlightenment in New England, 1760-1820," *William and Mary*

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CONTENTS

PRELUDE	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	xxvii
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	xxxix
PART FIRST	1
PART SECOND	83
PART THIRD	132
PART FOURTH	188
FINALE	259
BIBLIOGRAPHY	293

ILLUSTRATIONS

PRELUDE

1. Hutchinson Family Singers' Concert Bill, 1846	vii

PART FIRST

1. Danvers Anti-Slavery Commemorative Meeting	4
2. Advertisement for John Hutchinson in the 1890s	16
3. Garrison in Danger	27
4. John Hutchinson	69
5. Frederick Douglass	69

PART SECOND

1. Polly Leavitt Hutchinson	88
2. Jesse Hutchinson	91
3. Judson Hutchinson	106
4. John Hutchinson, c. 1843	108
5. Abby Hutchinson	110

PART THIRD

1. Concert at East Wilton	138
2. Hutchinsons' Concert Bill, September 1842	152
3. Hutchinson Family Singers' Sheet Music Cover	180

PART FOURTH

1. Baltimore's Washington Monument	190
2. Lyrics for "Get Off the Track!," <i>Liberator</i> , April 10, 1844	205
3. Review of "Get Off the Track!," <i>Liberator</i> , April 11, 1844	208
4. "Get Off the Track!"	209
4a. Close-up of "Get Off the Track" Cover	210
5. "The Bereaved Slave Mother"	214
6. Price List for Hutchinson Family Singers' Sheet Music	232
7. "The Old Granite State" from Jacques & Brothers	235
8. "The Old Granite State" with cover lithograph	236
9. "The Spider and the Fly"	238
10. Hutchinson Family Singers' Sheet Music Cover	243

FINALE

1. A Farewell Performance from the Hutchinson Family	260
2. T. D. Rice in London	262
3. Hutchinson Family Singers' Announcement from 1846 foreign tour	265
4. Cartoon from <i>Turner's Comic Almanac for 1848</i>	270
5. John Hutchinson's Home at High Rock, Lynn, Massachusetts	277
6. Ad for Judson Hutchinson and Family	279
7. Ad for the Tribe of Asa	280
8. Ad for the Tribe of John	281

Part First



Those were inspiring days. I look back lovingly upon them; and I find it very hard to realize that so much of it has passed into oblivion, and that whatever remains is merely the cold record of history.

—Lydia Maria Child, 1880—

Everybody now is anti-slavery. It is honorable now to be a child of the man who 'cast the first anti-slavery vote in our town;' or called 'our first anti-slavery meeting;' or first entertained Garrison as guest, or Abby Kelley, or Frederick Douglass... Everybody now is an abolitionist, or son, or grandson of an anti-slavery parentage, and so all seem to claim equal honor, so far as honor is due, for ridding the world of the sublimest scourge and curse that ever afflicted the human race.

—Parker Pillsbury, 1884—¹

DANVERS, MASSACHUSETTS, 1893

The air temperature was around 44 degrees, normal for an April day in the Bay State. A chilly morning of arrivals and greetings gave way to reception lunches that set the stage for the afternoon's reunion. At one o'clock long-lost friends and former rivals shared pleasantries which reverberated through the warm air inside of Town Hall. It was 1893, Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation had aged thirty years and, now, over one hundred and fifty people gathered in Danvers, Massachusetts, to relive the excitement of days since past. The meeting began with a clamor and confusion often associated with remarkable get-togethers. To honor lives well spent as abolitionists, the guests had come from far and wide. But before celebrating their role in ridding the nation of slavery, the reunion's most prominent posed for a picture. The photographing took more time than the planners had anticipated—a frenzied air swept over the room. Only the efforts of William T. Clark of the Soule Photograph Company, who politely coerced the chatty visitors to stand for the photo, saved the day. With one last rush, all were positioned to be in the print.²

A flash arced over the men and women poised before the camera and the moment was secured for future generations. Clark's final product is masterful, capturing the congratulatory spirit and the chaos of the event—certainly no mean feat considering the circumstances (see fig. 1). What will be seen is humorous and earnest. The men and women in the photograph stand in two rows, with the row in back placed on a riser. In front of the first row sits a large arrangement of flowers in the middle of which are two larger-than-life portraits—one of William Lloyd Garrison, the other of Reverend Samuel Joseph May. Two more large portraits loom as bookends for the first row; on the left, Charles Sumner, and, on the right, John Greenleaf Whittier. Behind the attendees a very large American flag (presumably the 44-star flag that became official in 1891) envelopes most of those pictured in its folds. A light drops from the ceiling in front of the flag with two fixtures forming a cross over the guests, a shape that is accentuated by the way the flag is tied to three supports. Floating above their heads, the light's white circular sconces hover as halos. Indeed this is a saintly bunch, for these men and women represent the final vestiges of the antislavery vanguard.³

The haste of the endeavor is established by (at least) five blurred images in a picture holding forty-three people. Somehow one woman's name was lost, perhaps never recorded amidst the confusion. All of the activity was too much for Alfred F. Masury, the young boy caught in the foreground. Alfred turned back toward the photographer with a thrill of expectation—having watched all the people trying to situate, he didn't know what would come next. A minute after the picture taking, it is easy to imagine him a bit disappointed in his discovery that all of the excitement was just for a photograph. When the guests broke



Figure 1
DANVERS ANTI-SLAVERY COMMEMORATIVE MEETING
Photo from *Old Anti-Slavery Days* (1893)
(Courtesy of The Library Company of Philadelphia)

from modeling and began a five-hour discourse on how important their lives have been, Alfred's distress probably reached a new high.

The function was the Anti-Slavery Commemorative Meeting sponsored by the Danvers Historical Society. Its members gathered to recall America's "Second Revolution"—the freeing of the slaves—understood by everyone in attendance as a continuation of America's First Revolution.⁴ William Lloyd Garrison, Jr., Parker Pillsbury, Lucy Stone, and George Putnam were just a few of the notables captured in the picture. It was quite a diverse group, made more interesting by the choice of portraits which surrounded them. The four men evoked through portrait represented a character that the conventioners, reformers famous in their own right, deemed particularly worthy of remembrance. A prophet, a preacher, a politician, and a poet—Garrison, May, Sumner, and Whittier. These four waged their antislavery battles in very different arenas and occasionally against one another. In 1893 the Danvers commemorators advanced the idea that each had been vital to the success of the movement.

William Lloyd Garrison glares out from an oval print centered prominently before the first row in the photograph. It is an appropriate position for the noted advocate as few would contest his placement within the pantheon of great American reformers. Garrison's was a legacy secured long before the slaves were freed. His public life began with his antislavery conversion in 1828 and continued as he placed his stamp on antebellum society through his newspaper, *The Liberator*, and through his stewardship of important antislavery organizations. The impeccably dressed and well-mannered Bostonian had quickly developed into one of the high priests of American reform by 1831.

Antislavery located Garrison in the annals of American history, but he espoused many progressive causes of the era. Pacifism and women's rights were particularly dear to his heart and the unyielding editor rarely sacrificed one reform for the sake of another. When the issue surrounding women in the leadership ranks troubled the international antislavery movement in 1839 and 1840, Garrison stood firm in his belief that women were vital to the cause. This was the positive side of Garrison's idealism. His obstinacy made him equally infamous by creating multiple rifts. Garrison's refusal to work through the nation's political system—he held that slavery unavoidably corrupted politics—was legendary. This position rankled many influential antislavery advocates. Yet the Boston editor remained steadfast throughout his career, arguing that moral suasion—appealing directly to people and trying to change the way that they thought—offered the best alternative to the ballot box or violence. Garrison's belief in this principle separated him from many friends when the climate shifted during the 1840s and 1850s as antislavery eventually mixed with national politics.

Emancipation not only freed the slaves, it justified Garrison's cause and quieted his critics. One writer portrayed him as an antislavery bigot while acknowledging that "the future generation will look upon his severity of character, his bigotry, as we look upon the same faults in the grand men who laid the foundations of this republic—as spots upon the reputation of one the noblest men that ever lived." Following the war the reformer was heralded more often as a hero than a heretic. His death in 1879 further enhanced a legacy that was recorded in a biography written by his sons Wendell and Francis in 1885. Of all the portraited men in the Danvers' picture, the reputation of Garrison needed the least

stoking in 1893. At the convention he was represented by progeny as well as portrait. His significance to antislavery secured by deed and publicity, Garrison's commemoration was more a ritual than an announcement.⁵

Customary reverence was not guaranteed for the three remaining figures chosen to share the spotlight in the Danvers photo. The Reverend Samuel Joseph May was a Harvard graduate connected to Boston's elite circles by kin. He left this comfortable social network to join forces with William Garrison and campaign against slavery. Already considered a radical when he formed the Brooklyn Temperance Society in 1828 at his church in Brooklyn, Connecticut, the Unitarian preacher completely alienated himself by promoting antislavery in the early 1830s. Eventually there were only two churches in the greater Boston area that allowed May the pulpit, both headed by antislavery sympathizers. It was from one of these pulpits that the ordinarily genial May thundered out his "Discourse on Slavery in the United States" in 1831. This sermon catapulted the minister to the front line of antislavery.

From this vantage point—estranged from family and church, but at home among reformers—May lived the rest of his life. With an undying gleam in his brown eyes, he demonstrated that he cared more for his sense of right than he did anything else. May once invited a black family to move up to the front pew of his church (as their number had outgrown the pew reserved for them in back) to the consternation of his white listeners. At a church in Haverhill rocks flew through the windows and the locals readied a canon while May calmly led his antislavery listeners to safety. He fought valiantly for the abolitionist cause throughout the 1830s and became Garrison's closest friend—performing the editor's

marriage in 1834 and providing him counsel throughout his life. But after two decades of antislavery crusading, years of unfulfilled activism boiled over when May broke his vow of non-violence to ensure the freedom of a fugitive slave named Jerry McHenry. May led the unarmed mob which stormed the Syracuse prison in which McHenry was being held in 1851. This placed him at odds with Garrison, yet unlike many who fell from grace in William Lloyd Garrison's eyes, May was able to salvage their relationship. The portraits of these two friends stood side-by-side on the Danvers stage, each with its own light casting a soft shadow on the surrounding reformers.⁶

The charged environment that tried May's pacifist convictions also opened a space for antislavery politics on a national level. Of the four portraits on display in Danvers, only two of the men dedicated themselves to political action. The divide between the adherents of moral suasion and those who sought redress through politics was considerable. The debate, which really heated up toward the end of 1839, was not resolved until the Civil War made clear that the federal government would play a large role in emancipation. During the intervening years there were several attempts to solidify support for a political party based upon antislavery, but the national political scene was not saturated with antislavery advocates until the 1850s.

One of the most significant antislavery political figures is found on the left side of the Danvers picture. Here sits the youthful likeness of Charles Sumner with flowing hair parted on his right side. Since Sumner's was the only portrait of the four framed with a light color, one's eye follows a line of white beards until it rests on his angled picture, crowned with a wreath, highlighting the left side of the photograph. Sumner fought on

behalf of the slave on a national level starting when Massachusetts sent him to the Senate for the first time in 1851. The historical record remembers Sumner best as the victim of South Carolina Representative Preston Brooks' fierce caning in 1856. This episode introduced vigilante justice so often associated with slaveholders into the genteel and gentlemanly quarters of Congress, making Sumner a martyr in the North and Brooks a celebrity in the South. It is easy to understand the Danvers organizers' choices of Garrison, May, and Sumner. They had always been considered vital actors in the history of anti-slavery. The final portrait selection, however, was a bit more curious.⁷

John Greenleaf Whittier, the "poet laureate for the abolitionist cause," never did look like a hardened and impassioned reformer. His tall and slender frame housed "delicate features, eyes of fiery black, and a quick, nervous manner." While everyone probably recognized his small portrait placed on the right side of the stage, Whittier had not been a very public face within antislavery reform. Many reports found him, if anything, "exceedingly bashful in general society." This affliction was accentuated by Whittier's hypochondria and worsened by real maladies, including near-blindness. His reclusiveness was not a terrible burden for a writer, but it was for an abolitionist-turned-political-activist. Yet no one at the Danvers convention looked at his portrait and saw a weak man. Whittier may have been frail in body, but anyone who had ever read his poetry quickly forgot his physical shortcomings and found a daring, emotional reformer.

The Quaker poet linked up with antislavery in 1833 at the insistence of William Lloyd Garrison. Attending the first meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society in Philadelphia, Whittier, along with Garrison and May, sat on the sub-committee charged

with composing the Declaration of Sentiments. From this moment on Whittier's writings, a blend of moral sentiment and religious themes, earned him the moniker "preacher-poet." One of his first compositions for the cause, "Our Countrymen in Chains!," quickly developed into the centerpiece for the American Anti-Slavery Society's broadside campaign. It began:

OUR FELLOW COUNTRYMEN IN CHAINS!
SLAVES—in a land of light and law!
SLAVES—crouching on the very plains
Where rolled the storm of Freedom's war!

His lines appealed to the "sons of the Revolution," a generation struggling to live up to the promise and deeds of their fathers and grandfathers who fought for America's liberation. Nothing stirred this group more than pointing out declension in a nation "where rolled the storm of Freedom's war." Whittier also chronicled events significant to the antislavery world in his work. These poems, shorter and thus quicker to make their point than newspaper articles, served as abolitionist interpretations of current events. "The Sentence of John L. Brown" (originally titled "Stanzas for the Times—1844") was one such piece. Brown, a white South Carolinian, married a slave and then aided her escape from slavery. For these actions Brown was sentenced to death, which incited an international outrage that bullied officials into lessening his punishment. The "newspaper-poet's" writing in these situations tied sentiment to the reportage of historical events, turning his poems into a valuable source of history. These narratives were important to the rank and file of the antislavery movement and endeared Whittier to abolitionist leaders.⁸

The success of the antislavery poet was not universally celebrated. Whittier was blacklisted from many national political and literary journals due to his reform associations.

This guaranteed that he would be the darling of a select group of antislavery readers, mainly those from New England. National recognition for the poet was not realized until the late 1860s when a Northern victory dictated that antislavery opinions were no longer appallingly radical. And it was not his antislavery poetry that was heralded. When Whittier achieved fame, his status as a great American poet was upheld while his abolitionist contributions were muted. This celebrity earned Whittier a spot in the temple of American literature instead of that of American reformers. In the 20th century the poet would be listed along with such literary greats as Walt Whitman, Henry Wordsworth Longfellow, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Mark Twain, and Emily Dickinson as one of the worthies in American writing. This was not why those gathered at Danvers in April of 1893 chose Whittier's image to grace the stage. To them he fit Frederick Douglass's description of the writer in 1855, a "brilliant" American poet who spoke "in burning verse." To them Whittier's was a face that belonged on the stage with Garrison, May, and Sumner.⁹

There is a tinge of irony in the fact that Whittier and Garrison shared the Danvers' platform. While the two had been friends in the early days of antislavery, Whittier parted ways with the man who drew him to the reform. Their dispute had several causes, not the least of which was the poet's conviction that moral suasion must connect to political action in order for the abolitionists to succeed. In this impulse Whittier was hardly alone. Staying true to this belief, he helped found the Liberty Party and, in 1844, ran for Congress as one of their candidates. These actions aggravated his mentor, Garrison, and the two never shared the same bond that they had once had. Whittier ultimately found Garrison "dictatorial, censorious, intolerant." Meanwhile the poet's political activities strained the

friendship past the breaking point so that the two spent most of the rest of their lives in similar circles yet rarely shared a word.¹⁰

The victory of antislavery brought about by the Emancipation Proclamation and the Union army changed the mindset of many reformers. In the aftermath of a nation divided, a feeling of triumph melted away the factional disputes among antislavery reformers. They were now unwilling to let bygones cloud their new sense of self-worth and celebration. Instead many former foes searched for ways to bridge their gaps. This reconciliatory attitude was further fueled by the demographics of antislavery reformers. Those who had enlisted in the 1830s served the cause for close to thirty years—almost half of the average life expectancy for a New Englander—by the time the slaves were freed. They were men and women at the end of their lives. Outside of festive events such as the one in Danvers, funerals served as the most frequent place of reunion after the war.¹¹

William Garrison had gone to as many memorial services as he could in the 1870s serving as an “unofficial minister” to his comrades who had withdrawn from the church long ago. There were others, such as Wendell Phillips, who performed these services too. It was a ritual that continued through the 1880s and, at a less frequent rate, the 1890s. Garrison’s 1879 death disheartened many abolitionists; they had lost a leader and counselor. His passing shocked John G. Whittier into recognizing his former friend’s best qualities. The poet penned a few lines of praise that were read at the funeral, an event Whittier proclaimed himself too enfeebled to attend. The two men who started as friends in the 1830s were reunited in the forgiving milieu of postwar America.¹²

Thirteen years later, the 1892 funeral of John Greenleaf Whittier produced a significant reunion of its own. The poet's death brought together the remaining members of the Hutchinson Family Singers. Fifty-two years after their first performance at the Baptist Meeting House in Milford, New Hampshire, John Wallace Hutchinson and Abigail Jemima Hutchinson Patton sang to honor the famed writer. The Hutchinsons were, at best, casual friends of the poet. Their bond to him was that forged between people of similar circumstance—artists who used their talent to promote reform. It was a friendship built upon mutual admiration and not much individual interaction. Over the years, even the most personal exchanges demonstrated minimal affection. John once used a Whittier poem as lyrics for a song he and his family performed for Union troops during the Civil War. The poet, surprised by John's initiative, wryly stated, "I am glad to know that there is *any* sing in my verses." Whittier wrote to John in 1874 that "as one of the old pioneers of the cause, I am glad to acknowledge your service of song" and then wished him good luck in the days to come. Fourteen years later, Abby and her husband Ludlow sent a gift from Africa for the poet's 82nd birthday, but it was common for the wealthy couple to treat acquaintances, especially famous ones, in this manner.¹³

The superficial nature of their relationship did not prevent John and Abby from feeling that Whittier was indeed a brother and, despite a general discomfort with music by Quakers, the Hutchinson siblings were permitted to sing their offering at his funeral. Among the songs they performed was George H. Bok's "Dirge for a Soldier," opening with the lines, "Close his eyes, his work is done." John wrote two new verses which replaced

references to a dead soldier included in the original version of the song. The siblings warbled together once again not knowing this would be their last time.¹⁴

A few months later Susan B. Anthony compassionately wrote to John: "The Farmer's Cabinet of Dec. 1—brings the word that your precious sister Abby has gone before you to the land beyond—and this leaves 'John'—'brother John'—The last of that marvelous band of sweet singers for freedom + equality of fifty-years ago." Abby Hutchinson Patton had died leaving John as the sole surviving member of the Hutchinson Family Singers and the only living sibling from a family of the sixteen brothers and sisters. A year before her passing Abby worried that her volume of poetry, *A Handful of Pebbles*, "will have to go as my last will and heirloom to my brothers' and sisters' children." She was right. John's work, however, was far from done. This is why he could be found sitting next to the Danvers Historical Society's president, A. P. Putnam, exactly five months after his sister's death. An elderly John is situated comfortably in the commemorative photograph. And he is easy to spot. In an image where others' features are not very clear, one can distinguish the middle part in John's hair and moustache and even some individual strands of the lengthy white beard attached to his rather somber face. John Wallace Hutchinson had stood for many photographs. A life in the public eye taught him the importance of appearance and, more important for the technology of his day, he learned how to stay still. In the midst of all the hubbub, John was composed and, perhaps, even at peace. Clearly he belonged on stage with the four portraited luminaries.¹⁵

John and his brothers, Judson and Asa, along with their sister Abby had displayed traits from each of the memorialized reformers at Danvers during their time as the

Hutchinson Family Singers. They were leaders and demagogues of antislavery music, martyrs for their cause, and artists who suffered for their beliefs. By 1893 John had changed from his days as the Hutchinson Family Singers' unflagging cheerleader. He was now the grayed patriarch of Lynn, Massachusetts, who owned considerable real estate upon High Rock, biding his time making sure that there were renters for his tenements, traveling the country with younger women, and seizing the spotlight at any opportunity. In the 1890s John could be found in Washington, D.C, visiting Frederick Douglass, chatting with the President, strolling the streets with senators, and attending the seventieth birthday of Susan B. Anthony; in Lynn, at his own seventieth birthday bash and financing more cottages on his High Rock premises; in Minneapolis with the New York delegation for the Republican National Convention; and in many towns throughout the nation attending friends' funerals. He sang at almost all of these events and continued to vocalize for any cause he deemed worthy. The anti-cigarette campaign was his last beneficiary—"Sings to Save" capped the headline of John's final tour in 1901. His promoters enjoyed playing up his status as the last of a species, a live antislavery advocate and Hutchinson Family Singer, to publicize his shows (see fig. 2). The reverence allotted to him in the 1890s was substantial. But being Lynn's most recognizable celebrity never fulfilled John's needs. In his twilight, the famed singer was lonely.¹⁶

As a man in his seventies, John faced the day without seeing many peers and lived under the watchful eye of his daughter, Viola. He once filled his days after the Civil War planning and throwing celebrations which ensured that he would see his dearest friends and siblings, but they were no longer available—either departed or in such poor health as to

COMING.—READ BOTH SIDES.

The mere mention of Mr. Hutchinson's name will crowd the house. Let the young people of to-day ask their parents about the famous Hutchinson Family of years ago. Now one of the ORIGINALS is coming. He has been personally acquainted with ex-President Lincoln, Henry W. Longfellow, John Brown, General Grant, General Sherman, Garfield, Henry Ward Beecher, Mrs. Stowe, Gladstone, Charles Dickens, and many others.

All the scholars will be invited to take part in the Grand Chorus of several Patriotic Songs. It will be a great treat to thus listen to a thousand voices.



BORN IN MILFORD.

EXTRA GREAT FUN AND LAUGHTER
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

Come rain or shine, let nothing keep you away. This entertainment will be the "talk" in every household. A great surprise in store for those who attend.

Town Hall, Milford,
Thursday Night, Nov. 2.

Mr. Hutchinson will be assisted by Miss Effie Mae Stevens, the favorite soprano of East Lynn fame. Remember that he was born in New Hampshire. This will be your only chance of a lifetime. He will receive a grand ovation. Many extra seats will be provided.

10, 20 and 30 Cents.

Figure 2

ADVERTISEMENT FOR JOHN HUTCHINSON IN THE 1890S
(Courtesy of the New Hampshire Historical Society)

prevent travel. His parties were now tinged with sadness—a birthday celebration for his departed sister Abby is a prime example. Viola understood his plight, but only to a point. She was afraid of her father squandering his fortune on some conniving woman. Her anxiety was fueled by John's actions. From 1894 through 1905, the elderly singer kept his daughter busy with numerous attempts to wed younger women. These romantic interludes created plenty of legal trouble for John as, either on his own whim or at his daughter's insistence, he broke off several marital engagements. Almost all of his scorned lovers filed "breach of promise" lawsuits. Viola, so taxed by these events, tried to have her father declared legally incompetent. John Hutchinson, the ultimate performer, foiled her at every turn. While there was probably a hint of senility settling in with his old age, John could still pull it together when on the limelight. The judge found John quite competent.

The final two decades of John's life hosted multiple dramas. Outside of his courting quandaries and the deaths of friends and siblings, the loss of a large portion of his memoir manuscript, and a fire to his barn that roasted his oxen topped John's list of woe. But the most difficult thing for the singer to deal with was not in plain sight. It can't be found in his speeches, memoirs, or within the newspapers. It was that the vast majority of Americans at the close of the century had never even heard of the Hutchinson Family Singers. This explains why, at the antislavery reunion in Danvers, John was at home in the past once again. Along with the other dinosaurs of the abolitionist days, he remembered, recollected, and reshaped the past.

The time consumed by the photography session in Danvers pushed back the start of the meeting, scheduled for one, until two. At this time the Reverend William H. Fish

offered an opening prayer and, following the "amen," the seventy-two year-old John Hutchinson was asked to sing a song. The old bard had adjusted swiftly to his status as the only living member of the Hutchinson Family Singers and he set out alone on "Few, Faithful and True," joined during the chorus by his granddaughter, Kate, and his daughter. After the applause, John, with a voice robust even in his old age, addressed the convention:

"DEAR FRIENDS: This is an impressive occasion and a momentous review. We bid you all a hearty welcome. To the few veterans whose lives have dwindled to so short a span, let me say, we congratulate you that one more opportunity is offered that will yield sacred remembrance of joys we have tasted and of true friendships we have experienced...Your joys are full and our hearts made glad this day, even though it should chance to be the last. We meet here upon ground sacred to the memory of our ancestors, who, two hundred and fifty years ago, settled and cultivated this soil, deriving title from the aborigines who had so recently vacated their corn fields and hunting grounds. Here, seven generations, bearing the name of Hutchinson, have followed in due succession. From this place heroes of that and many another family went forth to the defence of liberty and were among the bravest at the battles of Lexington and Bunker Hill and in the struggles of the Revolution. We, who have lived since that day of sharp conflicts with the foes of freedom, have rejoiced to hear again the sound of emancipation. And now, in our old age, we assemble with our countrymen here and commemorate the events that establish the fact that the nation could live with chattel slavery entirely eliminated, and right made triumphant."

In closing John pronounced that:

"Familiar as household words shall be the names of Garrison, Rogers, Thompson, Phillips, Douglass, Weld, Quincy, Jackson, Burleigh, Sumner, Chase, Wilson, Birney, Foster, Kelley, May, Pillsbury, Putnam, Mott, Purvis, Chapman, McKim, Whittier, Abraham Lincoln and Lucy Stone, with the Tribe of Jesse, and full many others"

The speech outlined the main purpose of John's later life. Where Abby had left her legacy in a small collection of poems, maxims on how to live a godly and good life, John's final mission was to carve a place for his family and friends in the annals of American history. In the 1840s he awoke to sing for freedom and battle slavery. Now he wanted to

guarantee the Hutchinson family a place in American memory for years to come. Not satisfied with just having the Hutchinson Family Singers canonized, he attempted to marquee the entire Hutchinson line staring with his great-grandfather.¹⁷

The charming entertainer covered familiar ground with his Danvers speech. In it he acknowledged a common bond with the audience—their pending mortality—and gave everyone a pat on the back for being reformers. John went on to immortalize himself and others by hanging on the coattails of the American Revolution. For a man of John's age, to capture the spirit of the Revolution was uplifting, noble, and necessary to compare favorably to your grandfather's generation. The members of the Hutchinson family who had fought in the Revolution passed on a notion of liberty to their sons and grandsons which found honor in dying while struggling against threats to white men's civil liberties. John and many other northern white antislavery advocates brought this ideology into the slavery debate resulting all too often with the ennoblement of their own actions and activities while largely ignoring the plight of the enslaved.

The conclusion that John's relatives' fight for independence imparted a genuine sympathy for the oppressed to future members of the Hutchinson clan rested on shaky ground. There is no evidence that either of John's grandfathers, Elisha Hutchinson or Andrew Leavitt, ever supported antislavery. And it was his grandfathers' generation's ideal of liberty which helped create a Constitution that sustained slavery. John Hutchinson needed only to look back at the Civil War to understand the unseemly nature of the legacy of the Revolution. During this conflict each side claimed to be the legitimate heir of the Revolution's heritage. The leader of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis, had been, like many

Southerners and also the Hutchinson Family Singers, born into a family littered with Revolutionary War veterans. While bequeathing a narrative of the Hutchinson family to posterity, John ignored the problematic past of Revolutionary ideals by automatically assuming their righteousness.¹⁸

Stories of American freedom and liberty often conceal less glorious consequences. John Hutchinson's talk in Danvers was no exception. His effort to praise his family and others by drawing a line from the colonial pioneers to the Revolution to the antislavery movement was inspiring, if not outright majestic—but it was accomplished through omission. With the great hand of “liberty” driving his oration, the famous singer masked the conquest of Native America as his ancestors derived “title from the aborigines” who had “recently vacated.” Euphemism, a term reserved for phrases like “passed away,” seems far too mild to describe what John achieved here. In the blink of an eye the singer wiped away several hundred years of struggle over Native American territory. This was surprising. John, so sensitive to oppression that he believed cigarettes tyrannized black Americans, censored the conflict between his countrymen and the Indians. The famed New Hampshire entertainer was hardly the first to ignore the massacre of North American natives, however; John had a history of sympathetically singing about the Indian dilemma.¹⁹

As a member of the Hutchinson Family Singers, John belted out the “Indian's Lament” many times. The song, which spoke of an Indian who paddled out to sea in a canoe to avoid the fate of his people, clearly delineated a link between the treatment of Native Americans and slavery: “The foaming billow shall be my grave, For I'll not die the white man's slave.” It was a composition that John first performed in the 1840s and would

sing again to an elderly Indian chief at the World's Fair in Chicago a few months after leaving Danvers. Following the Indian leader's story about not being paid for lost tribal lands, the emotional Hutchinson Family Singer burst into song. What a sight it must have been, a slightly hunched and old John Hutchinson singing to the fading Indian chief about the abuses wrought by white men. It was no wonder then that when John rang out with the emphatic "whoops that accompany the song," the chief "opened his eyes very wide." The old Indian was no doubt perplexed by the eccentric white gentleman. John's well-meaning deed served to highlight how out of touch he had become.

In all fairness, the aging singer had experienced nothing but grief in his personal relationship to Native America. John and his brothers Asa and Judson founded the frontier town of Hutchinson, Minnesota, in 1855. About 60 miles west of Minneapolis, Hutchinson was set in Indian territory. And the townspeople, including Asa, who resided there more often than any of his brothers, experienced several raids over the years. The worst was at the hands of the Sioux in 1862. Angered at the U.S. government for paying them in notes instead of gold and possibly stirred by Confederate agents, the Sioux, who lived on a reservation at the time, rampaged several towns including Hutchinson. These events produced financial losses for the brothers and exposed them to horrifically violent scenes. In the years that followed, the growth of Hutchinson was severely stunted. Thirty years later John would still write bitterly of the 1862 incident.²⁰

What the celebrated singer did not appreciate was that 1893 was a landmark for white relations with Native Americans. Indian conflict was now far removed from the daily lives of Americans as most Native groups were confined to reservations and opportunities

for further struggles dimmed in the minds of Americans as the perception that frontier lands were had been developed materialized. While Indians had become less of an actual threat to John and his colleagues, they continued as figures by which the reformers gathered at Danvers measured the progress of American civilization. That Native Americans were less of a threat to citizens of the United States in the 1890s compared to the 1840s did little to negate their lowly status in the eyes of many white Americans. The hallowed group of reformers meeting at Danvers had never included Indians in their support for women's rights or temperance. As a representative reformer of the 19th century John and his colleagues believed they were all-inclusive in their social consciousness yet consistently excluded Native Americans.²¹

This was the danger inherent in the vision of liberty passed down by John's ancestors. John and the rest of the Danvers reunioners were in Massachusetts focusing on *their* love of liberty. A passion that lead them to uphold antislavery and press for the goal of emancipation. John's opening speech met with approval from everyone at the convention, for they shared in his values, especially his opinion that their work in the fight for liberty was finished. A shocking accord hung over Town Hall as many inside had toiled in the South during Reconstruction to aid the newly freed black men and women. Yet, at a time when black Americans were losing their right to vote and losing their lives, these former advocates for black freedom found it essential to congratulate themselves on a job well done. For their understanding of liberty had been met. Equality was a concept that the reformers saw fit to look past. Their mission to "establish the fact that the nation could live with chattel slavery entirely eliminated" had been accomplished.

“The scenes and occurrences of anti-slavery days shall, in our social gatherings, be ever remembered. I cannot express, as I would, the sentiments I feel at such a gathering as this,” recited John in his final remarks. The applause thundered as John finished his speech and it is hard not to imagine the old reformer pondering how much simpler it was to gain approval for antislavery in 1893 than it had been in 1843. His task to praise the “old anti-slavery days” in which he played so vital a part was relatively easy. There were no slaves, thus there were fewer problems. John’s reform duties stayed relatively undemanding as he neared his life’s end. These meetings gave him the opportunity to feel that all of his reform efforts had paid off. No longer did he stomp around New England singing for freedom at antislavery conventions. Nor did he take to the road for temperance. His role was that of the dying crusader, a man worth more to the next generation for his memories and money than for any recent idea or action. This befit the old bard well. At meetings such as this one in Danvers he felt important again. Yet one can not help but to think that a good part of John’s loneliness came not from living in relative solitude largely devoid of his former fame, but from the fact that his message and status were too easy to promote at the close of the nineteenth century. What once inspired fierce opposition and required incredible resolve was now commonplace: slavery was recognized universally as “a heinous sin and crime.” Begrudgingly fighting both former lovers and family in court, John basked in the favorable reception he garnered at these reunions in the hope of masking his emptiness. But the fact remained that it was not so much that he had changed, but that the people around him, the society in which he lived, no longer resonated with hostility to the demon of slavery.²²

MILFORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE, 1840

The state of New Hampshire had not had a slave living within its bounds since the census of 1800. At that time the population included 182,898 whites, 856 free blacks, and 8 slaves. The 1840 census counted 284,036 whites and 537 free blacks. Still the leaders of antislavery had made yearly visits to a small town nestled in the Souhegan river valley since 1835. On the 13th of November 1840, there was an antislavery meeting in the Hutchinson Family Singers' hometown of Milford. The reformers gathered here viewed slavery as a social ill, a flaw in the national character to be righted. To them abolition was not about changing the legal foundation of slavery, it was about changing the moral reasoning that supported it. If we could alter the way Americans think and feel about the slave system, they mused, then the political and legal buttresses would quickly crumble. "Let us aim to abolitionize the consciences and hearts of the people," said William Garrison, "and we may trust them in the ballot-box, or anywhere else." This position had predominated within antislavery throughout the 1830s, but the movement, formerly centered upon immediacy and moral suasion, was fragmenting in 1840. It had become a victim of its own successes. Having drawn in many new advocates, the antislavery movement needed a more accommodating ideology or else face fractious divides.²³

Antislavery advocates soon split for a variety of reasons, but one of the largest fissures had started exactly one year prior to the Milford gathering. In 1839 an attempt was made in Warsaw, New York, to organize the first antislavery political organization in American history. The move was, in part, a challenge to Garrison's philosophical and physical stranglehold on the American Anti-Slavery Society. The organizers of the event

took advantage of the abolitionist leader's refusal to work within the nation's political system. Those who convened in Warsaw harbored great expectations, but this initial effort proved a false start. Frightened by the relative obscurity of the group, the candidates chosen by the convention refused their nominations. A few months later, in April of 1840, the winds had changed. The Liberty Party was up and running as a national political organization with James G. Birney, an antislavery leader from Kentucky, as their presidential candidate.

The creation of an antislavery party had a considerable effect on local politics in Milford. The town, valued at \$518,704, was hardly a major economic or political force within the state of New Hampshire. Yet this did not keep it from housing a politically active citizenry. Prior to 1840 the men of Milford voted for the Whig party at a two-to-one ratio. With the dawn of the three party system, no single party garnered a majority at the annual Town Meeting. In national elections the voters of Milford overwhelmingly chose Liberty Party candidates and, later on, their successors in the Free Soil Party. This was not terribly unusual for the electorate in the Granite State. Voters here supported the Liberty Party more than those in any other state during the 1844 election—roughly 8.4% of New Hampshire's ballots were marked "Liberty." What was different was the depth of voter support for the Liberty Party in Milford. The Hutchinson family and their neighbors selected reform candidate James G. Birney at the astonishing rate of 30.5%.²⁴

Looking back, it appears that Garrison and his advocates in the American Anti-Slavery Society picked the right town to hold an antislavery meeting in 1840. Support for antislavery reform was strong in the countryside, reflecting the demographics of the nation

in general. At the time they worried about the ramifications that the founding of the Liberty Party would have upon their lives as reformers. Their many visits to New Hampshire in 1840 were to serve as reminders to the citizens there that slavery must end and it must end now. As they tried to drum up support, they added that abolition was not going to happen at the ballot box. What Garrison and other leaders did not appreciate was that many Americans found little or no contradiction voting for the Liberty Party and also supporting the American Anti-Slavery Society. Caught so deeply in their own squabbles, antislavery leaders on all sides imparted too much importance to the differences within the movement and too little to the growing antislavery backing within New England.²⁵

Increasing approval of antislavery did not make it safe to openly espouse the reform within New England or even in Milford. This held true for the 1830s as well as the 1840s. Throughout the antebellum era American citizens were more likely to greet slaveholders than to shun them. The record of violence against antislavery advocates was already long by 1840. There were the famous events such as the Boston mob that tied a rope around William Lloyd Garrison's chest in 1835 (see fig. 3) and the horrific murder of abolitionist editor Elijah Lovejoy—shot while seeking refuge from a fire that a mob sets to his Illinois business in 1837. Events of this kind represented the extreme of antiabolitionism. There was a regularity to antiabolition violence that studying the celebrated incidents alone can not relate. These repeated acts were usually not as severe as that which Lovejoy faced, but they were ever-present, with a lingering possibility of further escalation.²⁶

This was precisely the state of affairs for antislavery advocates in New Hampshire. While New Hampshire citizens tended to support antislavery more fully than those of other

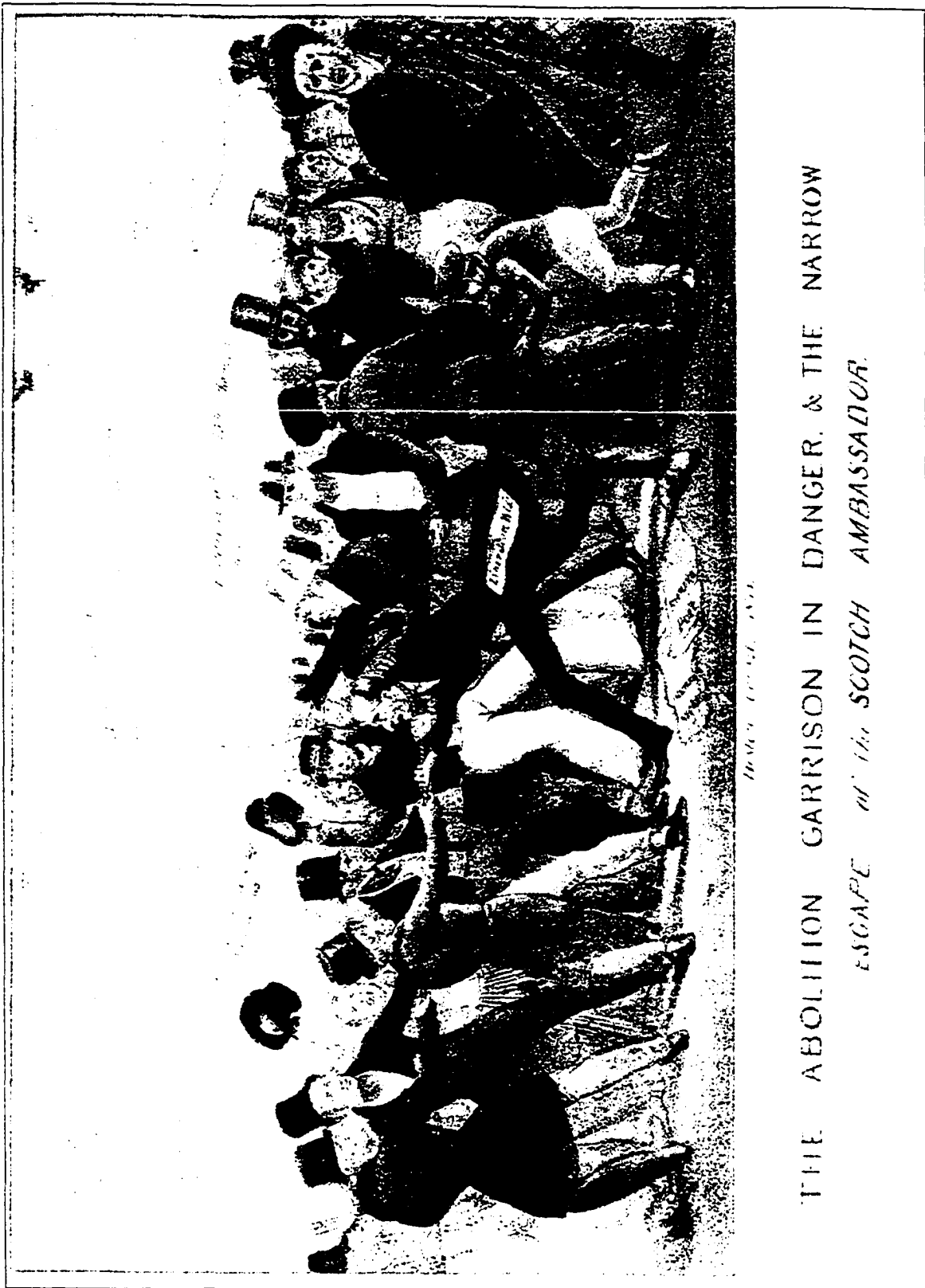


Figure 3
GARRISON IN DANGER
(Courtesy of The Library Company of Philadelphia)

states, their reform instincts were not strong enough to make the region secure for abolitionists. In 1835 an invited speaker was lifted from his knees while leading an antislavery prayer and thrown out of the church in Northfield. The townspeople in Canaan once banned an integrated school and then proceeded to haul the building away by fastening either horses or oxen to it.²⁷ Stephen Symmonds Foster and Lewis Ford were pounced upon by a Baptist deacon when rising to speak out against slavery in Nashua, a town only 10 miles east of Milford. Aggression against antislavery supporters was so common that the eccentric reformer Stephen Foster measured “the success of anti-slavery meetings by the number of windows and benches broken by the mob and by the quality of eggs thrown at the speakers.” In this he was not alone. “The cause is progressing,” John Greenleaf Whittier once wrote, “I want no better evidence of it than the rabid violence of our enemies.”²⁸

Antiabolition sentiment extended even to Quakers in the Granite State. The Society of Friends, routinely touted for their support of antislavery and their openness to speakers of all kinds, were not as welcoming as their reputation suggested. Parker Pillsbury and Stephen Foster were once silenced at a Quaker meeting by local law enforcement officials who had been called in to place them under arrest. These examples serve to demonstrate a pervasive dilemma for antislavery reformers. Antiabolition feelings ran deep, not only in the South, but in New England as well. This trend had developed with the onset of immediatism introduced by Garrison in 1831. From that moment on, public support of the antislavery movement virtually guaranteed exposure to some kind of violence.²⁹

This proved true at many antislavery meetings in the Granite State in 1840, a year in which the leading lights of the Garrisonian camp considered the region ripe for an abolitionist invasion. Milford was merely one town designated to hold an antislavery convention and conversion. Yet, even years later, Parker Pillsbury recalled this particular meeting as “the best [in] everyway.” Not only were those in attendance very receptive to the abolitionists’ messages, but the Orthodox Congregational Meeting House remained intact. Not even one egg was thrown to mar the proceedings. It was this positive reception that helped Milford earn a reputation as an “early anti-slavery town.”³⁰

Within these supportive environs, the notables of New England reform delivered their messages—Pillsbury, Nathaniel P. Rogers, Stephen Foster, and William Lloyd Garrison all journeyed through the chill of the New Hampshire fall to be in Milford. At the meeting they discussed slavery as a national dilemma, chastised churches which refused to condemn slavery, and restated that the American Anti-Slavery Society’s principals were pure. They lashed out against the Liberty Party warning that this attempt to “*new organize*” antislavery was nothing more than a bastardization “of the cause of the slave.”³¹ They were in the Granite Town of the Granite State to convince its citizens that their brand of antislavery reform was best. And the people of Milford listened to the dialogues around which the meeting revolved and heard some of the movement’s best speakers.

The meeting proceeded like hundreds, if not thousands, of other antislavery conventions. Its significance rests upon who was in the audience and not on who was featured or on what was said. The records of the meeting reported that there were thirteen people sharing the last name of Hutchinson who sat and listened to the reform lecturers on

Friday and signed the attendance sheet on Saturday. This figure is not particularly exciting since there were at least three different Hutchinson families living in town at this time. Only one family, however, housed a "J.W." and an "A.B." Hutchinson.³² There is little doubt that two future members of the Hutchinson Family Singers, John Wallace Hutchinson and Asa Burnham Hutchinson, attended this meeting.

It is not difficult to imagine what they were doing there either. These two Hutchinson brothers were nineteen and twenty-one in 1840. Their older brothers were guaranteed the family lands for farming. Two of their brothers had already been awarded their share which included the first homestead of Jesse and Polly Hutchinson, a farm from which they moved in 1824.³³ As a result of the scarcity of family land to go around, some Hutchinson brothers had left Milford to work in Lynn, Massachusetts, to make enough money to secure farmland at some point in the future.

Asa and John, raised in a tradition that praised those who tilled the soil, probably would have become farmers if they had had reason to believe that they could secure fertile land. These two declared a desire to farm throughout their lives. However, because they were among the youngest in the family, this would not be their reality. Their father was successful, but not enough to guarantee his younger sons farms in Milford. Acknowledging this fact, John and Asa had visited Lynn and, while thrilled by the urbanity of the town, they did not see a future in their brothers' stores. Unable to foresee a career working the land or in Lynn, the two discussed working in music.

As two young men in their position, an antislavery meeting in their hometown helped stimulate their youthful idealism. It also spoke to them in a familiar tone. John and

Asa had discovered religion during a 1831 Baptist revival in Milford. The antislavery speakers, steeped in the practice of the revival preachers, drew upon many of the devices used by the orators of the Second Great Awakening. With talk of moral perfection, of millennialism, and of salvation, antislavery reformers used a language that translated into recognizable forms for the Hutchinsons and others steeped in New England revivalism. In Milford on a rather auspicious day in 1840, the Hutchinsons shared space with the “antislavery apostles,” indeed with the high priest himself, William Garrison. All that is known regarding Asa and John at the meeting is that they were there. A small yet significant detail. While they would remain virtually unknown to the greater antislavery movement for another two years, the brothers were beginning down a path that eventually merged music and antislavery.³⁴

In 1840 they had a long way to travel. There was no mention of any singing at the Milford antislavery meeting. Antislavery reform featured animated orators and tireless writers, it did not highlight music. Unlike other antebellum movements, such as revivalism and temperance, in 1840 antislavery advocates had yet to use music to broaden or hone their message. On the rare occasion that music was employed on behalf of the slave it was in the form of a hymn.³⁵ The infrequent use of music and other entertainments at antislavery functions at this time assured that a majority of their meetings mimicked a lyceum offering more so than a temperance convention, religious revival, or even a church service. There was nothing to change the ebb and flow of their meetings, burdening the listeners by testing the limits of attentiveness. At small meetings, like the one in Milford, this didn't seem to matter. With everyone in such close proximity to the lecturers and with

some of the most eloquent speakers, all ran smoothly. Keeping the undivided attention of larger audiences would prove far more difficult.

Only seven days before the antislavery meeting, Milford had hosted one other noteworthy Hutchinson event. The ad read quite simply: “The eleven sons and two daughters of the ‘Tribe of Jesse’ will sing at the Baptist Meeting-House.” The Hutchinson Family Singers, though not yet known by this name, accompanied by their entire family gave their first public performance on November 6, 1840. Devoid of any reform sentiment, the concert showcased a variety of hymns and other moral music. To assure everyone that this endeavor—a concert of music—was respectable, Milford’s esteemed attorney Solomon K. Livermore opened the evening with a discourse on music. Certainly the audience, more accustomed to hearing speakers at the Milford Lyceum, found this comforting. The concert was a success and even caught the attention of the *Farmer’s Cabinet*, the local paper, which relayed that “the performances exhibited much skill and taste.”³⁶

LYNN, MASSACHUSETTS, THE 1890s

John Hutchinson concluded his two-volume family epic with an uncited quote: “Ever hopeful, never doubting, always working for right, Loving, waiting, watching, longing for the millennial day of light.” Waiting, watching, longing was precisely what John’s friends and fans did for over twenty years. In 1874 he ran an advertisement declaring that his memoirs subtitled “the History of the Conflicts and Triumphs attending Thirty-five Years of the Eventful Public Life of the Author” were “soon to be put in press.”

It appeared at the back of his brother Joshua's family history, *A Brief Narrative of the Hutchinson Family*, which combined interesting vignettes of all sixteen children and their parents. John Whittier read the ad and was excited. He wrote to John insisting that the book include "scenes and adventures of your remarkable career." By the time it was published, Whittier had been dead for four years—the work could have been subtitled "Fifty-Seven Years of the Eventful Public Life of the Author." Not printed until 1896, the final title of John Hutchinson's family chronicle was rather understated, *Story of the Hutchinsons (Tribe of Jesse)*. Charles E. Mann, a close friend and the editor of the *Lynn Daily Press*, helped to compile and edit the lengthy manuscript which, when finished, opened with a glowing introduction from John's friend, the recently deceased Frederick Douglass.³⁷

The famed abolitionist orator and ex-slave wrote that knowing the Hutchinson family throughout the years was "a source of more satisfaction than I can express...especially now that only one has survived to write this book in preparation of their precious memory." The work showcased John's commitment to the legacy of the Hutchinson Family Singers, an obsession stopped only by his death in 1908. As one of the most sought after celebrities of the antislavery movement, John's grand explanation concerning the Hutchinson Family Singers and their initial connection to the antislavery movement was expected. If he desired to enhance his siblings' and his own stature at memorial celebrations—and he certainly did—his book represented another means to accomplish this goal. Sure enough, what began as a rather disciplined account of the Hutchinsons and antislavery slowly deteriorated into a hodgepodge of jumbled memories.

John began with his older brother Jesse Hutchinson, Jr., composer, performer, and the Family Singer's first manager. Jesse was deemed a pivotal figure in the Hutchinsons' reform leanings. John wrote that his brother "was identified with the very beginnings of anti-slavery agitation" and that it was through him that John, Asa, Judson, and Abby were introduced to antislavery reform. Jesse had moved to Lynn, Massachusetts, in the 1830s, no later than 1835. At 8 Exchange Street, a place from which his brothers David and Zephaniah also operated a grocery, Jesse ran a stove business. Here he gained a modest degree of fame for his design of an "airtight" stove that burned wood more efficiently than those of his Lynn competitors.³⁸

Antebellum Lynn was a town becoming a hotbed of radicalism where Jesse was certainly exposed to antislavery. Numerous antislavery groups from the Lynn Anti-Slavery Society to the Old Hampshire Slavery Society held their meetings in town and the local paper switched its name to the *Lynn Freeman* in 1840. The town of Lynn was active, whether referring to music or reform, there was always an event happening. In this setting Jesse, found endless activities that were unavailable in sleepy Milford. Here he gained an autonomy for ideas and a forum where these thoughts could be expressed. Moving to Lynn allowed Jesse to deeply explore the reform beliefs which he first absorbed in New Hampshire. A former apprentice at the *Farmer's Cabinet*, Jesse was an avid reader. And here, 10 miles northeast of Boston, was where he read Garrison's *Liberator* and Rogers's *Herald of Freedom*, securing extensive details about the antislavery movement. Jesse knew who was involved, what they thought, and when and where were the next meetings.³⁹

Their brother's reform enthusiasm certainly helped entice a young John and Asa Hutchinson to attend the antislavery meeting of 1840 in Milford.

But Jesse's influence was not as important as John claimed in 1896. In his book the memories of the Milford antislavery meetings were erased. Why he chose to exclude them we will never know, but one thing is for certain: the hometown of the Hutchinson Family Singers provided them important contact with the world of antislavery. Not only did various members of the Hutchinson family meet noteworthy figures of the movement there, but it was at a Milford meeting that the group eventually debuted as antislavery singers. John, either from a failing memory or to pay homage to those he held most dear, looked elsewhere to explain the troupe's antislavery involvement. In this narrative Jesse, Jr., introduced the rest of his siblings to antislavery. But, according to John, it was their befriending of Frederick Douglass that cinched their reform involvement. John wrote that once he heard "Douglass's story...the result was an earnest desire to aid him in his work."⁴⁰ Lecturing from personal experience about the indignities suffered in slavery, Douglass easily won the sympathies of many throughout New England.

Douglass fled from bondage in 1838 and, by 1841, had developed into one of the American Anti-Slavery Society's best speakers. He moved to Lynn in the late fall of 1841 where the famed speaker lived "in a modest building" a few streets away from the Hutchinsons. Douglass quickly became a well-known Lynn resident. His dispute with the Eastern line over their refusal to allow a black man to ride in first-class triggered a number of protest rallies in town.⁴¹ The initial encounter of the Hutchinsons with Douglass was most likely at one of these rallies held by antislavery supporters where the Hutchinsons and

many others were inspired by the eloquent orator. With the groundwork for their reform inclinations set by antislavery meetings in Milford, the Hutchinsons found a kindred spirit burgeoning within the former slave.

The *Story of the Hutchinsons* points to one final event to explain the Hutchinsons Family Singers antislavery inspiration: the George Latimer incident. The Latimer confrontation was one of the most electrifying events of 1842. Latimer was a former slave detained in October while the Boston courts debated the claim of his former owner, Virginian James B. Gray, that Latimer was a fugitive slave. The month of November saw several protests concerning the status of Latimer and, eventually the decision of the judges was subverted by concerned citizens who raised enough money to purchase Latimer's freedom outright.

John Hutchinson completely bungled his retelling of the Latimer episode; scholars have been quick to point out that his version is filled with inaccurate dates and other distortions. The venerable John wanted to associate himself with a crucial antislavery event, an unnecessary effort to enhance his reform résumé. What he accomplished in his book was to link his siblings and himself to notable black reformers earlier than had occurred in reality. The strange thing about this is that the Hutchinsons were close friends with Douglass and Latimer. Did John not remember times like April of 1844 when after not having seen "Fred for nearly a year," the Hutchinson Family Singers greeted him with "shaking hands, pulling and hauling, loud talking, laughing, embracing?" While these friendships blossomed a little later than John, for whatever reason, wanted to admit, the

fact that Douglass wrote a lengthy and personal introduction to the book conveyed the relationship to anyone who may not have known about their intimacy.⁴²

There is little doubt that for a man of seventy-two years John was in excellent condition in 1896. He would go on to live for another twelve years. Of course, even the sharpest seventy year-old would find deciding what events drew him to a cause that defined the rest of his life difficult. John, forever a quintessential performer, had a flair for the dramatic. And, after giving credit to his brother Jesse and his good friend Frederick Douglass, he must have thought that a theatrical event, like the Latimer episode which tore apart Boston for one tumultuous month in 1842, was appropriate. His hindsight displayed more about what he was thinking in the 1890s than in the 1840s. At the close of the century John considered being close to black abolitionists and the raucous events surrounding fugitive slaves as more important than a relationship with the white abolitionist editor and the successful, but small and peaceful, antislavery meetings in his hometown of Milford. As he laid the foundation for how the Hutchinsons would be remembered, John found himself in a quandary. He was not alone in this dilemma, for many of his fellow-travelers had to face it. The Rev. Aaron Porter described their common plight best—"We are too near in time to the early abolitionists to dispassionately judge them on their methods. We are neither artists designing nor skilled workmen building their monument. We are only the burden-bearers, bringing each one his share of the raw material which he hopes will have its place in the finished structure."⁴³

New York, May, 1843

It will be the source of immense gratification to our anti-slavery friends to learn that those charming vocalists, the HUTCHINSONS, contemplate being in New-York during the anniversary week, and lifting up their inspiring voices in the cause of universal emancipation at our meetings. We hope they will attract with more than magnetic power.

—*The Liberator*, April 1843—⁴⁴

The advertisement was cautiously optimistic. The Hutchinson Family Singers were only thinking of coming to the tenth annual gathering of the American Anti-Slavery Society. While many had felt that the previous year's meeting needed to be "the most interesting Anti Slavery Meetings ever held in the city of New York," there is something about an anniversary that warrants extra attention—the American Anti-Slavery Society's decennial celebration was no exception. The organizers needed to find some way to make this occasion distinctive. In 1842 Frederick Douglass was the newest abolitionist attraction, but a different antislavery novelty appeared in 1843. At the center of this frenzy was the Hutchinson Family Singers who antislavery leaders trusted would provide the spark for an extraordinary New York convention.⁴⁵

The Hutchinsons were seen not only as a perfect fit for the New York convention, but for the American Anti-Slavery Society in general. Since 1840 many other avenues had opened to express antislavery ideas and actions, leaving the advocates of the Anti-Slavery Society searching for ways to hold their public's attention. Its leaders harbored a sense of urgency for the May meeting. They were still adjusting to the factionalization of the movement that redistributed Americans' focus on antislavery. Members of the American Anti-Slavery Society, who had basically presided over the reform cause during the 1830s, were no longer the only major voice against slavery. In public they were now at a

disadvantage. While their rivals in the Liberty Party were seen campaigning for office and were listed on ballots, the heart of the Society's mission—antislavery publications and lectures—had lost some vibrancy in the 1840s. Public meetings may have been more exciting than privately reading about antislavery, but, despite their use of speakers of all styles, antislavery gatherings were not overly captivating when compared to antebellum political rallies or temperance functions. The need to make a mark on the public mind had organizers scrambling for new approaches to promote the cause. The highly touted singing family seemed to be what the anniversary meeting required.⁴⁶

The invitation to attend the antislavery meeting provided the Hutchinsons with the opportunity to make their first visit to New York, an event they highly anticipated. For over a year the Hutchinson Family Singers had promoted concerts in which they would sing a variety of new songs “which have received the applause of the most fashionable and popular audience in New York.” The trick in their advertisement was that it was hard to discern whether it was the musicians or the songs that had been to the city of New York. Prior to 1843 the Hutchinson Family Singers had never been to Gotham. This ploy shows how crucial a New York concert pedigree was to the Hutchinsons and their audiences. It was no great secret that in the sixty-seven years since the nation was founded, New York had edged out Boston and Philadelphia to become America's cultural hub. An 1835 article in the *American Musical Journal* put it bluntly: “all talent must fail in America which is not imported via New-York and make its debut in the city.”⁴⁷

The Hutchinson Family Singers from Milford, New Hampshire, who had been capturing the hearts of New Englanders for more than a year, now turned to the country's

most important artistic center for validation. From the start, their Empire City experience turned out to be everything that they hoped for and more. On the his second day Asa gushed with wonder:

O! *New York* is all that I have had it represented to be! Boston does *not* compare with it for *life* and *business*. The Splendid Street "*Broad Way*" is the most Splendid Street that I ever saw, and then the Grand Park, and the Splendid *water works* where the water is thrown into the air to the height of 25 or 30 feet and then falls in to the Pool again in the most majestic Style. Then the Splendid "*Niblos Garden*" is worth a journey of 50 miles to see the fine flowers & plants. O *New York* is the place for me. I have so far, been perfectly at home here.⁴⁸

The urban settings with which the Asa was most familiar, Boston and Lynn, did not measure up to the majesty that was New York. The Hutchinsons spent their first day visiting Niblo's and seeing the City Hall fountain supplied by the recently opened Croton Aqueduct. All of the siblings were so overcome with excitement that it appears they temporarily forgot the purpose of their visit. As the antislavery convention opened on the morning of May 9th, the Hutchinsons were at Niblo's Garden once again.⁴⁹

Located a little below Canal Street at 405 Broadway, the tenth anniversary meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society started out rather traditionally. Within the confines of Concert Hall, an impassioned orator spoke out against slavery. Countless moments such as this one once triggered Ralph Waldo Emerson to claim that "eloquence was dog-cheap" at antislavery functions.⁵⁰ The proceedings on this May morning were filled with the kind of overly emotional speeches which Emerson had belittled. The crowd was not moved by James Monroe, the first lecturer. Nor was the gallery packed to hear the pleas of any other speaker. Those in New York were well aware that the Hutchinsons were supposedly in attendance. When Monroe closed his speech, the crowd was unable to contain its

excitement. Thunderous cries for a song went out. And the convention's leaders, knowing exactly who was being called upon, nervously scanned the audience for any sign of the Granite State's songsters. By this time the troupe would normally have sprung into action, but the Hutchinson Family Singers were too busy at Niblo's to witness their fans' impatient screams. New Yorkers would have to wait a little longer for their first encounter with the Hutchinsons. Garrison noted that the Hutchinsons' absence during the morning session was a "disappointment of us all." The musicians arrived in the afternoon and enlivened the hall with their songs.⁵¹

A rainy Wednesday prevented the mishap of the previous day from repeating. The Hutchinsons were at the antislavery meeting from start to finish. During its course, they sang several times, usually opening or closing a session and, with increasing frequency, they broke out in song to punctuate the debates. The Hutchinsons were beginning to perfect the art of lyrical improvisation. It was a process that Jesse Hutchinson, Jr., started and that his brothers would perfect. In order to highlight something special about the place or the time at which they performed, the Family Singers would alter the words of their songs. During antislavery meetings, the group took this skill one step further by interjecting a song into debates which emphasized the positions being discussed.⁵²

In New York this improvisational style and their singing in general guaranteed that the Hutchinson Family Singers were the main attraction. After their initial slip-up, the group took the convention by storm. They were such a success that one of the closing resolutions read "the thanks of this meeting be, and they are hereby tendered to our esteemed friends, the Hutchinsons, for the interest which they have contributed to this

meeting by their presence and soul-stirring music.” It was no surprise that after the final resolution was passed, the tenth annual meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society closed with a song from the Hutchinson Family.⁵³

Danvers, Massachusetts, 1893

Once the meeting was in full swing there was no denying that John Hutchinson was the most prized celebrity in attendance. Not only was the old bard repeatedly asked to sing, but he was also lauded from the podium. A few hours into the afternoon George B. Bartlett stood at the lectern to share a poem which he had written while imagining an audience listening to “the glorious voice of the great singer who has pleased us so much this afternoon.” He read:

Relics of the mighty past
Sound the grand old bugle blast.
Summon to their haunts again
All these old historic men
Who in Freedom's blackest night
Dared to battle for the right.
Garrison, that fortress strong,
Refuge sure from every wrong,
To the shelter of whose name
Every hunted creature came.
Phillips, on whose silver tongue
Eager crowds enraptured hung.
Whittier, who with mystic lyre
Quaker souls could rouse to fire.
Sumner, whose majestic head
For the cause of Freedom bled.
Andrew, who to victory sent
Many a noble regiment.
Craft, who stole himself away
From the men who watch and prey.
Burns, marched back to Southern hell,
Past the spot where Attucks fell.
Spring's best blossoms strew his way
Whose presence was perpetual May,
Who with consistent courage trod

The footsteps of the Son of God.
Parker, with his grandshire's gun
From the Green at Lexington
On that 'ever glorious day,'
Eager for another fray.
Old John Brown, uplifted high,
Saw the glory in the sky:
What to him were pain and loss
When the gallows gleamed a cross!
These and twenty thousand more
On the fair and shining shore,
When our St. John strikes the chord,
Chant the glory of the Lord.
Whitest souls, with faces black,
Fling the glorious tidings back
From the resurrected land,
Free from Slavery's Iron hand.

Immediately following this tribute which placed "St. John" amidst the noblest ranks of antislavery, calls went up for the affable songster. The remodeled Hutchinsons who sang at the opening of the convention swiftly spring to action with the Family Singers' antislavery anthem "Get Off the Track!" A change was made to delight the audience. John adjusts a stanza to sound, "See the throngs that run to meet us, \At Danvers Hall the people greet us, \ All take seat in exultation, \In the car Emancipation." Those familiar with the Hutchinson Family Singers, while still relishing the lyrical adjustment, had long since realized that the singers were "probably accustomed to adapt the line to each new locality." When the song ended and the applause subsided, a few more words were shared about the power of the Hutchinsons Family Singers in the days of yore. The speakers firmly believed that none of their strength had been lost. Then, for a while, the commemoration continued with talk of the Hutchinsons relegated to the background. It wouldn't be long before John was asked to sing again.⁵⁴

New England, The Early 1840s

If I mistake not, they made their first appearance in Boston, at the anniversary of the New England Anti-Slavery Society, in 1843.

—William Lloyd Garrison, 1874—⁵⁵

John, Asa, Abby, Judson, and Jesse, Jr., enjoyed a quick ride to the peak of antislavery popularity. At their first major antislavery performance in January of 1843, the singers delighted a Boston crowd by taking the argument of Wendell Phillips and carrying it “heavenward.” Jesse had quickly penned new verses while the famed Bostonian spoke and, when Phillips finished, the Hutchinson Family Singers rushed the stage and “poured forth with amazing spirit, in one of the maddening Second Advent tunes.” The crowd cheered wildly—“the multitude had caught the spirit of the orator and the minstrel bards, and they exemplified it, in their humanized shoutings...Slavery would have died of that music, and that response of that multitude.”⁵⁶ For the next few years this antislavery singing frenzy fueled the Hutchinsons’ meteoric rise to wide-reaching fame.

The link between music and antislavery was not forged in Boston or Lynn, but in the Hutchinsons’ home state of New Hampshire. It started out as a simple request from Nathaniel P. Rogers. Rogers, New Hampshire’s William Lloyd Garrison, was the influential editor of *The Herald of Freedom*, an antislavery newspaper established in 1835 under the name *The Abolitionist*. A New Hampshire native and Dartmouth graduate, Rogers left a long and successful law career in 1838 to move to Concord as the editor of the *Herald* which was now an official organ of the New Hampshire Anti-Slavery Society. Rogers’ decision to leave the legal profession had been years in the making. He had been

drawn to antislavery reform after reading pieces by Garrison in the early 1830s. He then went on to found the first immediate emancipation association in New Hampshire, the Portsmouth Anti-Slavery Society, with his friends. As an editor Rogers proved to be as hardnosed and progressive as his more famous counterpart charged with *The Liberator*.⁵⁷

Rogers loved music. Later on he would press his own children to form a singing group (a fairly talented bunch, The Rogers Family, modeled on the Hutchinson Family Singers), but in 1842 the editor was enamored of the Hutchinsons. Nathaniel P. Rogers and the Hutchinson Family Singers turned out to be an ideal match. He quickly developed into the troupe's biggest fan; they quickly developed into the vocalists of antislavery. Rogers' editorship meant that he could be more than a musical aficionado; he could be the Family Singers most important promoter. As John, Asa, and Judson began to tour in 1842, Rogers undoubtedly recognized them from the annual antislavery meetings held in Milford. This connection helped earn them a July review in his *Herald*. Here he dubbed the Hutchinsons, who were performing under the name of the Æolian Vocalists, "The New-Hampshire 'Rainers.'" This was a reference to a very popular Swiss family of singers, The Rainers, who enjoyed great success in the 1820s and 1830s when touring the United States. It was a tremendous compliment, one that helped generate a approving climate for the response to the music of the Hutchinsons.⁵⁸

For the antislavery public, Rogers' attentiveness to the Hutchinson Family Singers must have been unexpected. His early pieces on the group were quite extensive, but the singers had yet to proclaim their antislavery sentiments from the stage. The Hutchinsons were actually very much like the Rainers—family singers who accentuated their place of

origin to suggest something unique in their performance (for the Hutchinson Family Singers this place was New Hampshire). This fact made the musicians' review seem out of place in a major reform publication. Rogers, fully aware of this anomaly, began to justify his articles on the singers by stressing that they were from the "anti-slavery town of Milford."⁵⁹ Not yet singers for freedom, the enlightened reputation of their hometown earned them a splash of reform respectability. For the time being their personal connection to antislavery remained private.

Rogers heard the Family Singers again in July, only this time the brothers had their sister Abby on stage with them. The performance was tremendous. In the *Herald of Freedom* Rogers equated their instrumental talent to Paganini—the famed Italian violinist and showman who died only two years earlier—and the Greek God Orpheus. As for their singing, he found it "truly eloquent and overpowering." Then, as if he hadn't endorsed them enough, the editor closed his lengthy article with a bold declaration: "If the Hutchinson's [sic] come again to Concord, or any where, where these presents may come, I can warrant all true lovers of music, a regale well worth their pains and the trifling ticket price."⁶⁰ This was precisely the kind of publicity that the struggling young singers needed, but no one could have predicted how far it would take them.

In his next piece on the ensemble, which was also carried by the *Liberator*, Rogers candidly admitted his bias. He wrote, "perhaps I am partial to the Hutchinsons, for they are abolitionists." It was a peculiar sort of coming out for the reform-minded entertainers and yet Rogers was convinced that "it need not affright them to have it announced." The possibility that the Hutchinsons would be banned from stages for their antislavery beliefs

was not inconceivable (and was something that they would face later in their career). John Greenleaf Whittier and Lydia Maria Child were just two who felt that all of their work had been slighted because of their reform sympathies. This could have been a moment of unwelcomed focus for the family of singers. Instead it worked to their advantage. They were introduced into a reform niche ripe for musical invasion. This result does not lessen the seriousness of Rogers' actions. The Hutchinsons' career was placed at a great risk because their art, music, was already viewed with caution by many Americans. Adding antislavery to this mix could have untracked their whole endeavor.⁶¹

At the very performance that Rogers raved about, the Hutchinsons took in eighteen dollars, of which about fourteen was left after expenses. This, while a good sum compared to the income of the average worker, was not much when split four ways. It was even less when one realizes that they were not bringing in this amount every week, let alone every night. Considering that they "left the people of C[oncord] in extacies," the sum was paltry. On this night Judson was much more concerned about the mosquito bites he suffered after the performance than the money. But, at other times, it was not unusual for him to lament that when thinking of the future his "eyes become dull" or for John to scribble that the group was "short due expenses to night." The Hutchinsons continually worried about their career choice as 1842 was terribly disheartening.⁶²

Nathaniel Rogers' next suggestion did little to lessen their despair. Neither the Hutchinsons or Rogers understood the possible consequences of the editor's August appeal that the musicians compose a "series of anti-slavery melodies, to sing at their Concerts."⁶³ Thanks to the newspaper experience of their older brother Jesse, the Family Singers were

always rather publicity savvy. And now they were at a turning point in their career. Their parents desperately wanted twelve-year old Abby back home and her brothers to find “real” jobs. Meanwhile the entertainers were financially strapped and a well-known editor publicly made a request of the group. Rogers’ appeal was not completely outlandish, after all he was one of New Hampshire’s most famous abolitionists. What else was a man in his position to ask of these artists? Rogers most certainly knew that the Family Singers had already begun to perform temperance songs and to sing at temperance functions. A jump to antislavery entertainment seemed to him a reasonable request and clearly the reform was in line with the Hutchinsons thinking as proven by their attendance at antislavery meetings. How hard could it be for them to come up with some material? What he may not have known was that the Hutchinsons were desperate and would try anything before going back to work in Lynn. The editor had opened the door, the Hutchinsons would have to make it happen.

Rogers’ request was an intriguing one. The world of antislavery reform was not music minded. It teetered on the edge of utilizing song to promote its message and this was very different from the other major antebellum reform, temperance. The close ties between temperance reform and the church ensured that temperance hymns could flourish. And they did. Lyrics to traditional church hymns were adapted many times throughout the 1830s in support of temperance. The American Temperance Union published many of these in their 1837 journal and as 1842 rolled around temperance leaders wrote that “the influence of Temperance Songs is no longer to be questioned, as a pleasing, useful, and powerful means of carrying forward our Cause.” Anti-alcohol reformers also held music to

be a positive stimulus within American society—it was one of several forms of entertainment that would keep Americans morally preoccupied thus avoiding idleness which they believed to cause drinking.⁶⁴

The links forged between temperance and music did not translate to antislavery. Antebellum Americans, though faced with an increase in leisure time, did not find that idleness lead to slavery. And while there were a handful of antislavery hymns in use in the 1830s, by 1840 many in the movement had isolated themselves from the church. Religious institutions were often seen as enablers for slavery therefore the sound of an antislavery hymn was a bit unwelcoming to abolitionists. The problem inherent to the situation was that church music represented the closest thing Americans had to a shared musical language. In order for a tune to ring familiar in reformers' ears, the music of antislavery had to draw upon the church tradition and somehow lose its overt relationship to the sacred institution. In the 1840s and 1850s the musicians who exploited this relationship best were the writers and performers of popular songs. The music of Henry Russell, from which the Hutchinsons borrowed freely and frequently, combined sacred based tunes with original lyrics. With this formula he created such antebellum hits as "Ole Dan Tucker" and "The Maniac."

The music of the Hutchinson Family Singers utilized Russell's successful formula to sidestep the thorny issue surrounding the church and antislavery. But even arming themselves with widely loved tunes to support their reform lyrics did not appease everyone in the movement. Lucretia Mott, a leading female abolitionist, was thoroughly repulsed by the thought of any music at antislavery meetings. A month before the New York anniversary convention she sent out a letter on behalf of her husband and herself stating that

“we are sorry to hear that the Hutchinson family of singers is expected to be there.” The Motts found little reason for the American Anti-Slavery Society to descend “to mere excitement to carry on the work.” Satisfied with the “high ground” of “rational appeals” at antislavery conventions, Mott was concerned about the possible alienating affect that music would have upon the Quaker element of the abolitionist world. She wished to have music confined to those who enjoyed it and not pressed upon the entire body. The only reason she attended the New York meeting was a feeling that her absence would mean a victory for those wishing to deny women a public antislavery voice. “So,” she wrote, “we shall go.”⁶⁵

Mott was hardly the first to reject innovations within the antislavery movement. In 1840 James Gibbons opposed the sale antislavery medallions—pieces which helped create a visual base of antislavery. Almost any American who saw the kneeling slave in chains understood it as a representation of the antislavery reformers. Yet Gibbons mocked the decorative pieces, claiming that young children could “cut their gums with an Anti-Slavery Medal” while “older folks may use theirs for their *wisdom* teeth.” Gibbons’ joking aside, his objection to the medals was charged by a personal aesthetic. Mott’s objection was based in religion. There was a long and deep connection between Quakers and antislavery reform. Lucretia Mott’s complaint got to the heart of why music, which was fast becoming the most popular entertainment of the day, was spurned by the antislavery movement until the 1840s. While many Americans’ religious upbringing taught them that music was ungodly, this current was even stronger in the Society of Friends who found “stage plays, horse races, music, and dancing,” to be “vain sports and pastimes” for those whose “delight is in the law of the Lord.” Mott once used the word “threadbare” to describe the atmosphere at

an annual Quaker meeting in Philadelphia. She wrote another telling statement at the same time, this one about entertainment—"music, very wicked."⁶⁶

Despite the hurdles facing the Hutchinsons, they proceeded down the path to merge music and abolitionism with relative ease. They started in their hometown. In December of 1842 the antislavery reformers in New Hampshire were livid. Thomas Parnell Beach had been imprisoned for speaking on behalf of the slave. A sense of disgrace stirred the citizens of Milford who announced, "RALLY! RALLY!! RALLY!!! Beach Anti-Slavery Meeting at Milford, New-Hampshire, January 4th, and 5th, 1843...Our liberty—your liberty—EVERY MAN'S LIBERTY IS IN JAIL!" Forty-two names accompanied the ad and the Hutchinsons were clearly on board. John, Jesse, Jr., and their brother Benjamin endorsed the public notice that appeared for several weeks in the *Herald of Freedom*. Only four months earlier the Family Singers had been egged on by an enthusiastic Rogers to sing for antislavery. What better time to test it out than at a meeting in Milford?⁶⁷

"BEACH IS OUT!," read a headline only a week before the Milford convention. Released from prison, Thomas Beach would now participate in the Milford assembly that was called due to his incarceration. Initially a ground for outrage, the meeting now took on a tone of celebration. The changed atmosphere did not catch the Hutchinsons off guard. Neither did the terrible snow storm, a "mischievous Nor'wester," that pummeled Milford that day. In fact, music was not the only thing that the Hutchinsons had in store. Jesse contributed a resolution against the supportive stance of the church towards slavery. Normally an expert at succinct expression, Jesse appeared nervous as his proposal was both lengthy and convoluted. Fortunately an ever alert Nathaniel Rogers condensed Jesse's

resolution into something more accessible. The entertainers would not need Rogers' assistance when singing. In a rather spectacular style, they took the reformers in Milford by surprise and made antislavery music.⁶⁸

At a meeting that featured passionate speeches from Thomas Parnell Beach and George Latimer, the performances of the Hutchinson Family Singers were distinguished as "the charm of the meeting." Rogers claimed that nothing showed "anti-slavery zeal" better than their "popular and striking music of Advent and Revival" which rang out in Milford's Old Meeting House "like trumpet-bursts of music." The Hutchinsons began by introducing Thomas Beach through an especial song obviously prepared for his entrance. Beach's delayed arrival only added to the aura of the Hutchinsons offering. From either the stairs leading up to the balcony or from the balcony itself the Family Singers then continued "to burst down upon" the meeting with perfectly tailored selections.⁶⁹

Their first antislavery meeting was a mystifying achievement. On Thursday morning January 5th—the final day of the Milford antislavery meeting—the following was approved: "Resolved, That whatever else of deficiency may be charged on New-Hampshire abolitionism, the Anti-Slavery Host will always look to her for the *music*, so long as her Mountains can send down into the field 'THE NEW-HAMPSHIRE RAINERS.'" Nathaniel Rogers even spent the night at the Hutchinson's family farm. A more smashing success would have been difficult to imagine. Except, of course, if they were to play for a much larger audience in Boston or in New York. This was exactly what Rogers thought.⁷⁰

"While I think of it, I suggest to the Massachusetts Society to invite them to their approaching anniversary," penned the eager editor in January of 1843, "Boston would stand

amazed at their mountain melody.” In all likelihood, Rogers did not have to push very hard for the Hutchinsons. The craze had started. The Hutchinsons had been wise to build a connection to the movement before flooding the reformers with song. It provided them with the necessary reform credentials prior to delivering antislavery messages through new media. While this probably was not their intent when they began to attend antislavery meetings a few years earlier, it had worked out that way. Their smooth transition to singing abolitionists brought a sudden interest in music from antislavery reformers. By February 1843 the *Herald of Freedom* published a bunch of “Anti-Slavery Hymns and Songs” that were set to such tunes as “Auld Lang Syne,” “America,” and the “Missionary Hymn.”⁷¹ The leaders of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, feeling the momentum of something new and exciting, followed Rogers’s suggestion and invited the Family Singers to their 1843 meeting in Boston.

Danvers, Massachusetts, 1893

After Parker Pillsbury finished explaining why he hadn’t voted in quite some time—the government taxed his wife, who was not allowed to vote, breaking the fundamental principle of the Revolution, no taxation without representation—John Hutchinson added another song. This time it was “There’s No Such Word as Fail.” The reason for this selection is rather plain. Asa Hutchinson had composed the music and George W. Putnam, the current president of the Danvers Historical Society, wrote the words. When John finished, George T. Downing took the podium and remembered a New York antislavery meeting. At this event, Downing recalled, John and his siblings squashed a disturbance

from a menacing group of New Yorkers led by the infamous Isaiah Rynders. Rynders was a political animal connected to Tammany Hall, notorious for his skillful instigation of riots. Rynders gathered the proslavery mob which infiltrated the meeting, causing all kinds of mayhem. The assembly ground to a halt amidst the interruptions. Then, Downing shared, “without any announcement, the Hutchinsons rose in the audience, or rather in the gallery, and with their sweet voices completely tamed the wild beast.”⁷²

George Downing was not the only reformer who had found this event remarkable. On different occasions, both Frederick Douglass and Elizabeth Cady Stanton had also recalled the Hutchinsons’ crowd control capabilities. When neither Garrison or Wendell Phillips could silence the mob, “the voices of this family came down from the gallery of the Old Tabernacle, like a message from the sky, and in an instant all was hushed and silent,” penned Douglass shortly before his death. Stanton similarly recalled that “perhaps, after one of their ballads, the mob would listen five minutes.”⁷³ In an era that featured raucous disruptions of antislavery gatherings, the Hutchinsons discovered a way to contain distractions. Much more than abolitionism as entertainment, the Family Singers were remembered as an essential combatant to unnerve antislavery’s adversaries.

When Downing finished his remembrance, John stood to elaborate on the Family Singers’ activities at antislavery meetings. He said that it “was not always convenient for us to be announced from the stage.” As long as the Hutchinson Family Singers were in the audience, he continued, “when the opportunity came to do our duty, we did it.” John then read a letter from Abby’s husband, Ludlow Patton, which stated that while he and, of course, Abby could not be at the Danvers gathering in person, they are there in spirit.

Delivering the letter deeply stirs John and, feeling that sense of duty once more, he sang another antislavery staple, “The Slave’s Appeal.” The Danvers’s listeners applauded passionately, they wanted nothing more than to hear the old bard.⁷⁴

Boston, Massachusetts, 1843

*My county! 'tis of thee, Stronghold of slavery, Of thee I sing:
My native country Thee, Where all men are born free,
If white their skin.*
—*Anti-Slavery Melodies*, 1842—⁷⁵

When William Lloyd Garrison ran Nathaniel P. Rogers’s article about the recent Beach antislavery convention in a January edition of the *Liberator* he added a short editorial note. It stated simply that an invitation would be given to the Hutchinson Family Singers to attend the upcoming meetings in Boston’s Faneuil Hall. True to his word the group made what was their first major antislavery appearance on Wednesday, January 25th. Much like their premier antislavery appearance in Milford and later showings in New York, the convention was structured around performances from the Family Singers. On the first day they sang twice in the morning and then closed out the afternoon session. That evening they presented another song and also concluded the final session of the day at 11 P.M. Thursday followed a similar course, except this day they influenced several debates with their music—“the discussion was enlivened by two appropriate songs by Messrs. Hutchinson”—and, again, ended the late night discussion with “a thrilling song.” On the final day of the Eleventh Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, the

Hutchinsons interjected music into some tense debates and, of course, vocalized two songs during the waning moments prior to the convention's adjournment.⁷⁶

Although it was only the second time that the troupe had graced the platform at an antislavery conference, this format would represent their standard practice in the years to come. According to the reviews, their methods worked wonders. The singers had "enchancing powers" that "made the thousands at Fanueil Hall spring to their feet simultaneously...with a cheering that almost moved the old revolutionists from their stations on the wall." Clearly the Hutchinsons had given the hall, a "large, dreary place, with its walls and innumerable dingy windows," an energy not felt since the days of the Revolution. Their presence, it was stated, most probably "contributed considerably to keeping up the unparalleled attendance, that thronged the hall."⁷⁷

Along with a larger venue and greater public exposure came an increased scrutiny. Who was paying the group to perform? Who were these Hutchinsons and what right did they have to interrupt abolitionist meetings? These were just some of the doubts voiced about the role of the Family Singers. The man who was in a large part responsible for their presence in Boston, N. P. Rogers, took it upon himself to answer the Hutchinsons' skeptics. "They are not wandering, mercenary troubadours, who go about selling their strains for bread or brandy," he wrote, "they were not hired as performers." The New Hampshire editor went on, asserting that "they were there as Garrison and Boyle were, as Douglass and Remond and Phillips, and the rest of us." His point was clear. The Family Singers were abolitionists. This was difficult for many reformers, raised with religious doubts about entertainers' decency, to grasp. Surely the group was unhealthy for

antislavery in some way. But Rogers did not equivocate; he was certain that the Hutchinsons “were not mere vocalists.” To him the singers were sincere reformers who, like every other reformer, sacrificed their time and money for their convictions.⁷⁸

Things were never as clear as they seemed in this debate. The Hutchinson Family Singers were not as noble as their supporters maintained or as vile as their critics declared. A few weeks after the word of the Hutchinson Family’s January antislavery presentations had spread around town, the group capitalized on this reform generated publicity with two concerts in Boston. Garrison, not Rogers, helped them drum up a respectful audience. A week prior to their February 28th show, a blurb appeared in *The Liberator* which appeared to have been written by its editor. It bluntly stated that the words of Nathaniel Rogers “barely do them justice” and goes on to promote the Hutchinsons’ upcoming show. On the same page one can find an advertisement taken by the Family Singers announcing a “**VOCAL CONCERT. AT THE MELODEON.**” For 25 cents, or one dollar for the whole family, Bostonians were encouraged to see the “moral worth and modest desert” presented at a concert of the Hutchinson Family Singers.⁷⁹

The Hutchinsons did not stop with this performance. Only a week later ads appeared again for the “**SECOND AND LAST CONCERT BY THE HUTCHINSON FAMILY.**” Apparently, their first performance on Tuesday had gone quite well and on Saturday, March 4th, the siblings were going to offer a concert, “being **POSITIVELY** the **LAST** for the season.” The group proposed a performance of original compositions along with other well-known pieces. Tickets were the same price as their previous offering. In a testimony to their determination and popularity, the Hutchinsons would ignore their own advertising claims

and return to Boston at least six more times in 1843. However if the “season” in question in their announcement was winter, then the Family Singers’ claim that their March show was the “last for the season” was accurate. Their next show was in May, the “spring season.”⁸⁰

The Hutchinson Family Singers’ use of antislavery meetings to help build their personal performances was not unique to Boston. In New York a few months later it was even more explicit. Two days after the anniversary meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society ended, the Hutchinsons performed in Concert Hall, the same space in which the convention had been held. On May 14th, 1843, the morning after this performance, Asa reported “first rate Satisfaction” at the show which attracted “about 200” New Yorkers. The Hutchinson Family Singers would go on to perform several more times in Brooklyn and New York during the month of May. At the conclusion of what can only be described as a fantastic first-run in New York, Asa observed: “The people of New York are crazy after ‘The Hutchinsons.’ We have accomplished our ‘aimes’ for the people are completely charmed. I suppose we might Stop in New York a month and make a thousand dollars each!”⁸¹

For all their sincere antislavery convictions, the Hutchinsons had larger goals for their musical talent. Asa’s last comment was part premonition. In October 1843, the Hutchinson Family Singers moved to New York for over two months and played roughly twenty-three concerts. While there are disputes as to how many people attended their final shows at Niblo’s in December, somewhere between 1200 (Asa’s estimate and the listed capacity of the garden) and 2000 people came every night. Their profit margin at these last two concerts exceeded \$600 per evening.⁸²

With this evidence, an explanation for the Hutchinsons' absence at the opening session of the tenth annual meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society is clear. It appears that the group had been doing more than just enjoying the flora at Niblo's Garden on that May morning, their second day ever in New York. Niblo's was one of the premier performance spaces in the city and the Hutchinsons no doubt skipped the antislavery meeting in order to forge a connection to this popular institution. Using the overwhelmingly supportive reviews from the antislavery press and backed by music publishers who began to print the Family Singers' works, the group eventually was allowed the opportunity to play at the gardens.

The fantastic accomplishments of the Hutchinson Family Singers in 1842 and 1843 would not have been possible without the assistance of N.P. Rogers and the American Anti-Slavery Society. The singers' climb to prominence coincided with an ambitious campaign by the society to flood New England with antislavery reform. 1843 was to be a banner year for the American Anti-Slavery Society as they planned it to be the year of the Hundred Conventions. One hundred antislavery meetings was the organization's goal. And judging from the Hutchinsons' busy schedule, one would never guess that the Society's aim was not achieved.⁸³ After their January appearance in Boston the singing abolitionists were the most sought after members of the antislavery community. There were the pleas—"The **Hutchinsons**, are cordially and earnestly invited by the Essex County Abolitionists, to meet them at their Annual Meeting;" "Our friends 'of the tribe of Jesse,' from the Old Granite State, are specially invited to be present on this occasion;" "among whom we hoped to be favored with the musical talent of friend Rogers' 'New-Hampshire Rainers,' the

Hutchinsons”—and then there were the pronouncements—“C.L. REMOND, GEORGE LATIMER, and the HUTCHINSONS, will be present;” “The Hutchinson Family will be present, in full strength. Enough said!”—and lastly the reports that the Hutchinsons led a singing of the “Our Father” in Andover; that they sang their “Friendly Greeting” for the antislavery gathering in Haverhill; and that “the Hutchinsons...contributed to bring out the people” for an abolitionist picnic in Lowell.⁸⁴

The ties between the Hutchinsons and antislavery only strengthened throughout 1843. It is difficult to qualify the relationship between the Hutchinsons and the movement. At times the singers look like musical parasites feeding off of the well-functioning network of reformers. But, just as often, the Hutchinsons, through their use of a medium that quickly became central to American society, appear as antislavery saviors—which was how many reformers characterized the association. In fact, some in the movement began to worry about how the group was making a living since they were not profiting from their antislavery shows. During a March meeting in Massachusetts a collection was taken to benefit the Hutchinsons. The group wanted no part of it, however, and quickly announced that the monies were to be donated to former slave George Latimer and Charles Lenox Remond, a black antislavery leader from Salem.⁸⁵ Refusing the public generosity of antislavery reformers was common for the Hutchinsons, but they were not averse to more subtle forms of support. Somewhat hidden in the “disbursements” for the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society’s twelfth annual meeting in January of 1844 was the fact the organization paid \$33.53 to rent Faneuil Hall and that the “amount paid per order of the Board, for traveling expenses of the Hutchinsons in attending annual meeting” was \$15.00.

The Family Singers had become so valuable that abolitionists were willing to pay the musicians' way to Boston in order to guarantee their attendance. Field agents of the society, often professional men who had to travel and thus could widely solicit subscriptions to antislavery publications, were one such group that received payment for traveling expenses. The leaders obviously felt the Family Singers brought more than "delightful and inspiring" songs to the movement; they were agents of antislavery in their own right.⁸⁶

The important link between the Hutchinson Family Singers' reform ambition and their personal gain was always downplayed, if not completely denied. Yet it would be hard to imagine the Hutchinsons having gripped the attention of Americans without the resources of the antislavery movement. Frederick Douglass once wrote that the Hutchinson Family Singers' "fine talent for music could have secured for them wealth and fame, but, like Moses, they preferred to suffer affliction in the cause of justice and liberty." A noble statement, but the black abolitionist was more accurate when he wrote to John in 1894 that the Family Singers "have dared to sing for a cause first and for cash afterward."⁸⁷

Following 1843, the Hutchinsons' relationship to antislavery reform increasingly blurred the distinction between their own personal performances and their abolitionist work. This was common among antislavery figures like Anthony Burns (a former fugitive slave) who was offered \$100 per week to appear in P.T. Barnum's New York museum. The combination of fashionable antislavery celebrities and the further politicization of slavery made distinctions between reform and entertainment harder to judge. An ad for a Hutchinson Family Singer performance not connected to an antislavery meeting surprisingly stated, "Tickets for sale at the Anti-Slavery Office." Normally the Hutchinsons would sell

at several hotels and the local music stores, but it was much easier for them to use the agents of the antislavery society. As the lines were blurred, the Hutchinsons opened themselves up to increasing criticism and to doubts from within the movement. In fact public scrutiny from both friends and foes of antislavery never ceased as the 1840s progressed. But for several months in 1843, these singers mesmerized antislavery reformers with their efforts. In June the *Practical Christian* decided that John, Asa, Judson, Jesse, Jr, and Abby were the most important antislavery phenomenon of the year:

The music of the Hutchinsons carries all before it. It was a most important charm to collect and attach people to the meetings of the Convention. Speechifying, even of the better sort, did less to interest, purify and subdue minds, than this irresistible anti-slavery music. To this an' to the great Latimer excitement of last year, may be mainly attributed the increased interest evinced in the late gathering.⁸⁸

Danvers, Massachusetts, 1893

As the meeting slowly wound down, the honorable George W. Putnam made his way to the front of the room. It is likely that Putnam first heard the Hutchinsons in 1842 after moving to Nashua, N.H., a stone's throw away from Milford. Throughout his life Putnam displayed a genuine love of music, teaching at singing schools in towns like Lowell and Nashua. As the president of the institution sponsoring the commemoration, it was only appropriate for the eighty-three year-old to kick off a round of closing remarks: "Gray haired and bent with age—we, a portion of the veterans of the 'old guard of freedom' who still linger on earth, have come here today by the kind invitation of the Danvers Historical Society, to exchange our last greetings, and, with our fellow citizens to commemorate the most sublime event in human history, the abolition of American slavery and the

emancipation of four millions of chattel slaves!” He then invited his listeners to go back sixty years and recall the hypocrisy of America—slavery in the land of liberty. “These things are hard and unpleasant to think of,” Putnam insisted and, after praising those at the meeting a few more times, he inquired, “What was the character of these early abolitionists?” Did they always agree? Absolutely not—“They had their sharp angles of character, and they disputed vehemently over the ways and means of carrying out their warfare with slavery.”⁶⁹

The Danvers’ celebration was exactly the festive occasion that the old reformers desired. They did not wish to acknowledge current problems, but rather bask in the belief that they had solved the most pressing American dilemma of the nineteenth century. One cannot deny, however, that “sharp angles of character” persisted. They were simply absent from this grand celebration. The one contentious issue that was solidly voiced at the reunion was women’s suffrage. A minority of the Danvers’ speakers compared the struggle against slavery to the contemporary struggle for women’s right to vote. This, they claimed, was to be the next step in the fight for freedom. Yet the tone of the meeting remained unchanged. The feeling that the struggle for liberty had been won during the Civil War remained firmly ensconced in the hearts and minds of most of the reformers. In addition, a general agreement existed that the reunioners at Danvers had “always stood in favor of the freedom of public speaking women.” So women’s rights was not a radical concept to this crowd. The struggle over this issue, while gaining impetus in the 1890s, was, in fact, a tired dispute to these aged reformers who could remember the same questions regarding suffrage raised for the past fifty years. To them, women’s rights was a cause lacking the

urgency that antislavery once prompted in antebellum society. The one issue that should have raised eyebrows at the meeting was mentioned briefly by former slave Reverend Peter Randolph. Race relations, he thought, could be solved by turning to the brotherhood and unity revealed through religion. One would presume that a comment of this nature would rankle a group so confident that the abolition of slavery had ended the problems between black and white Americans. Randolph's comment, however, passed without further remark.⁹⁰

Following George Putnam's address, John and his progeny sang the Hutchinsons' signature closing tune, "The Old Granite State." The assembly at Danvers was not over yet however. Only after John led the audience in a stirring rendition of "My Country, 'tis of thee," did the Commemorative Meeting of the Danvers Historical Society officially end. Five months later A.P. Putnam wrote that "but for the absence of all signs of angry dissent or violent opposition, one might almost have fancied himself transported back to the abolition meetings of the long ago." Of John he said that few have "dissolved more of slavery's chains by human voice, than has he; and it is the consciousness of a life so spent that makes age at once happy and interesting."⁹¹

Chicago, Illinois, 1893

I hope the American people will never underrate the influence of the songs of the Hutchinson family. I wish we had another such, attuned to the times and needs of the present hour...

—Wendell P. Garrison, 1891—⁹²

There was a curious omission from the ranks gathered in Danvers' Town Hall which no one seemed to notice. Frederick Douglass did not attend. Douglass, the most famous

abolitionist alive, had spent the year before the Danvers convention recharging his reform zeal. At the root of his new consciousness was a friendship with Ida B. Wells. Wells' journalism exposed the economic and racial impulses behind Southern lynchings that were more commonly attributed to blacks' licentious nature. After reading her work, Douglass was appalled with himself, bemoaning that he "had begun to believe it true that there was an increased lasciviousness on the part of Negroes." Of course the black leader was not completely oblivious to the circumstances in which black Americans were living. He understood all too well that, following the 1876 election, the Republican party—the party of Lincoln—was no longer committed to its black supporters. Douglass keenly felt that recent years were filled with "reaction and darkness" and grumbled that "the air has been filled with reconciliations between those who fought for freedom and those who fought for slavery." And so he searched for answers. Sometimes he turned to his aging abolitionist colleagues. Early in 1892 he singled out John G. Whittier, Robert Purvis, and Parker Pillsbury as the only worthy members left from the old antislavery days. But if the Danvers' commemoration was any sign, his old friends, by and large, would not sufficiently serve him. It was not until he came across Wells that he found a new place and a new inspiration for his voice.⁹³

The famed abolitionist's absence at the Danvers meeting was no accident. He wrote to the convention goers that "to see Parker Pillsbury, the man who was perhaps the source of more terror to the proslavery church and clergy of his day than any other, and to see John Hutchinson, the only remaining one of the Hutchinson Family which gave its youth, beauty, and transcendent musical genius to the cause of the slave, would compensate me for

any trouble a long journey would require at my hands.” Yet Douglass did not make the trip. It was not that he was unconcerned about the days of emancipation—in fact one of Douglass’s black critics, Rev. Alexander Crummell, came to see the famous spokesman’s obsession with slavery’s past as a hindrance to the contemporary struggle of African Americans. The explanation was simple: In April of 1893 Douglass was at his post at the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago as the commissioner of the Republic of Hayti pavilion, a position he acquired as a former U.S. ambassador to the Caribbean nation.

And he was often upset by what he witnessed at the fair. During a celebration in honor of the four hundredth anniversary of Columbus’s discovery of the New World, a gala showcasing the future of human progress, blacks were presented as an amusing side-show. Nothing better demonstrated this than Colored People’s Day at the fair in August. The event which was supposed to showcase black artists and black achievement quickly turned into a mockery—Douglass arrived early at the fairgrounds only to discover that vendors had been stocked with watermelons. Not amused, he stormed off.⁹⁴

Unlike other black leaders, including Ida Wells, Douglass felt that Colored Americans Day offered the opportunity to highlight black accomplishment. So the famous orator returned at two-thirty to take his place in the afternoon festivities. Following the introductions, Douglass began to read a piece entitled “The Race Problem in America.” White hecklers who were dispersed throughout the crowd interrupted his speech. Douglass tried to continue, but could not. The combination of the critics and the summer heat appeared too much for the aged speaker. Seemingly defeated, he threw down his speech and then his glasses. Douglass, however, did not retreat. He regained the

thunderous voice of his youth and started, "Men talk of the Negro problem...There is no Negro problem. The problem is whether the American people have loyalty enough, honor enough, patriotism enough, to live up to their own Constitution." One hour later, he finished.⁹⁵

Douglass was not in Danvers because he preferred to be on the frontlines of the African American struggle for recognition at this global showcase. In 1893 he was not exuberant over the ending of slavery. Reawakened to the struggles of his race, he recommitted himself to the fight for civil rights. Celebrating the end of slavery would not only have been trite, but also useless for the enraged reformer. Douglass chose to fight at an international venue in the Midwest rather than pat himself on the back in New England. What he found in Chicago was upsetting. In the end, the fairgoers rejoiced in the comic visages that white Americans held of blacks and upheld a "scientific" ideology on exhibit that placed blacks near the bottom of the evolutionary scale. Simply put, "the White City took no account of the inhumanity endured by black Americans."⁹⁶ Douglass had lived through the 1840s and what he saw in 1893 looked strikingly similar. Black Americans were living in virtual slavery, chained by poverty, violence, disenfranchisement, and racism. The predominately white convention that gathered on a spring day in Massachusetts—a group once at the forefront in the battle against slavery—turned a blind eye to these facts. In Danvers sat the most painful proof of how far apart race relations in the country had drifted. In Chicago, it was on display.

John Wallace Hutchinson found his way to the Windy City in the summer of 1893. Here he spent roughly six months wandering the fairgrounds, singing at a variety of events,

and mingling with luminaries. He remembered visiting Frederick Douglass as one of his first orders of business after arriving (see fig. 4 and fig. 5). John's memoirs, always boasting a touch of egoism, focused more upon his accomplishments, like singing "The Sword of Bunker Hill" on Massachusetts Day, than upon his friend's troubles within the "white walls" of the Exposition. John did attend the June 24th inauguration of the Hayti Building. Chicago papers reported that "the exercises were very appropriately opened with a song, 'The Millennium,' by dear John Hutchinson, who has so often sung in the cause of the freedom of the black people as he now sung in their triumph." This account obscured a striking fact: black musicians were relegated to spaces outside of the fairgrounds. During the festivities on Hayti Day, John and every other speaker and singer was accompanied by the all-white Iowa State Band. In order for visitors to hear black musicians they had to search for the rare performance on the fairgrounds held off the main drag or wander into one of many establishments catering to exhausted fairgoers outside of the Exposition. It was here, away from the fair, that people could hear a composer, pianist, and cornetist from Sedalia, Missouri, named Scott Joplin render his interpretations of the latest musical craze called ragtime.⁹⁷

August 25, 1893, was the infamous Colored People's Day at the fair. John Hutchinson sang one of "his inimitable songs" during the day's festivities—indeed John was only one of several featured white musicians. His thoughts on a day set aside for African Americans remain unknown as, other than a newspaper clip mentioning his own involvement in the revelry, John provided little else about the event in his memoirs. While Ida B. Wells proclaimed that Douglass's impromptu speech "had done more to bring our



Wires



139 BROAD ST.
LYNN, MASS.

Figure 4
JOHN HUTCHINSON



Figure 5
FREDERICK DOUGLASS

(Courtesy of the Lynn Museum)

cause to the attention of the American people than anything else which had happened during the fair,” John never mentioned Douglass’s name once within the context of this occasion. What does this silence suggest? It is important to note that the singer did not publicly condemn his outspoken friend. By singing at a variety of Douglass’s events in Chicago, the old bard demonstrated a certain degree of acquiescence. John Hutchinson’s support of Frederick Douglass appeared to be that of a brooding patriarch, saying nothing, silently standing in the shadows. John was a product of a white antebellum society that replaced the Enlightenment notion of equality with a promise of generous sympathy—the famed singer felt badly about the plight of Indians, black Americans, and women yet did very little beyond pointing out their oppressed condition. In this vein John remained the typical antebellum reformer throughout his life. The Civil War had greatly reshaped power relations in America, advantaging the weak to the detriment of their antagonists, but never to the discomfort or inconvenience of their white, male sympathizers. John believed the state of race relations in the 1890s was not his problem—equality was not on his agenda, compassion and pity were. To the elder singer’s credit, he was not appalled by Douglass’s message—their friendship continued strong until the black leader’s death in 1895. Almost immediately after the fair closed at the end of October of 1893, John sang a few tunes and introduced Douglass at a lecture held in Boston’s People’s Church. A little later both men were thrilled to have the former slave write the introduction to John’s two-volume memoir. And when Douglass died in 1895, John requested to sing at the funeral.⁹⁸

The difference between the two was that John reveled in being a relic from days past, while Douglass battled against being an “antique abolitionist.” The paths of these

hallowed reformers had split. In 1893 John Hutchinson was oblivious to the inequalities which created some of the very exclusions from society that moved him fifty years earlier. He now enjoyed the privileges afforded his whiteness without shame. Frederick Douglass's spirit had been rekindled and in the last few years of his life he led the wake up call to white America that blacks were now poised for a fuller participation in American society. This notion voiced prominently in the collaborative publication entitled *The Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition* proclaimed a new era of civil rights activism. And while black Americans were very much a part of the fair experience as visitors, speakers, workers, and performers, the African American vanguard looked to further this inclusion.⁹⁹

Samuel May wrote in 1874 that "it will be very difficult for most readers at this day to comprehend the extent and force of the hostility to the Abolitionists in 1835." It was a sentiment widely echoed by former antislavery advocates at such celebrations as the one years later in Danvers. This would not have been the case had they stood by Douglass's side in Chicago. There they would have felt transported back in time. John and his Danvers colleagues were living in a world that increasingly sanctioned everything that they had battled against. Disenfranchisement, lynchings, sharecropping, and other means were now employed to reinforce the nation's racial stratification. There was little need for actual slavery when this new system of virtual slavery kept power safely in white hands. Even black Americans were beginning to suffer from a "fading racial memory." The commemoration of emancipation in Washington, D.C., which had commenced every year since Congress first freed the slaves there on April 17, 1862, was now a celebration

shunned by the African American elite and virtually ignored by the younger generations for whom the event lacked meaning. Douglass once exclaimed that prejudice “hangs around my neck like a heavy weight.” These words closed one of his first public speeches. More than fifty years later they continued to ring true. Douglass could not tolerate it; John was more sanguine.¹⁰⁰

Notes

- ¹ Lydia Maria Child to Theodore D. Weld, 10 July 1880, *Letters of Lydia Maria Child* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1883), 259. Parker Pillsbury, *Acts of the Anti-Slavery Apostles* (Boston: Cupples, Upham, & Co., 1884), 46.
- ² This figure was surmised by taking the average temperature of April in the region from 1895 until 1910 (with 1895 the earliest for which there is data available), National Climactic Data Center, <<http://lwf.ncdc.noaa.gov/oa/ncdc.html>> 9 Dec. 2002. *Old Anti-Slavery Days: Proceedings of the Commemorative Meeting, Held by the Danvers Historical Society, at the Town Hall, Danvers, April 26, 1893, With Introduction, Letters and Sketches* (Danvers: Danvers Mirror Print, 1893), 1-2.
- ³ Picture and list of participants in the picture included between pages xxvii and l in *Old Anti-Slavery Days*. See the 44-star flag, The U.S. Flag Page <www.usflag.org/the.44.star.flag.html> 1 Mar. 2002.
- ⁴ Much in the same way some current scholars herald the Civil Rights Era as the "Second Reconstruction" the Rev. Austin Willey declared the Civil War as the "Second Revolution," *The History of the Antislavery Cause in State and Nation* (Portland, ME: Brown Thurston and Hoyt, Fogg & Donham, 1886), 30.
- ⁵ Henry Mayer, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1998), 51-55. David W. Bartlett, *Modern Agitators: or Pen Portraits of Living American Reformers* (New York: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1855), 111-112. Merton Dillon, "The Failure of American Abolitionists," *Abolitionism and American Reform*, ed. John R. McKivigan (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1999), 255. Wendell Phillips Garrison and Francis Jackson Garrison, *William Lloyd Garrison, 1805-1879: The Story of His Life Told By His Children*, 4 vols. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1885).
- ⁶ Donald Yacovone, *Samuel Joseph May and the Dilemmas of the Liberal Persuasion* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 3, 31, 40-41, 61. Samuel Joseph May, *Memoir of Samuel Joseph May* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1874), 50-51, 260. Mayer, 103-104, 199, 186, 387, 571, 412, 620. Ronald G. Walters, *The Antislavery Appeal: American Abolitionism After 1830* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978), 25. Albert J. Von Franck, *The Trials of Anthony Burns: Freedom and Slavery in Emerson's Boston* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 20.
- ⁷ David Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861*, ed. Don E. Ferenbacher (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1976), 139, 209, 210-211, 220-221.
- ⁸ John B. Pickard, introduction to *The Letters of John Greenleaf Whittier* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 1:xix, xviii, xiv. Bartlett, *Modern Agitators*, 243. See also Thomas Wentworth Higginson to Mother, 10 July 1859, *Letters and Journals of Thomas Wentworth Higginson, 1846-1906*, ed. Mary Thatcher Higginson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1921), 107. John Greenleaf Whittier to Thomas J. Mumford, 3 Nov.

1871, *The Letters of John Greenleaf Whittier*, ed. John B. Pickard, 3:151. W. Sloane Kennedy, *John Greenleaf Whittier: His Life, Genius, and Writings* (Boston: S.E. Cassino, 1882), 9. John B. Pickard, "Whittier's Abolitionist Poetry," *Memorabilia of John Greenleaf Whittier* (Hartford: The Emerson Society, 1968), 109. Van Wyck Brooks, *The Flowering of New England, 1815-1865* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1937), 400, 398, 401. Poem included on the broadside, *Am I Not a Man and a Brother?* (n.p., 1837). John Greenleaf Whittier, "Stanzas," *The Early Poems of John Greenleaf Whittier Comprising Mogg Megone, The Bridal of Pennacook, Legendary Poems, Voices of Freedom, and Songs of Labor* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1885), 137. See explanatory notes in Pickard, *Letters*, 2:637. For more examples of Whittier's reporting through poetry see Whittier, "Lines on the Adoption of Pinckney's Resolutions," "The World's Convention of the Friends of Emancipation, Held in London in 1840," "Lines, Written for the Meeting of the Antislavery Society, at Chatham Street Chapel, N. Y., 1834," *The Early Poems*, 226-228, 170-178, 162-163. Whittier also wrote public letters about current events, see Whittier to Essex Transcript, 6 Oct. 1843; Whittier to Essex Transcript, 20 May 1844, *Letters*, 1:607, 638.

⁹ Kennedy, *John Greenleaf Whittier*, 99-100. Brooks, 398-399. Pickard, "Introduction," xv. Whittier's name is included among those American writers listed in the "Poet's Corner" dedicated in St. John the Divine Church in New York, NY during the 1980s. Frederick Douglass, *The Anti-Slavery Movement. A Lecture by Frederick Douglass before the Rochester Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society* (Rochester: Press of Lee, Mann & Co., 1855), 40.

¹⁰ Pickard, "Introduction," xxi, xxxv. Whittier to Samuel May, 27 Mar. 1840, *Letters*, 1:402. Thomas Wentworth Higginson also relayed Whittier having negative things to say about Garrison in 1849, *Letters and Journals*, 8.

¹¹ In Massachusetts white men between 30 and 40 years old in 1850 could expect to live for another 34 to 28 years, while white women in the same range another 35 to 30 years, Information Please, "Life Expectancy by Age, 1850-1999," <<http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0005140.html>> 26 Feb. 2002. Mayer, 620. H.B.B., "Memorial Meeting for Maria Weston Chapman" in Lewis Ford, *The Variety Book Containing Life Sketches and Reminiscences* (Boston: Geo. E. Crosby & Co., 1892), 53. Stacey M. Robertson, *Parker Pillsbury: Radical Abolitionist, Male Feminist* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 184-185. William S. McFeely, *Frederick Douglass* (New York: Norton & Company, 1991), 359-360.

¹² Mayer, 628, 620.

¹³ John Wallace Hutchinson, *Story of the Hutchinsons (Tribe of Jesse)*, ed. Charles E. Mann (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1896), 1:382-384. Quote in Whittier to John Wallace Hutchinson, 6 Mar. 1862, *Letters*, 3:29. This letter is also included in John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:397. Whittier to John W. Hutchinson, 2 Dec. 1874, in *Story of the Hutchinsons*, 2:336. Whittier to Abigail Hutchinson Patton, 1889, *Life and Letters*, 2:744.

¹⁴ John Hutchinson, *Story*, 2:191. Roland H. Woodwell, *John Greenleaf Whittier: A Biography* (Haverhill: DBL Commercial Press, 1985), 529.

¹⁵ Susan B. Anthony to John W. Hutchinson, 9 Dec. 1892, *Memorabilia of the Hutchinson Family*, Gift of Mrs. Viola Hutchinson Campbell to the Lynn Historical Society, 1920.

Abby Hutchinson Patton to John Hutchinson, 6 June 1891, *Story of the Hutchinsons*, 2:381. Patton, *A Handful of Pebbles* (Privately Printed, 1891).

- ¹⁶ John Hutchinson, *Story*, 2:152-233. "High Rock Card of Inquiries" (Lynn: n.p., 1888) Wadleigh Memorial Public Library, Hutchinson Family Singers Collection Box 3, Item 98 [abbreviated WMPL 3, 98]. *The Seventieth Birthday Anniversary of John W. Hutchinson, (Tribe of John and Jesse,) At Tower Cottage, High Rock, Lynn, Mass. January Fifth, 1891* (Lynn: The Nichols Press, 1891). "Sings to Save," WMPL 3, 130. "Aged Singer in Cigarette War," *Boston Journal* 16 Dec. 1901, WMPL 3, 129. "He'll Sing Against Use of Cigarettes: Millionaire John W. Hutchinson, 81 Years Old, to Start on Tour," *American (Chicago)*, 25 Dec. 1901, WMPL 3, 129. "John W. Hutchinson," *New York World*, 16 Jan. 1900, WMPL 3, 128. John Hutchinson, *Story*, 2:153.
- ¹⁷ Mrs. Mary A. Livermore to John W. Hutchinson, 20 Aug. 1903, *Memorabilia of the Hutchinson Family*, 33. "John W. Hutchinson's Relatives Wish Him Declared Insane, Last of Famous Family, Nearly 80, He is said to Have Asked 20-Year-Old Girl to Marry Him—Is Known Nationally as a Singer—Has Much Property" *Boston Morning Post*, 16 July 16 1900, WMPL 3, 128. "John W Hutchinson of Lynn has appeared in court in Salem to prove his sanity. He called at the POINTER office last week. Uncle John is evidently o.k.," WMPL, 1,117. Carol Brink, *Harps in the Wind* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1947), 287. "John Hutchinson's Oxen Cremated," WMPL 1, 117. In the end, John gives his ample holdings of land in Minnesota to his family and turned over his estate on High Rock to the city of Lynn to be made into a park, see "Good News From High Rock," WMPL 3, 99. John Hutchinson, *Story*, 2:184. "Obituary," *New York Mail & Express*, 26 Nov. 1892; "Mrs. Abby Hutchinson Patton," *New York Herald*, 26 Nov. 1892; "One of the Hutchinsons. Death of a Woman who had Charmed Thousands with her Songs," *New York Times*, 26 Nov. 1892; "Abby Hutchinson Patton Dead," *New York World*, 26 Nov. 1892; "Funeral of the Late Abby Hutchinson Patton," *New Hampshire Republican*, 29 Nov. 1892, WMPL Box 3, Item 105. "Sung the People's Songs. Death at Her Home of Mrs. Abby Hutchinson Patton," 26 Nov. 1892, *Memorabilia of the Hutchinson Family*, 96. "The Last Minstrel," n.p., n.d., WMPL 3, 129. *Old Anti-Slavery Days*, 4. John Hutchinson, *Story of the Hutchinsons*, 2:200. John W. Hutchinson, "Address and Song By John W. Hutchinson," reported by Edward Noble and others, *Old Anti-Slavery Days*, 4.
- ¹⁸ Perley Derby, *The Hutchinson Family* (Salem: Essex Institute Press, 1870), 29. John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:3, 5. Von Franck, *The Trials of Anthony Burns*, xi, 59-60. Paul D. Escott, *After Secession: Jefferson Davis and the Failure of Confederate Nationalism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978).
- ¹⁹ Rogers M. Smith, *Civic Ideals* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997). Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (New York: Norton, 1998). A Horace Bushnell speech in 1851 accomplished many of the same things that John Hutchinson did in 1893, see Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *The Age of Homespun* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001), 24.
- ²⁰ Hutchinson Family Singers, *The Hutchinson Family's Book of Words* (New York: Baker, Goodwin & Co., 1852), 32. The song John offered is similar in theme to Henry Russell, "The Indian Hunter," (New York: Firth, Hall & Pond, n.d.). John Hutchinson, *Story*, 2:216-217. Eliza Cook, *The Poetical Works of Mary Howitt* (Boston: Phillips, Sampson, and Company, 1857), 360. Theodore and Sophie Bost to Ami, Jr. and Timothée, 13 Sep.

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- 1862, *A Frontier Family in Minnesota: Letters of Theodore and Sophie Bost, 1851-1920*, ed. Ralph H. Bowen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), 216. John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:340-353. John W. Hutchinson, *The Book of Brothers; (Second Series) Being A History of the Adventures of John W. Hutchinson and his Family in the Camps of the Army of the Potomac* (Boston: S. Chism, 1864), 22. Derby, 104.
- ²¹ Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: H. Holt and Company, 1920). Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 3.
- ²² John Hutchinson, *Old Anti-Slavery Days*, 4. Pillsbury, *Acts of the Anti-Slavery Apostles*, 80.
- ²³ "Anti-Slavery Convention at Milford," *The Herald of Freedom (Concord)*, 20 Nov 1840: 154. A. J. Coolidge and J. B. Mansfield, *A History and Description of New England, General and Local* (Boston: A. J. Coolidge, 1859), 1:396. The first antislavery meeting in Milford was probably held in October of 1835 in the schoolhouse of District number ten, Edith Hunter, *A Brief History of the Public Schools of Milford, New Hampshire, 1738-1972* (Wethersfield Center, VT: The Hunter Press, 1973), 29. Garrison, *The Liberator* (Boston), 13 Mar. 1840, cited in Walters, 14.
- ²⁴ David Goodwin, *Historical Sketch of the Town of Milford, New Hampshire, 1846*, ed. Milford Historical Society (Milford: The Cabinet Press, 1987), 8, 11-13. In the national election of 1848 Milford casts 46 Whig votes, 75 Democratic, and 176 Free Soil. In the 1852 Governor's race, 179 for Free Soil, 81 for Whig, and 98 for the Democrats. Goodwin recorded elections in 1854 and 1856 as those between "anti-slavery" and "pro slave." Voters overwhelmingly preferred the antislavery candidate—in the 1856 election nearly 3 out of four Milford votes were for John G. Freemont. Dale Cockrell, *Excelsior: Journals of the Hutchinson Family Singers, 1842-1846* (Stuyvesant: Pendragon Press, 1989), 93-94.
- ²⁵ John W. Quist, "The Great Majority of Our Subscribers are Farmers': The Michigan Abolitionist Constituency of the 1840s," *Abolitionism and American Reform*, 221. Walters, 3-18.
- ²⁶ Sarah H. Southwick, *Reminiscences of Early Anti-Slavery Days* (Boston: Privately Printed, 1893), 11. Walters, 27. Mayer, 200-205.
- ²⁷ George Storrs, *Mob, Under the Pretence of Law, or the Arrest and Trial of Rev. George Storrs at Northfield, N.H.* (Concord: Elbridge G. Chase, 1835), 3, 6-7. For oxen version, Mayer, 197. For horses, James Brewer Stewart, *Holy Warriors: The Abolitionists and American Slavery* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), 63.
- ²⁸ Pillsbury, 266. Lewis Ford, *Variety Book*, 22. Quote from Sallie Holley, *A Life for Liberty: Anti-Slavery and Other Letters of Sallie Holley*, ed. John White Chadwick (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1899), 6. Whittier cited in Stewart, 73.
- ²⁹ Pillsbury, 266, 318.
- ³⁰ Pillsbury, 102. Milford was also a station on the Underground Railroad and housed Harriet E. Wilson. Wilson, author of *Our Nig* (1859), was both the first African American woman

and first black person to publish a novel in the United States. She resided a short distance from the home of the Hutchinson Family Singers. See Barbara A. White, "'Our Nig' and the She-Devil: New Information about Harriet Wilson and the 'Bellmont' Family," *American Literature* 56.1 (Mar. 1993): 19-52.

³¹ Pillsbury, 102. "Anti-Slavery Convention at Milford," *The Herald of Freedom*, 20 Nov 1840, 154.

³² "Anti-Slavery Convention at Milford," *The Herald of Freedom*, 154.

³³ John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:8-9.

³⁴ "Declaration of Faith," *Church Covenant, and Catalogue of Members of the Baptist Church in Milford, N.H., August, 1859* (Milford: Boutwell's Book and Job Office, 1859), 17-19. John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:21, 2:239-240.

³⁵ See, for example, *Hymn for the Quarterly Meeting of the Mass. Anti-Slavery Society. Monday, March 28, 1836* (Boston: n.p., 1836).

³⁶ Cockrell, *Excelsior*, xxiv. "The performances," *Farmer's Cabinet* (Amherst), 13 Nov 1840, n.p. Brink, 8-9. John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:35-36. The selection of a lawyer to lecture on music is not a surprise. Lawyers, as well as merchants, printers, millers, and artisans played a disproportionate part in bringing urban cultural values to the countryside. See Richard D. Brown, "The Emergence of Urban Society in Rural Massachusetts, 1760-1820," *Journal of American History* 61 (June 1974): 48.

³⁷ John Hutchinson, *Story*, 2:309. Joshua Hutchinson, *A Brief Narrative of the Hutchinson Family. Sixteen Sons and Daughters of the 'Tribe of Jesse'* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1874), 68. John G. Whittier to John W. Hutchinson, 2 Dec. 1874, *Story*, 2:336. *The Seventieth Birthday Anniversary*, 9. John Hutchinson, *Story*, 2:170.

³⁸ Frederick Douglass, introduction to *Story of the Hutchinsons*, by John Hutchinson, 1:xviii. John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:70-71. A letter being held for "Hutchinson J Jr" was in the "List of Letters," *Lynn Record*, 14 Jan. 1835, n.p. *The Lynn Directory and Register for the Year 1841* (Lynn: Benjamin F. Roberts, 1841), 12. Speech of Cyrus M. Tracy at John Hutchinsons seventieth birthday, *Story of the Hutchinsons*, 2:180.

³⁹ John W. Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:70.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ McFeely, 69-94. John W. Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:70.

⁴² Cockrell, 91-93. Asa Hutchinson, "Saturday, April 27, 1844," *Excelsior*, 267.

⁴³ Cockrell, 91-94, 388. Rev. Aaron Porter, "Address," *Old Anti-Slavery Days*, 45.

⁴⁴ "Anniversary in New-York," *The Liberator*, 28 April 1843.

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- ⁴⁵ J. A. Collins to I. C. Ray et al., 28 Apr. 1842, "Slavery in the United States Collection," Box 1 Folder 5, Manuscript Division, American Antiquarian Society. McFeeley, 91-103.
- ⁴⁶ For public meetings over books and "the diversity of forms and styles" see Walters, 21-22.
- ⁴⁷ Advertisement in scrapbook at Minnesota Historical Society and its deceptive nature cited in Cockrell, *Excelsior*, 85. *American Music Journal* cited in Vera Brodsky Lawrence, "Rondo," *Strong on Music: The New York Music Scene in the Days of George Templeton Strong Vol. 1, 1836-1849* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1988), xxvii. These sentiments were widely echoed. The *Knickerbocker* (New York), for example, proclaimed that "there is a wide and general taste for the fine arts in this country, and New-York boasts as many enlightened connoisseurs as could be found in any city of the same extent in Europe." 2:3 (March 1833): 194. Henry C. Watson, *Musical History, Biography and Criticism* (New-York: Henry G. Daggers, 1845), ix-x.
- ⁴⁸ Asa B. Hutchinson, "New York May 10th, Wednesday Evening," *Excelsior*, 112.
- ⁴⁹ Asa B. Hutchinson, "Tuesday May 9th," *Excelsior*, 115.
- ⁵⁰ Emerson cited by Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Cheerful Yesterdays* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1898), 327. Also cited in Pillsbury, 326.
- ⁵¹ *The Weekly Herald*, 13 May 1842, cited in Cockrell, 116. Garrison to *The Liberator*, New-York, 9 May 1843, in *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison*, ed. Walter M. Merrill (Cambridge: Belknap, Harvard University Press, 1973) 3:156-158. See also Cockrell, 117.
- ⁵² Nathaniel P. Rogers, "Anti-Slavery Melody," *Liberator*, 20 Jan. 1843, 10. "Eleventh Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society," *Liberator*, 3 Feb. 1843, 19. William Lloyd Garrison, "Concerts in Boston by the Hutchinson Family," *Liberator*, 24 Feb. 1843, 81. N. P. Rogers, "Anniversary of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society in Faneuil Hall," *Liberator*, 24 Feb. 1843, 32. N. P. Rogers, "Milford Convention," *Herald of Freedom*, 13 Jan. 1843, 186.
- ⁵³ *The Liberator*, 26 May 1843, 81. See also Cockrell, 117. Asa B. Hutchinson, "Wednesday May 10th" and "Thursday New York May 11th," *Excelsior*, 117.
- ⁵⁴ George B. Bartlett, "Relics of the mighty past," *Old Anti-Slavery Days*, 25. *Old Anti-Slavery Days*, 26-27.
- ⁵⁵ William Garrison to Joshua Hutchinson, 3 Apr. 1874, *A Brief Narrative of the Hutchinson Family*, 6.
- ⁵⁶ Nathaniel P. Rogers, "Anniversary of the Massachusetts A.S. Society in Faneuil Hall [from the *Herald of Freedom*]," *Liberator*, 24 Feb 1843, 32.
- ⁵⁷ Stacey Robertson, *Parker Pillsbury*, 64. Jacob B. Moore, "History of Newspapers Published in New Hampshire," *American Quarterly Register* 13 (Nov. 1840), 174.

- ⁵⁸ "N. H. Vocalists," *The Nashua Gazette*, 9 Oct 1845. Lawrence, "Obligato: 1839," 55. Cockrell, xxi-xxiv, xxvii. Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 8.
- ⁵⁹ N. P. Rogers, "The New Hampshire 'Rainers,'" *Herald of Freedom*, 10 June 1842, 63. Rogers was not exaggerating Milford's status. Charles H. Burns' mother and father were thrown out of the church in Milford for their antislavery views. Burns recalled that "Milford was once the hotbed of abolitionism...It contained a splendid set of men and women who early espoused the cause of the slave," cited in Winifred A. Wright, *The Granite Town: Milford, New Hampshire, 1901/1978* (Canaan, N. H.: Phoenix Publishing, 1979), 13.
- ⁶⁰ Rogers, "The Hutchinsons again," *Herald of Freedom*, 15 Jul. 1842, 83.
- ⁶¹ Rogers, "The Hutchinson Singers," [from the *Herald of Freedom*, 11 Aug 1842] *The Liberator*, 30 Dec. 1842, 208. John Greenleaf Whittier, introduction to *Letters of Lydia Maria Child*, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1883), ix. Kennedy, *John Greenleaf Whittier*, 99-100. Brooks, *The Flowering of New England*, 399. Carolyn L. Karcher, "Rape, Murder, and Revenge in 'Slavery's Pleasant Homes': Lydia Maria Child's Antislavery Fiction and the Limits of the Genre," in *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Shirley Samuels (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 60.
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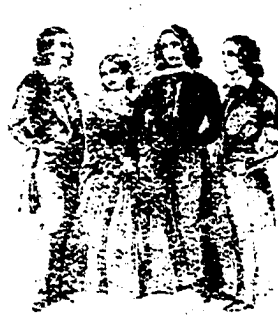
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Part Second



They were genuine children of the rugged New Hampshire soil on which they were born...It is hoped that the story of the travels and experiences of the Hutchinson family may be told some day in a form that shall be permanent. Certainly it might be made a very interesting memorial of some stirring days now long past, while as a contribution to the history of the anti-slavery struggle it could hardly fail to possess great value.

—*Boston Transcript*, May 9, 1885—

The Hutchinson Family Singers' saga began at the dawn of the nineteenth century in a country that was new and insecure but filled with possibility. The United States, situated on the eastern edge of North America, was an island of sixteen states bounded by water, foreign possessions, and unsympathetic natives. Britain, France, Spain, Holland, Cherokee, Mohawk, Sioux, and others posed immediate threats to the young nation's security. There were internal problems too. The Constitution was still "a doubtful experiment" and the unity of the Revolution had already been replaced by an unwelcome factionalization. Three times in the period from 1800 to 1820 the Federalists seriously considered a New England secession. Their power was waning, struck a serious blow when Americans elected Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence, and leader of the Democratic-Republican party, to the Presidency. Turn-of-the-century foreign policy was equally unstable, and Americans would once again battle the British who, this time, set fire to the White House.¹

Perhaps the most significant development was the fervor with which the nation embraced geographic exploration and expansion. Enlarging the country's boundaries became the solution to shelter Americans from foreigners, natives, and one another. In 1803 the famous expedition of Merriweather Lewis and William C. Clark affirmed the nation's course of expansion for the years to come. Funded secretly by the federal government, the explorers traveled by foot, horse, and boat as they mapped a large swath of territory between present day Ohio and Oregon. The successful expedition detailed a diverse range of items from flora

and animals to Indians and terrain, laying the groundwork for government acquisition of those lands. The enlarged nation would be generously endowed with natural resources. America now had room to grow.

Three years before Lewis and Clark, a young couple set out on a memorable journey of their own. Uncertain of what fortunes, if any, their future together would bring, a 22-year-old farmer named Jesse Hutchinson and Mary "Polly" Leavitt, the 15-year-old the daughter of a mastercarpenter got married. Their August wedding united two branches of America's first freedom fighters as both Polly's father and Jesse's father were veterans of the Revolutionary War. America's future was in the hands of the children. Despite Jesse Hutchinson's lack of wealth, Polly's father judged him a promising suitor. The young farmer won over the Leavitt family with his sense of discipline and religious fervor. Judged by these traits, Jesse earned a label of promise. The Leavitts' felt confident their daughter would live in comfort and security.² The union was a sure sign that the mantle of liberty was being passed to the next generation. Unbeknownst to the young couple or to their parents, the newlyweds had started a family voyage that would resonate far beyond the hills of New Hampshire and map a new course within the contours of American culture.

The Hutchinsons resided in Milford, New Hampshire, and were fortunate to have a house to themselves, a gift bequeathed upon the death of Jesse's father. Milford, a rural and secluded spot, nurtured the Hutchinson family for most of the 19th century. Named for a *mill* that was located by a *ford* across the Souhegan, Milford lies slightly north of the southern border of the state of New Hampshire in Hillsborough County. The town was relatively young for New England, incorporated in 1794 to invest "the inhabitants thereof with all such privileges and immunities as other towns in" New Hampshire enjoyed. Located roughly 50

miles north-west of Boston, 31 miles south-west of Concord and 5 miles south-west of Amherst, New Hampshire, Milford was not even a burgeoning frontier in 1800.³

In the late 17th century settlers had trickled into the region continuing a well-known New England trend to migrate away from shortages and inequality of land that arose in more established towns. Elisha Hutchinson, the grandfather of the Family Singers, moved in 1779 from Middleton, Massachusetts, to the location that would become Milford. He was a part of a migratory impulse that penetrated much deeper into unsettled New England than ever before. At the age of twenty-eight, Elisha was older than most of the new generation of rural migrants who followed trade routes up the Merrimac Valley to New Hampshire. Milford was small, housing only 139 taxpayers when founded and blossoming to 939 for the 1800 census. To call the town isolated is a bit misleading, for, like many places in the early nineteenth century, it was tied to a multitude of markets both near and far. The entire region was inextricably connected to commercial ports. The two closest were in Portsmouth, about sixty miles away, and, more importantly, Boston, the nation's third largest city. These connections brought rural residents in touch with people and items from Europe, the Caribbean, and beyond.⁴

As rural dwellers, the Hutchinsons were like most Americans, for only a tiny minority, three percent, lived in cities in 1800. A few months into their marriage, when Elisha Hutchinson died, the couple split the inherited farm property with Jesse's brother Andrew. As Andrew had not yet wed, he received the half that was without the house. Living as farmers was not easy, but the rewards of working their own land brought a degree of camaraderie and exhilaration to the Hutchinsons. Hard work and other Christian values formed the basis of a life well-lived for Jesse and Polly. They would do their best to keep

their children in touch with these principles. With the birth of their first child, Jesse, in February of 1802, the time to test the newlyweds' ideas about child rearing began.⁵

The start of her childbearing years quickly dragged Polly into a new stage of life. The sixteen year-old who had been helping with domestic work around her parents' home was now married with a child of her own. Some contemporaries found that nineteenth-century women began "to fade in a few years after marriage," with motherhood leaving "but a wreck of what was once most lovely," and Polly certainly endured through years of wearisome child raising. At the age of forty-four, twenty-nine years after she wed, Polly delivered her sixteenth and final child. Her life during these years are best understood as that of a nurturer and reproducer. Four daughters and twelve sons represent a significant contribution to the Hutchinson family. Hers was an intrepid pace even for the early 1800s when the average rural woman started to give birth to the first of seven or eight children at the age of twenty-four. By the time Polly Hutchinson was twenty-four she was already caring for Jesse, David, Noah, Mary, Andrew, and Zephaniah was due in seven months.⁶

Amazingly Polly's had a life beyond conception, birthing, and childcare. She was responsible for cooking, mending, milking, and washing despite her repeated pregnancies. It was a busy life that demanded great emotional and physical strength. Those who lacked such vigor quickly broke down.⁷ While fortunate to have the assistance of various female family members and the occasional boarder throughout the years, Polly never commanded any servants or hired help. The Hutchinsons were never impoverished, but they were not moneyed either. An undated print of the Polly in her later years reveals a gloomy, thick woman who had shouldered the heavy loads of raising children and illness which characterized the majority of her adult life (see fig. 1). While her portrait depicts a sturdy woman, Polly



Figure 1
POLLY LEAVITT HUTCHINSON
From John Hutchinson's *Story of the Hutchinsons*, vol. II (1896)

was the extreme worrier in the family who filled the Family Singers' initial trials in music with guilt and apprehension.

Her anxieties aside, Polly was remembered as the musically talented parent of the Hutchinson clan. A Dartmouth professor pleasantly recalled hearing Polly's singing in church and linked her sister Sarah to the preeminent vocalists of the century—Jenny Lind, Madame Malibran, and Madame Sontag. While Polly's vocal skills did not translate into encouragement for the Hutchinson Family Singers' career choice—she was always wary of her children's musical desires—the musicians pointed to their mother and her singing as their first inspiration. In the end, music was what took all of her youngest away from Milford. Polly openly despised this. The ugliest scenes revolved around her youngest child, Abigail Jemima Hutchinson. Abby represented the final link to a way of life, of birthing and rearing, that her mother undoubtedly found familiar. So when the brothers whisked their sister away to tour at the tender age of twelve, their mother's reaction—panic—should not have been surprising even though it was an annoyance. Perhaps Polly feared that her daughter would face a fate similar to her own—married at fifteen—or that she was losing her last bit of help around the home. More likely, Polly, who had never really traveled outside of New Hampshire, feared for her children's well-being in unfamiliar places so far from the comfort of home. Whatever the reason, there were constant negotiations and promises during which John, Asa, and Judson insisted that they would return her darling daughter home quickly and safely. Polly was a traditional matriarch who lived in a different world from her famous children, more inclined to sing a hymn, stay at home, and declare that “sweet cream with maple molasses on boiled corn is excellent.” Apprehensive and homespun compared to her public and worldly

offspring, she was the overprotective mother who, at times, irritated the Hutchinson Family Singers to no end.⁸

The gap between mother and sons, so prevalent in the 1840s, developed long before they “stole” Abby away. The division of labor in the farming household all but mandated a separation of work along gender lines. This usually resulted in a corresponding “emotional segregation.” Preparation for domestic life began early in the Hutchinson household. As soon as a young girl was able to carry the wash, watch over a younger sibling, or help with cooking, she was instantly employed. The Hutchinson girls were trained in housework, spinning, and butter making. Unlike farming families in nearby towns, it does not appear that Hutchinson women were ever a part of a putting-out industry in which women and children assembled crude items (palm-leaf hat manufacture was particularly popular at the time) during slow times on the farm. Working in close proximity to their mother everyday strengthened the bonds between Polly and her daughters. As a Hutchinson daughter started to learn the ins and outs of domestic work, the roles of mother and daughter effortlessly blended together. With the exception of childbirth and nursing, there was little to distinguish the work of Polly from the chores of female offspring.⁹

While his body did not bear the ravages of nineteenth-century childbirth, Jesse Hutchinson’s routine as a New Hampshire farmer was hardly gentle (see fig. 2). Milford’s soil within the granite-strewn Souhegan valley did not yield easily to cultivation and farming has always been labor intensive work. A *New-England’s Farmers’ Diary and Almanac* from the 1820s listed a host of tasks for the industrious farmer each month. The work ranged from assessing the quality of one’s seed and cutting and splitting wood, to cidering, ploughing, and settling debts. Of these tasks, producing enough wood was both important and time

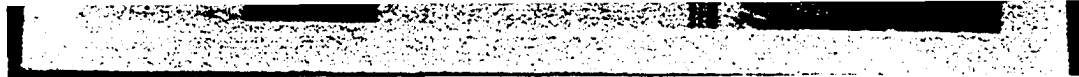


Figure 2

**JESSE HUTCHINSON, FATHER OF THE HUTCHINSON FAMILY SINGERS, AT HIS FUNERAL.
(Courtesy of the New Hampshire Historical Society)**

consuming. The economy of the early nineteenth century was predominately fueled by wood. Trees were a source of both combustion and construction for the Hutchinson farm and New Hampshire's winters would have been unbearable without them. If there were no other more pressing jobs to be done, ensuring an adequate wood supply was essential. Firewood was split and dried. Wood for construction was hauled down to the mill to be refigured into a more workable material. The males of the Hutchinson family were employed around timber often. Jesse's and Polly's first tragedy occurred when their first born, also named Jesse, delivered dinner to his father and others working at the saw mill. The boy, excitedly watching the mill operations, was crushed by a stack of boards that caught a gust of wind and toppled over. Jesse, who was around the age of seven at the time, survived the initial impact but died soon thereafter.¹⁰

The Hutchinson boys, for the most part, learned a different set of skills than those required for domestic tasks. They cared for livestock, directed plow teams, and assisted with the many odd jobs required in cultivating and harvesting crops. Much like the world of the home created a set of ideals and bonds among the Hutchinson women, the male work on the farm generated a certain solidarity. One initiation into manhood was the tolerance of bodily harm. Asa and John earned marks of distinction during their childhood labors; Asa lost part of a finger to an axe and John gained multiple scars from a similar implement. The boys did not spend much time in the home and, even when they were too young or too weak to perform a certain chore, they would watch their father and older brothers, helping in what little ways they could, such as delivering food to the working men.

While the male chores on the farm were seasonal, women's work—cleaning, sewing, cooking, and child care—was constant. In other rural families it was common for women to

help pick up the slack by harvesting in the field or toiling in the barn, but the Hutchinson family makeup so heavily favored men that it was common for Jesse to order one of his sons to assist with work inside the house. The first brother to suffer this fate was Joshua who was volunteered in 1823 to help his mother in the kitchen. Certainly it was painful for a boy of twelve to watch his twin brother drive cows and plow the field from the kitchen window while he greased baking pans with lard. Eventually each of the Hutchinson boys born after Joshua and Caleb would help the women who were overburdened with domestic work. They were not the most efficient houseworkers. Out of the watchful eye of their father the boys were more prone to dally. In the early 1830s John spent a good deal of time obsessively penciling the name of his adolescent love, Caroline Bartlett, on the walls around the washroom.¹¹

All of the children's labors were essential to the household, this explains why Jesse felt more blessed than cursed by his many offspring. Humphrey Moore, a minister in Milford, once touted Jesse as a wise farmer claiming the patriarch "was making money in raising a family of boys." Every task on the farm was crucial to the success of the family as an economic unit. Without proper clothes to brave the elements, someone to prepare the food, or someone to supply the food, the Hutchinson family could not have survived. At the same time, however, a large farming family was gradually becoming unnecessary. Once the foundation of economic stability, the form and function of rural American families had transformed. Polly and Jesse, bound to a more traditional set of values, saw a large family as a sign of constancy and survival. A farming family with many field hands would never starve. During the 1820s and 1830s children were less vital to agrarian families who had shifted even farther toward cash crop cultivation. By focusing on a few crops grown for the market,

families could hire seasonal help when needed and use cash to buy many of the items once made or cultivated at home. The Hutchinsons eventually faced a reality that many rural Americans experienced. They ran out of the means to guarantee a farming life for their children. Land in New England was increasingly expensive and, with such a large brood, the Hutchinson farm could not be divided among all the children. The Hutchinson boys had the option to move to cheaper lands in the West or to look for another means of support. The agrarian lifestyle had changed.

Even though Jesse and Polly did not wield the economic dominance that previous generations had enjoyed over their children, the young Hutchinsons remained bound to a strong paternal influence. The division of labor within the household was necessary, but it was not handled in an egalitarian manner. A legal and conventional power that men exercised over women and children was ingrained in their daily lives. This pattern, which kept women inside, men outside, and children wherever their father stipulated, was an unavoidable part of life in the Hutchinson family. Outsiders glossed over this phenomenon simply stating that the dominating persona of Jesse eclipsed Polly's more nurturing manner. The truth was that the Hutchinsons demonstrated how antebellum gender roles dictated the innerworkings of family life. Polly was thus guaranteed a rather hollow deference. Her sons recalled their mother as "an earnest Christian" who was "nervous and tired." They also pointed out the "peculiar sweetness" of her voice. Polly's material contributions to the family's success, except for the delivery of sixteen children, consistently went unheralded.¹²

By all accounts Jesse Hutchinson governed the Milford household. Visitors to the Hutchinsons' home noted that it was a "patriarchal premises." Yet Jesse's dominance was waning because of his decreased role in the economic life of his children, but also because of

other changes. The Milford family was caught in transition between the tradition in which Jesse and Polly were raised—centered around farming or carpentering; domestic work; the passing on of property; and the caring for dependent relatives—and the family lifestyle that developed in the first half of the nineteenth century which focused upon the emotional well-being of children, providing offspring with self-discipline and conscientiousness in an effort to make them upstanding citizens. The Hutchinsons witnessed the transformation of rural regions to include deeper ties to urban markets and the formation of a “provincial middle class.” When Polly and Jesse were married their union required the blessing of their families because it concerned issues above and beyond the love that they shared. Their nuptials set in motion an exchange of property. After the Hutchinson family’s first move and the subsequent relinquishing of the old homestead to their two eldest sons, Jesse’s ability to command respect from his children no longer rested upon his ability to bequeath land. In its place, he gave his children all that he had left: guidance on how to live a respectable and worthy life.¹³

Jesse led largely through example. Hutchinson family tradition records that, as a bachelor, Jesse enjoyed musical endeavors from playing the violin to singing. With his nuptials came an increased sense of responsibility. Music, Jesse believed, distracted men from the important things in life, like God, work, and family. It was a common belief that music, as well as other entertainments, were wicked forces. A devout Christian like his future wife, Jesse was rumored to have turned his violin into a cigar box. This story was repeated in the family’s history many times not only for amusement, but as evidence of his exacting value system. Throughout his life Jesse preached that farming was the only path to true contentment. A man of Puritan conscience with improvement on his mind, he gave his son John the impression that a man was worthless when not dressed before sunrise. The

demanding father constantly questioned the spiritual and physical health of his children as they paraded through the country as musicians.¹⁴

Jesse's rigid beliefs often created emotional detachment within the family. The Hutchinson Family Singers were met with a frightening paternal silence when they returned home during their first year of touring. Jesse flatly refused to speak to Judson in 1842 when the most thin-skinned of all his children surreptitiously left the Hutchinson Family Singers for Milford because he was homesick. For all Jesse's severity, the brothers did share their closest bond with their father, while Abigail and Rhoda remained far closer to their mother. The brothers' relationship with their father rested upon a generational and paternal respect based largely on fear. In no way did any of the brothers wish to disappoint their father lest they become the next recipient of one of his moral cautions. His "strong physical constitution" and iron will made him a formidable father. The Hutchinson Family Singer's musical endeavors stretched Jesse's value system to the utmost. Sharing certain characteristics with their father only deepened family conflicts. Jesse and his children were set in their ways and did not waver. This Hutchinson trait was seen in the verve with which the Family Singers concertized and promoted reform. Such steadfastness created an emotional detachment, but also a certain degree of mutual respect, an acknowledgement of the benefits of independence, that helped bridge the divide between the Hutchinson generations. Ultimately Jesse was the more supportive parent of the Hutchinson Family Singers. Polly fearfully cried when the children left for life on the road; Jesse sent them off with prayer.¹⁵

Jesse Hutchinson was employed in the most esteemed profession of his day. No kind of work garnered as much praise as agriculture during the nineteenth century. Many upheld the impossible notion that the independent farmer was to rely on no one to provide food and

clothing to his family. This vision, advocated by presidents and commoners alike, was the closest early America had to a binding ideology. As this idyllic vision of farm life began to unravel, antebellum Americans began to consciously acknowledge the flaws within their agrarian ideal. The farmer “is only more independent than his neighbor of another profession, but by no means, altogether independent of him.” “An independent farmer,” it was realized, was “not altogether independent of the community where he is, or of any business profession.” Yet in Milford—which was predominately a farming community prior to 1850—the ennoblement of the independent yeoman and agriculture remained constant. John Hutchinson, a professional musician, instilled his daughter, born in 1847, with this ideal: “We had never lived on a farm, but I loved everything pertaining to farm life,” Viola recorded in her memoirs.¹⁶

Though New Hampshire agriculture lagged behind that of other states in New England, such as Vermont, its farmers did not take their task lightly. Through various organizations New Hampshire farmers made certain that the public understood how important their livelihood was to the state. The Hillsborough Society for the Promotion of Agriculture and Domestic Manufacture was one local organization in New Hampshire that held public displays such as cattle shows and annual fairs. Serving as entertainment and education, these affairs helped sustain the praiseworthiness of farming life.

By the time Judson and John Hutchinson were in their teens, the farming ideal had become even less realistic than it had been for forty years prior. New technologies and farming practices, helped along by local agricultural organizations’ insistence that their members be “scientific”—to communicate news about soil composition, planting, fertilizing, harvesting, and animal husbandry—, improved agricultural efficiency. The introduction of

new techniques and tools along with an increased association of rural areas with urban markets promoted cash crop cultivation. Visions of the self-reliant farming family that handed down the farmstead over generations eventually gave way to the more impersonal, and, for many, more unstable world of cash crop agriculture. The latter was more a job than a celebrated lifestyle. This job was exactly what Jesse Hutchinson did during the 1820s and 1830s as a somewhat prosperous farmer. His cash crop, hops, was commonly planted by those farming along the Souhegan river.¹⁷

While the nineteenth century saw the “end of arcadia,” a closing of the peaceful and genteel rural life idealized in American icons such as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, it was a demise that many fought fiercely. The celebrated independence myth of rural life continued to remain vibrant throughout the century in Americans’ consciousness. This stranglehold that independent farming exhibited was a sure sign of a society adjusting to new developments. In the face of new jobs and new careers, along with a transformation in family life, Americans struggled to find ways to make sense of the novel world around them. More often than not, the largely rural population of the country found solace by celebrating the virtues of farming—even if these virtues did not exist. Humphrey Moore, the Congregational minister in Milford asked:

Shall we compare the Farmer with the trader, or speculator? The latter are but the mere brokers of the former. The farmer digs his living, his wealth out of the earth. The speculator digs his wealth out of the Farmer. The Farmer originates the wealth of his country. The trader does but convey it into different channels. The Farmer, by industrious and correct habits enriches himself and benefits society. The speculator, by fraud, fattens himself on the spoils of honest labor.

In spite of a continued decline in social and economic status, farmers continued to be seen as the backbone of American society throughout the 1800s.¹⁸

Jesse Hutchinson played the part of the industrious farmer throughout his life despite relying on outside sources of income and assistance. New England winters, with their crippling cold and harsh winds, left him with plenty of time to pursue additional work. From December until March there was “not much to be done in the fields” besides ensuring an adequate wood supply.¹⁹ Jesse’s carpentry, coopering, and shoemaking skills came in handy during these intervals and were a welcomed source of extra income. Bringing country produce and other wares to Boston was a normal practice for rural dwellers who had to rely upon the resources of larger urban markets for their lifestyle. Atop his “four-ox load” of barrels, Jesse was often seen passing through Milford on his way to sell whatever he could in Boston.²⁰

Despite the number of men in the Hutchinson clan, Milford’s townspeople knew that Jesse needed assistance on the farm. This was especially true before his sons matured and during haying time. It was common practice to pay between nine and ten dollars a month for agricultural work, a sum that was paid through a combination of clothing and cash. Jesse also compensated with generous portions of New England rum. The laborers aided the Hutchinson family with their hop cultivation as well as with their cereals and vegetables. Ignoring the valuable contributions of his wife and children, the fact that Jesse worked other jobs, and that the Hutchinsons’ farm required outside help, family histories and newspaper coverage of the Hutchinson Family Singers advanced the impression that Jesse was an independent farmer, the Hutchinsons’ sole economic provider.²¹

A host of traders and itinerants, from preachers to singing masters (traveling music teachers) increasingly invaded Milford as the Hutchinson family grew. And indeed the family appeared to multiply exponentially. In 1824 with a brood of fourteen, the Hutchinson family

moved three quarters of a mile away to a bigger house along the Souhegan river, two miles from the center of town and directly across the river from a road that ran from Boston to Vermont. The new homestead encompassed 160 acres, almost the average for a New Hampshire farm, and the house, originally built as a hotel, was large enough to fit the growing family. Fruit and hops were successfully grown on this rather fertile interval adjacent the gneiss-speckled banks of the river. Eight rooms roughly sixteen by eighteen feet, a full cellar (which had a stairway in back so that the bar boy could fetch refreshments without disturbing the guests), and "convenient" outhouses defined the childhood home of the Hutchinson Family Singers. Both the parlor and one bedroom were decorated with paper from France. While this may seem out of character for the 1820s, advertisements for "New & Fashionable Goods" from foreign locales can be found in New Hampshire newspapers as early as 1800. The wallpaper was the most ornamentation the Hutchinsons' home would display. Relative to the size of the home, there was almost no furniture and the Hutchinsons did not have the means to procure further items. Doing her best to explain the less-than-ideal interior decoration, Polly would offer that her many children were all the adornment that the homestead really needed.

Moving had further ramifications for the family. The Hutchinson elders left their oldest sons at the original homestead to oversee those lands, while the former owner of the hotel property, a colonel from the Revolutionary War, continued to live in a small red house upon a hill overlooking the fields. Jesse Hutchinson had benefited since the colonel had lost his property to debt. Out of consideration for the penniless old man, Jesse allowed Colonel Joshua Burnham to remain on the farm and, for some nourishment, to pick from the fruit

trees during harvest season. Even in his old age John Hutchinson remembered the extraordinary size of Burnham's pockets when the apples were ripe.²²

But for all the progress within the Hutchinson family during the 1820s, there were losses as well. The death of the oldest Hutchinson child Jesse, John recorded, "was the first of many sorrows for his loving parents."²³ To memorialize young Jesse, the Hutchinsons named their next son, born in 1813, Jesse, Jr. Polly and Jesse confronted the death of a child all too often. Following Jesse, two of their daughters did not live to see the age of five. Mary, their first daughter, died in 1810 at the age of four and, eighteen years later, Elizabeth, the fifteenth Hutchinson child, passed before reaching her fourth birthday. Death of children was a recurring theme in many nineteenth-century households, so in this the Milford residence was not unique. The fact that death was pervasive did not lessen the horror of the affliction. In an age devoid of grief counseling, the Hutchinsons turned to family, friends, and faith to alleviate the pain of such devastating losses.

Polly turned to the support of her female relatives and close friends. It would not have been uncommon for the grieving mother to have received little or no overt support from her husband during a time of crisis. The ties that shaped Polly's emotional support were to women and in this network Polly found solace. It is unknown whether or not Polly had someone in Milford or if her network was more dispersed. But even letters could sustain the female world of support from afar. The messages of intimacy and encouragement were more important than the means through which they were delivered. And at key points in the lives of women—courtship, marriage, childbirth, childrearing, and death—this female network was called into action. Upon the death of Abby Hopper Gibbons' son, Lydia Maria Child wrote:

Whatever may be my destiny, you will ever be to me as a dearly cherished sister. Be of good cheer under this temporary affliction; a little more patience will carry you through. I wish I could take part of your suffering for you. God strengthen you, bodily and spiritually, and long preserve you to be a blessing like the sunshine, to all around you.

Messages like this tried to focus a grieving mother on a future devoid of pain. This explains why they concentrated on the impermanence of suffering, on fortitude, and on God—"Let us not repine, but cheerfully submit to the will of Heaven." These notions were all vital parts of the female support system that undoubtedly carried Polly Hutchinson through her darkest moments.²⁴

Male network's of support worked differently. While many men appear to have developed close bonds before marriage, after they wed these relationships tended to take on a more businesslike tone. Throughout bachelorhood men studied and traveled together spawning close homosocial bonds that are easily compared to the relationships shared by women. Marriage changed all of this. A married man simply did not sustain the intimacy of his bachelorhood relationships. The tone of letters shared between men revealed the angst of courtship and young careers changed over to a distant, polite, and informational correspondence upon marriage. As a result, when married men were faced with tragedy they often turned inward to lighten their emotional burdens. James Gibbons wrote in his journal about his son's death, "Time only, can enable us to realize the consolations necessary to palliate the force of the blow which paralyzes all power of enjoyment." Other men, and no doubt Jesse Hutchinson was one of them, turned to their faith for guidance through troubled times.²⁵

The difficulty and pain associated with bereavement affected the entire family and many, in an effort to make sense of their anguish, wove telling narratives about their departed children. The child was thought innocent and angelic, thus absolved of any fault in his or her

demise. Families, like the Gibbons and the Hutchinsons, believed children to have special powers, not the least of which was prescience. At the Gibbons home, they held that their son had a vision of his death three weeks prior to the event. This caused Abby Gibbons to note that children are “favored with clearer premonitions of the future than people of advanced years and mature reflection.” A similar incident was reported regarding the Hutchinsons' first son, Jesse going to the mill. He allegedly told his brother “David, I don’t want to go to the mill to-day.” These were more likely the words of a tired child more interested in playing outside than delivering meals. After his death the Hutchinsons interpreted this phrase as a forewarning of their son’s awful demise.

These premonitions served as comfort for the families of deceased children. Who else except God could supply a child with such accurate visions? Already relying on their religious beliefs to pull them through the difficult loss, families were quick to make these post-mortem connections between their lost child and God. It appeared then that the loss of their child was an act of providence. And since their child was being watched over by God, families sustained a hope of meeting their departed child in heaven. The Hutchinsons, for example, longed for the “ultimate reunion” with Jesse. The frequency of early deaths in antebellum America ensured a spiritual elevation of children that pervaded the consciousness of families and provided musicians, writers, and others with significant cultural content.²⁶

After much grieving and sorrow, the Hutchinson family would eventually get back to celebrating their other children who blossomed in Milford. David, born in 1803, became the eldest after the death of his brother. He was followed by the third son Noah, then Andrew, Zephaniah, Caleb and Joshua (twins), Jesse, Jr., Benjamin, Judson, Rhoda, John, Asa, and, lastly, Abigail, who was born in August of 1829. The leader among the youngsters was

David, viewed by his younger siblings as the “home dictator.” As the oldest son, many responsibilities were piled upon him, especially when it came to the well-being of his brothers and sisters. It was no wonder then that the younger boys came to fear David, trembling “at his exacting words.” Complimenting David in the early years was Noah, who had a remarkable fiscal sense. Noah made his mark on the family by helping his father pay off the family’s debts, the majority of which accrued upon the purchase of the Burnham hotel. The musicality of the young Hutchinsons first appeared in Andrew and Zephaniah (born in 1808 and 1810), but limited family means did not permit these budding singers to travel farther than Milford’s own singing schools as life on the farm took precedence.²⁷

Three members of the Hutchinson Family Singers, Judson, John, and Asa—along with their brother Jesse, Jr.—matured under circumstances similar to their older siblings. They were expected to do the same chores around the house and the farm, but while a farmer’s life was consistently extolled, they were not pushed toward this end. Jesse, Jr., was the oldest member of the Hutchinson Family Singers by nearly four years. Known as the “Hutchinson Bard” due to his knack for lyrical composition, Jesse was a readily excitable youngster who not only performed with the Family Singers, but also served as their composer, manager, and publicist. Jesse’s career path points to a new era in the history of the Hutchinson family. At some time between 1825 and 1829—when he was twelve to sixteen—Jesse left Milford to learn a skill. His parents understood that, perhaps, an agrarian life would not provide their son child with a comfortable existence. So they sent their ninth child away to be an apprentice with a well-known weekly newspaper, *The Farmers’ Cabinet*, published in nearby Amherst, N.H. Jesse spent a few years as an apprentice and then a journeyman with E. D. Boylston, the owner of the *Cabinet*. As a member of the press, Jesse helped to build a

communication network that introduced urban culture to the countryside. Among the many attributes of this transition was music for leisure. Of course, having a press-savvy brother only helped the Hutchinson Family Singers when they decided to become musicians in the 1840s.²⁸

On March 14, 1817, the Hutchinson Family was blessed with a humorous and moody son, Adoniram Judson Joseph Hutchinson. Judson was the tortured soul of the Family Singers and the entire Hutchinson clan. Like his siblings, he had strong determination. As a boy, Judson sold vegetables to raise money to purchase a violin, an instrument he felt he must hide from his father. Gifted in song and verse, his comedic tendencies captured the hearts and laughs of audiences everywhere the group toured. An 1851 lithograph on the cover of his composition, "The Standing Collar, depicts a half-crazed Judson wryly glaring at the viewer over his violin while wearing a very large (standing) collared shirt. (see fig. 3) Judson also harbored a terribly dark side. What demons haunted this talented musician, we will never know, but its signs were unmistakable. In his journal writing it was demarcated by an "H" followed by an terrifying squiggle. The "H" stood for the "horrors" that troubled him, a condition that worsened with age. In his most dire moments Judson withdrew from the group and from his family to wallow in despondency. His suffering was no secret and was followed by the press and public. Judson once shared this opinion on his condition with a journalist who reported "He spoke of terrible seasons of depression, which at times came over him, and shivered at the thought of some terrible fate which he was sure would some day be his."²⁹

Judson's sister, Rhoda, was born on the same day as her unstable brother two years later, but did not share in his suffering. Rhoda possessed one of the finest voices in the family

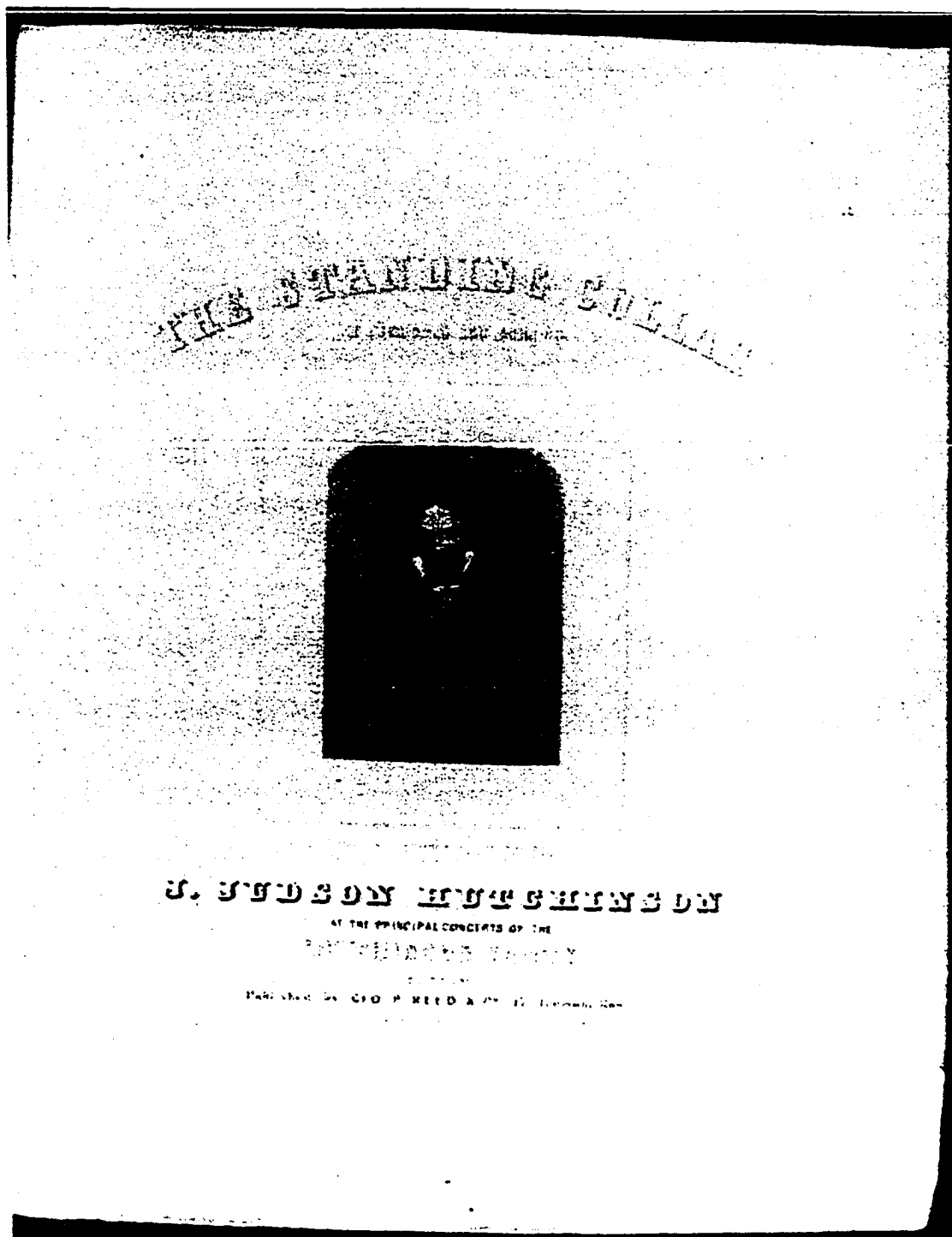


Figure 3
JUDSON HUTCHINSON
From the cover of *The Standing Collar* (Boston: G. P. Reed & Co., 1853)

but it was combined with paralyzing shyness. She was truly her mother's daughter for she could not get past her anxiety problem, forfeiting her chance at a lucrative career as part of the famed Hutchinson Family Singers. All attempts to put Rhoda on stage were unsuccessful. Joshua thought that the excitement simply wore down "the delicate condition of her nervous organism." Like her mother, Rhoda valued the quietude of home and spent her entire life, which included two marriages, in her childhood home in Milford.³⁰

It appears that Polly Hutchinson had a special affinity for March 14, for in 1823 she delivered her third child in six years on that day. This time it was a boy who they named Asa Burnham. He was the child who grew up quickly and the household applauded him for this feat. Asa's maturity especially appealed to his hard-working father. The other siblings caught on in no time that Asa was their dad's "pet boy." As a youngster, Asa was rumored to have placed his head against the church pews to catch the low vibrations from the organ. This was the Hutchinson family's explanation for the tremendously low and accurate bass voice with which Asa was blessed. His leadership abilities, moral compass, and vocal range—down to a double B-flat—were the very foundations of the Hutchinson quartet. Asa was "genial, manly, companionable," always looking to help those around him. When the need for a church was felt in his adopted home of Hutchinson, Minnesota, he went on tour with his family and raised the funds. Upon the death of his wife, he created the Elizabeth Chace Hutchinson Memorial Fund of the Minnesota State Temperance Union to which his own life insurance policy was assigned.³¹

Two years older than Asa was John, born January 4, 1821 (see fig. 4). John was an "intuitively aggressive" child who housed endless ambition. That he developed into the driving force behind the Hutchinson Family Singers surprised no one. As a child John once



Figure 4
JOHN HUTCHINSON, CIRCA 1843
(Courtesy of the Lynn Museum)

decidedly sped up the tempo during a song at singing-school believing the other children were slowing down. John's teacher kindly reminded him that there could be only one leader in the school. John and Asa, while similar in appearance (so much so that people often confused the two), were not close. Instead their relationship was always tainted with an air of competition. It was John and Judson, and, later, John and Abby, who shared the tightest connections.

Her brother Asa may have been their father Jesse's favorite, but Abigail Jemima—Abby—was instantly cherished by the entire family. (see fig. 5) Concern over her mother's age at the time combined with the fact that Abby was "born out of due time" made her birth a highly anxious event. But all went well and as the youngest Hutchinson by six years Abby was immediately doted upon. Constantly smiling, Abby did all she could to encourage the attention. As the youngest female in a household that had lost two daughters, Abby's development was closely watched by parents and siblings alike. Abby was clearly the "household pet." It was a kind of adoration that prepared her well for a life in the limelight which awaited her as a young singer in the 1840s.³²

Unlike her brothers who attended the public schooling system as well as Sunday school run by the local Baptists, Abby was the beneficiary of Milford's increased growth and gentrification. Abby was the one Hutchinson child raised as a part of the new provincial middle class. Two years before she was born, lecturers in New Hampshire spoke about the role of education women in America: "It is education alone, which shall place woman in her proper sphere, bestow upon all her powers a sublime energy and hallowed direction, and clothe her with a majesty, as which ignorance and vice shall hide their heads, and wisdom and virtue shall walk forth in triumph." This kind of thinking underpinned ideas about how women were going to properly fit into domestic life. Times had changed. Unlike her

ABBY HUTCHINSON.

MRS. LUDLOW PATTON.



Figure 5
ABBY HUTCHINSON
(Courtesy of the Lynn Museum)

mother, who was expected to take of the responsibilities around the home, Abby was expected to do household chores and be versed in a wide variety of subjects—to speak knowledgably about them—in an effort to provide intellectually stimulating environs for her husband and children, who, once in the home, were under her jurisdiction. To accomplish this mission numerous private institutions for female education sprang up throughout New England. Around 1835 the Milford Female Seminary began operating in Milford. The organization housed popular teachers and attracted a good number of students, but, after about four or five years, began a quick slide toward bankruptcy.³³

Listed on the attendance rolls for the fall of 1836 was a seven year-old Abigail Hutchinson. At the seminary, she was inculcated with a moral foundation considered to be “the most essential part of education” as her teachers endeavored to train their pupils in the proper “social and moral feelings.” The Milford Female Seminary exposed young Abby to geology, physiology, European history, and arithmetic as well. But the subjects that received the closest attention were “Vocal Music, and Calisthenics; Reading, Spelling and Composition.” Abby’s education focused on moral uprightness and proper decorum in social situations and the subject matter taught was well suited to her future which was spent traveling, writing letters, writing in a diary, and singing. Following the close of the Milford Seminary, Frank Carpenter reported that she attended school for women in Hancock, New Hampshire, and the Edes Female Seminary in Plymouth, Massachusetts, where she continued her education in the spring and summer.³⁴

Long before the Hutchinson Family Singers ever made it to the stage, Joshua and Caleb, the seventh and eighth children were welcomed into the Hutchinson family. The twins straddled the family’s transition from a household economy to an rural family integrated into

the market of antebellum America. Caleb was the intermediary within the family. When disputes arose—and with the Hutchinsons they always did—it was the even-tempered Caleb who stepped in to negotiate a settlement. He also took religion seriously. As a youngster he'd wake up napping church-goers so that they would not miss hearing the word of God. With a family of five children, Caleb and his wife, Laura, lived and farmed in Milford. In fact, until Joshua, the Hutchinson brothers would all become farmers. Some, like David and Zephaniah moved to lives on the frontier (in Iowa and Illinois), while others stayed in Milford or removed to farms relatively close by. Noah, for instance, took up a farm in Mount Vernon, N.H. where he and his wife raised ten children. Most of the Hutchinson brothers born before the twins worked in Lynn or Boston for several years, saving enough to purchase a farm. Of eight children born after the twins, only Benjamin spent his life solely as a farmer, living at the family's homestead in Milford while his famous singing siblings toured the nation.

The Hutchinson family's attachment to traditional rural lifestyles came to a close with Caleb's twin. It was a sign of changed times in New England and in the nation. A different set of options now earned the young Hutchinsons' attention. While the members of the Family Singers praised agricultural pursuits throughout their lives, they did not focus on agriculture for their livelihood. Joshua Hutchinson would blaze the trail down which his younger siblings would follow. Abandoning any dreams of an agrarian life, Joshua was the first musician among the Hutchinson children. After years of singing in the church choir, Joshua bullied his way into the position of choirmaster in 1829 at the age of eighteen. He held this title until 1843.

With encouragement from Milford's Baptist pastor, Mark Carpenter, Joshua raised forty dollars to pay for instruction from the two famous Boston musicians, Lowell Mason and

George Webb. After attending this class in 1836, Joshua felt comfortable enough to run a singing-school in Milford. Singing in his choir and growing up within the same household had an immeasurable influence on the members of the Hutchinson Family Singers. Though his intimate connection to music guided his younger brothers and sister toward stardom, Joshua remained an obscure entertainer for the duration of his career. His celebrity was realized as a substitute, filling in for one of his famous siblings if they should fall ill. And he did this on many occasions. But in his personal career Joshua consistently clung to the coattails of his famous siblings. Not satisfied with this role, Joshua tried to seize some of his sibling's spotlight by forming the New Hutchinson Family Singers when his illustrious relations toured Great Britain. This group met with only moderate success as they were unable to excite audiences in the way the original Hutchinson Family Singers did.³⁵

Joshua's work as the church choirmaster provides a unique glimpse into the early training of the Hutchinson Family Singers. Looking at their career from afar, it appears that John, Asa, Judson, and Abby were musical phenomena. After all this troupe from rural New Hampshire, a place one would presume destitute of culture, went on to captivate audiences throughout New England, New York, and even London. There is no doubt that the Hutchinsons were naturally gifted singers, but vocal talent alone would not have been enough to consistently win over large audiences in the antebellum era. From the start the Hutchinsons displayed a depth of musical knowledge—especially in composition and instrumental technique—which hinted at some kind of formal training. They could not have acquired such tremendous skills, as one writer suggested, through their enthusiastic rehearsals behind a large rock in their family's fields alone.³⁶

Milford may have lacked a degree of cultural sophistication when the Hutchinsons were growing up, but it certainly was not devoid of music. Like many rural citizens, the Hutchinsons had access to numerous works on musical instruction. These books, such as Cyrus Phillips' offering from 1828 entitled *The Musical Self Instructor, Containing Five Hundred Questions and Answers Relative to the Science of Music*, were usually the produced by an itinerant music teacher. Itinerant singing masters, as these music instructors are called, greatly aided in the cultural enlightenment of rural Americans. The success of these musical itinerants was initially due to their close association with the church. Organized religion in America has a long history in the promotion of music. Churches were by far the most active and most stable institutions in many rural communities. Their influence was most noticeable through their schooling of young Americans in a wide variety of settings and activities. Whether it was in the church choir, Sunday school, or in a common school children were exposed to a Christian "nationalism as part of the standard curriculum." Music was always a large part of this experience. Beginning in the early eighteenth century, churches in America championed music education in response to the need to improve unaccompanied congregational singing. The emergence of singing-masters dates back to this period and formed the basis for musical training for many Americans. While private musical instruction was reserved for urban dwellers, these itinerant music teachers scoured the backcountry of the nation, setting up temporary schools for musical instruction.³⁷

The instructional use of the tunebook developed along with the singing-masters. Replete with musical notation, lyrics, and a set of instructions on how to read music the tunebook became a foundation of musical pedagogy and also choral singing in the 18th century. Many singing-masters would compile their own materials and sell them to their eager pupils.

Teaching music represented the bulk of income for most musicians in the 18th century and first few decades of the 19th century. It was not until such names as Louis Moreau Gottschalk and the Hutchinson Family Singers appeared that the actual production of music turned into a viable source of income for American musicians.³⁸

The singing-master was closely tied to the church, not only to correct substandard church-singing, but through the materials which he taught. It would have been strange for the music teachers not to be connected to the church, since, with the exception of Quakers, all American Christians were singing. Quite simply the church was the nation's largest sponsor of music. Tunebooks, less common in earlier American history than songbooks (which just listed the lyrics), were developed almost exclusively around hymns and other forms of sacred music. In addition, the place where their students exercised their craft most often was in church, with the more enthusiastic students joining the choir. The close tie between music and the church replicated the bond of the church with American life in general. For example, the pastor of the Congregational Church in Milford was paid through a tax levied on all the town's residents, until this practice was stopped in 1832. (This was quite late, Massachusetts was the final state in New England to sever the economic ties of church and state in 1834.)

In the nineteenth century, singing-masters increasingly separated themselves from the church by introducing secular songs into their teaching repertoire. Despite this trend, sacred music remained a central part of the nineteenth-century and the singing-school experience. Vermonter Joel Winch recalled attending a singing-school in 1802 led by a Br. Simonds who Winch believed "had Religion" because Simonds "began his School with Prayer and at the close he called on me to pray." Slightly later on in Rhode Island a young Adin Ballou rejoiced over the opening of a singing school in Cumberland, but his father gravely opposed choirs in

general, especially when irreligious people took to singing the word of God. Ballou's father's fear is evidence that singing schools, even when not affiliated with the church, were teaching sacred song nonetheless.³⁹

Educational practices and the church were virtually inseparable in Milford when the Hutchinson brood were growing up. In the 1830s a visitor to this region of New Hampshire found that the people here observed "all the formalities of religion...to an extravagant extent." He went on to claim that "the assiduity with which sacred music is cultivated here is remarkable." What Samuel Osgood witnessed was an area overrun with religious revivals. The religious fervor during the early nineteenth century was remarkable. Following the Revolution, an ideological disjunction had arisen between Enlightenment ideals—which stressed the power and rationality of man—and the church in America—which focused upon the imperfections of man and a dependence upon God. The nineteenth century saw radical changes in church doctrine that empowered church-going Americans more than ever before within the sacred walls.⁴⁰

The personal and social consequences of this transformation was evident. By the close of the 1830s, Harrison Gray Otis noted that "all Christendom has been decomposed, broken into pieces and resolved into new combinations and affinities." Throughout the early part of the century, there was only modest loyalty when it came to church affiliation. Rural New Englanders changed church memberships with surprising frequency. It was not unusual to find parents worshipping in a different Christian sect from their children. All this was the result of a competition for resources amongst differing factions, the foundation of which was a battle over worshippers. Membership meant money for churches which relied solely upon voluntary contributions to stay solvent. Contemporaries recalled that "these denominations

were very hostile to each other; and much of the preaching of that day was given to sectarian controversies.” This, combined with an increased freedom given to children by their parents, created a spirited environment for religious turmoil. Joel Winch’s parents initially were not connected with any formal religion. By the time he reached ten, they were Congregationalists. Young Joel did not find comfort in Congregationalism. Instead, he became a Baptist, a decision influenced no doubt by the Baptist wife of Samuel Aboat, the family to whom he was sent to work at the age of thirteen. This was not an easy decision; in fact, Joel sought the guidance of his father. He, however, was of little help, and tried to convince his son that “the Devil would carry me [Joel] off Bodily.” The Reverend Joel Winch turned out to be a Baptist preacher. This kind of religious volatility within a family was common. The fact that many found the Christian sects interchangeable—Polly Hutchinson once told to her son “that she was an Orthodox, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Methodist, Universalist, Quaker, Baptist”—only encouraged religious exchanges.⁴¹

In 1782, prior to the incorporation of Milford, Elisha Hutchinson, the Hutchinson Family Singers’ paternal grandfather, was one of the forty-seven members of the South-West Parish of the Congregational Church and was a part of the group hired to build the Congregational Meeting House three or four years later. By 1788 a church was organized on land that would later be incorporated into Milford and Elisha was chosen as its clerk, a position he held until his death in 1800. Joining a church at the time was more than a simple matter of attendance. Some sort of public declaration of your principles was normally required. Applicants to the Milford Congregational Church had to demonstrate their religious experience either verbally or in writing. Elisha’s declaration did not have a lasting affect on his family. When the Baptist church of Milford was formed in 1809, Elisha’s son and

daughter-in-law, Andrew and Martha, were two of its founding members. The Hutchinson Family Singers' Uncle Andrew served as a deacon to this Milford institution for years to come. Andrew's brother Jesse, a little more wary of changing his affiliation waited until 1814 to join the Baptists, a move in which he was joined by his wife.⁴²

The Hutchinson children were not automatically members of the Baptist church upon birth. While it certainly influenced a child's choice, a parent's affiliation did not dictate their offspring's spiritual inclination. Children were commonly viewed as devoid of genuine religious experiences, so the fact that many of the Hutchinson siblings had no religious affiliation as late as 1830 was not peculiar. But the children's years of exposure to religious ideas at home, in music, and in school prepared them for a religious conversion. By staying active in the Milford community—particularly in the part of town where the Hutchinsons lived—the Baptist church exhibited a great influence upon the eventual decision of the children to join their church instead of Milford's Congregationalists or even choosing to worship in another locale. Sunday school was perhaps the most obvious influence in the children's' lives. Through the memorization of moral lessons, hymns, and bible passages children were awash in a sea of religion. This influence seeped into common schools as well, especially in Milford. The North District school committee hired Samuel Everett, the minister of Milford's Baptist Church from 1824 until 1832, as a teacher. This was only further evidence of the long-standing relationship that the Hutchinsons' school system shared with local Baptists. In 1806, prior to the construction of a Baptist church in Milford, the schoolhouse in District Number 2 was built as a joint project between Baptists and the community. For the next ten years the building was used as a school during the week and as a Baptist meeting house on weekends.⁴³

Christian ideas were prevalent in the lives of young New Englanders. Even in classes not taught by Everett, the preacher and teacher, John Hutchinson recalled that the instructors “read the Bible and prayed.” It was not uncommon for the missions of Sunday schools and common schools to overlap in this way. Milford certainly exemplified this situation. The Hutchinson children, all of whom attended the school on North River Road with the noticeable exception of Abby, were thus nurtured in an environment that made little distinction between church and education. Moral education founded upon Christian beliefs represented the very foundation of the pedagogical endeavor. Piety was understood to be an important part of patriotism. While John felt that all the talk of religion in school did little to foster “spiritual growth,” the combination of religious doctrine received in school, in the Baptist choir (led by his brother and a group that he joined three years prior to declaring his faith in the Baptists), and at home did not inhibit John’s warm reception of the Milford’s Baptist revival.⁴⁴

At a meeting of New Hampshire Baptists in 1829 it was announced that the “state of Religion...in our churches, it is generally low.” By 1832 things had changed dramatically. Baptist leaders declared in 1831 “most of the churches in this [Milford] Association have experienced some refreshings from the presence of the Lord.” The Baptist churches of New Hampshire were growing. They had formed Sabbath schools and bible instruction, began to support foreign and domestic missions, and had taken up the cause of temperance with zeal. In 1828 Milford counted 134 Baptists. This figure swelled to 167 by 1832, almost a 25% increase. What had happened in a few short years to inspire these “refreshings?”⁴⁵

The impetus behind the growth of the Baptists in Milford and in New Hampshire was revivalism. Revivals were not accidents. They were strategically planned attempts to

produce new adherents to a set of ideas. Samuel Everett took out the following advertisement in 1831:

The Baptist Church in *Milford, N.H.* hoping that by the grace of God it may be the means of promoting a revival of pure religion among them, have appointed a FOUR DAYS MEETING the third week in June next, to commence on Tuesday, the 14th day, at 2 o'clock, P.M. We therefore earnestly invite the ministers of the Milford Association, and other Associations around us, to come and help us. Dear brethren, we trust you will come, and we pray that you may come in the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ.

This particular event, part of a series of Baptist meetings in New Hampshire from 1829-1832, swept in many from the Hutchinson family. While their parents had been members for nearly fifteen years, the twins, Caleb and Joshua, joined in 1829; Benjamin, Zephaniah, Nathaniel, John, and Laura (Caleb's wife) joined during the 1831 revival.⁴⁶

"What must I do to be saved?" was the question Americans brought to revival meetings. The ministers had the answer—sinners are obliged to select and seek salvation. Revival meetings were exciting occasions. Impassioned speeches and music filled the air with messages of godliness, urging the crowd to find deliverance by being true to themselves and their God. Revival audiences faced a continuous stream of stories about those who had been lost and then saved. A visitor to a Baptist revival in the 1830s outside of Niagara Falls reported hearing three sermons one morning and claimed that their effectiveness relied upon their "reiterated admonitions and illustrative anecdotes." These repetitive lessons could and did go on for days at a time. "Tell stories," the revival master Charles Finney counseled his fellow preachers, "it is the only way to preach." Revivals were lively celebrations of body and spirit, energy and exhaustion for all who attended.⁴⁷

A more entertaining event than revival was hard to find in the early nineteenth century, especially in rural America. And with most Americans living in the countryside,

revivals were a national sensation. The art of revivalism was not to be found in material objects, but in oratory (sermons, prayers, and testimonies), song (hymns and other sacred songs), and movement (such as rushing the preacher on stage or even dancing). Revival preachers carefully calculated the use of each media and their messages. Their performances displayed a “practiced spontaneity,” appearing impulsive and unstructured, but in reality their show had been rehearsed. And while there were several different paths down which the minister could lead a revival meeting, each one treaded on familiar ground.⁴⁸

The most talented preachers understood how to read and react to the emotions of the crowd. Their goal was to build church membership. In this they were relentless. Peter Cartwright led a revival meeting at which he gained forty-seven new adherents. The next day he sought out the people who had left his meeting untouched by his words. He reports that he went “from cabin to cabin, taking the names of those that returned to the solid foundation of truth and my number rose to eighty-seven.” Revivalists were obsessed with recording their victories in their efforts to collect as many souls for their church as possible. Their perseverance would pay off.⁴⁹

Revival preachers successfully played upon strong currents in American society. Piety, perfectionism, and deliverance were all themes around which many Americans organized their daily lives. Outside of sermons, the messages were reinforced by the singing of such hymns as “Christian Soldier.” All were further emphasized by the printing of hymns and sermons in religious papers. This continual bombardment of religious themes lured many of the faithful to attend revivals. But it also attracted many young people who had spent their years receiving similar moral messages at school and at home. Revivals were electric and persuasive occasions, one of the first sites of mass entertainment in American history. It is

little wonder then that they appealed to a younger generation. The Baptist pastor, John Colby, wrote of a fifteen year-old Quaker girl who traveled twelve to fifteen miles to seek her conversion at a meeting. While she was stymied by her mother who immediately took her home, the story shows the magnetism surrounding revivals. The Hutchinson children—with parents who were devout Baptists and with revivals being hosted only a few steps down the road which fronted their house—were easy prey for a religious awakening.⁵⁰

Church membership was never stable. For the leaders of various denominations membership was always a yearly uncertainty. Without the grand spectacle of revival, congregations that swelled one year suddenly dropped off the next. In 1833, Baptist membership in Milford plummeted to 124 and then grew to 195 by 1835. Not surprisingly, the 1835 report of the Milford Association (a grouping of sixteen Baptist churches located in Milford, Nashua, Goffstown, New Ipswich, Dunbarton, and several other nearby towns) reveals that its churches were “favored with revivals in Nashua, Milford, and Dunbarton.” The Association was accustomed to expansion and retrenchment. New Hampshire’s Baptists paid close attention to the various Baptist organizations in the state and ranked them according to three categories. For example, in 1831 it experienced the biggest growth in membership when compared to the five other major Baptist Associations in New Hampshire (though the Milford group was third overall in number of churches and fourth in number of pastors during this year). By 1835, the Milford Association claimed the second largest membership in the state with 1451 adherents. This figure represented 19% of the Baptist population of the Granite State. The 1835 revival hit the town of Nashua so hard that local leaders found themselves building a second church. At the same time five other churches in the association continued to be “destitute of pastors” and heard preaching only on rare occasions. Despite the

variety of experiences, New Hampshire's Baptists still sustained an overall period of growth from 1825 to 1835: "During the ten years, increase of churches, 22; increase of ministers, 29; number erased, 178; restored, 44; baptized, 3552; added by letter, 835, dismissed, 1199; excluded, 264; died, 453. Net Increase, 3373; Total, 8010."⁵¹

The increasing numbers did not put church leaders at ease. They well understood the volatility inherent not only in church membership rolls, but within church management as well. In 1835 not one of the thirty-six New Hampshire Baptist preachers who had been active since 1825 was working in the same place that they had been ten years earlier. "Truly," concluded those at their annual meeting, "we have no continuing city." The turbulent nature of antebellum religion cannot be exaggerated. Underneath all of the commotion, there was a lot of money at stake. Increasing the number of Baptists ensured the economic foundation of their religious community. A stable leadership had a better chance at encouraging steady growth over time. Yearly church expenses were quite large. A pastor alone cost close to \$500 per year in 1835. This was a generous amount. Dartmouth professors commanding annual salaries around \$700 secured "many comforts with that sum." Add to these costs the maintenance of the church building, schools, and obligations to other Baptist endeavors and losing just a small percentage of membership would put a church in severe debt. Without the state tax support, churches depended upon voluntary contributions and were involved in an interdenominational competition for resources. This was one important reason why the churches incorporated into larger associations and groups where the success of one institution could head off the elimination of another. And the success of the church often relied upon the efforts of its minister—his message, his ability as a speaker, and his ability as an organizer.⁵²

In antebellum America the success of a minister sat squarely upon a respect for his congregation and their ideas. The days of a church hierarchy, where only a minister understood and could interpret the word of God were gone. Ministers had made a move that many politicians made in the period following the Revolution, a shift from being "Fathers to Friends of the people." Religion empowered ordinary Americans, both men and women, far more than that which they were allotted from politicians. Yet trusting people to their own devices in religion was a chancy proposition. No doubt the move attracted more church members, but it resulted in less control over church doctrine. One need look no farther than Jesse Hutchinson, the Family Singers father, to understand the potential for problems. During the 1831 Baptist meetings in Milford, Andrew Hutchinson was operating a grocery store in Boston. Wanting to be a part of this religious experience that had recently swept over his family, he eventually traveled home where he and his father Jesse went to Milford's "Jordan," the Souhegan River. Here Jesse, who had never held any position in the Baptist church, dunked his 23 year-old son, proclaiming his baptism in the crisp waters without any witnesses. The event caused some stir amongst Milford's Baptist community. However, they decided not to doubt Jesse's integrity and so the action stood. It is unlikely that an unconventional deed such as Jesse Hutchinson's, barely acceptable in 1831, would have been palatable at an earlier time. Thirty years before Andrew Hutchinson's baptism, Joel Winch was baptized by his father. Yet this did not sway his local Baptist leaders when he voiced his desire to join them. They ordered another baptism for the Vermonter to be carried out by church members.⁵³

Raised in an environment steeped in religious cautions in school, home, and in their music, the young Hutchinsons grew up in a time of great religious ferment. And yet, just as

they were reaching adulthood, the era of great revivals was quieting down. The combination of older brothers and successful harvests had left Jesse and Polly financially stable, yet their younger children seemed directionless. Perhaps that is what provoked Jesse to throw his three sons out of the house in search of employment and careers in 1840. Whatever the motivation, Judson, John, and Asa surprised their parents and everyone else with their career of choice. Very few Americans lived off of cultural performances in antebellum America, and no one from Milford had ever made it to a big city stage.

Notes

- ¹ Andrew Jackson, *President Jackson's Farewell Address to the People of the United States*, (New York: J. W. Bell, n.d.). Marc M. Arkin, "The Federalist Trope: Power and Passion in Abolitionist Rhetoric," *Journal of American History* 88.1 (June 2001): 78.
- ² John Wallace Hutchinson, *Story of the Hutchinsons (Tribe of Jesse)*, ed. Charles E. Mann (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1896), 1:1-11.
- ³ A. J. Coolidge and J. B. Mansfield, *A History and Description of New England, General and Local* (Boston: A. J. Coolidge, 1859), 1:580. Andrew E. Rothovius, "How Hillsborough County Towns Were Named," *The Olden Time: New Hampshire Historical Letter* 1:9 (Sept. 1949): 2. League of Women Voters of the Milford Area, N.H., *Know Your Town* (Milford: League of Women Voters of the Milford Area, 1974) 9. Winifred A. Wright, *The Granite Town: Milford, New Hampshire, 1901/1978* (Canaan, NH: Phoenix Publishing, 1979), 7. George Allen Ramsdell, *The History of Milford* (Concord: The Rumford Press, 1901), 6. John Hayward, *Gazetteer of New Hampshire* (Boston: John P. Jewett), 100.
- ⁴ Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 63. Christopher M. Jedrey, *The World of John Cleaveland: Family and Community in Eighteenth-Century New England* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1979), 164.
- ⁵ Steven Hahn and Jonathan Prude, "Introduction," *The Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformation: Essays in the Social History of Rural America*, ed. Steven Hahn and Jonathan Prude (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1985), 3. John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:6.
- ⁶ Quote on 19th Century women from Cassius Marcellus Clay, "Divorce.—Beauty in Women.—Physical Laws.—Slavery," *The Writings of Cassius Marcellus Clay: Including Speeches and Addresses*, ed. Horace Greeley (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1848), 238. Clark, 26.
- ⁷ Olive Maria Warner, *Memories, 1792-1872. A Sketch of the Life of Laurretta Jewett Hutchinson*. (Gilhead, CT: privately printed, 1899), 14-15.
- ⁸ R.D. Muzzey to Rev. Dr. Davis, 1862, *Story of the Hutchinsons*, 1:6-7. Dale Cockrell, *Excelsior: Journals of the Hutchinson Family Singers, 1842-1846*, ed. Dale Cockrell (Stuyvesant: Pendragon Press, 1989), 87-88. John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:470-471. Polly Hutchinson cited in Asa Hutchinson, "29 Mar. 1844," *Excelsior*, 241.
- ⁹ Thomas Dublin, "Women and Outwork in a Nineteenth-Century New England Town: Fitzwilliam, New Hampshire, 1830-1850," *Countryside*, 51. Joshua Hutchinson remembered this divide clearly with his father at the plough and his mother at the "old spinning-wheel and loom," *A Brief Narrative of the Hutchinson Family: Sixteen Sons and Daughters of the 'Tribe of Jesse* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1874), 12. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual," in *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 60.
- ¹⁰ Truman Abell, *The New-England Farmer's Diary and Almanac, 1822* (Windsor, VT: Ebenezer Hutchinson, 1822). Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 1.

John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:18. For an example of the frequency of wood cutting and splitting see Moses Porter, "Diary for the Year 1824, Kept by Moses Porter," *The Historical Collections of the Danvers Historical Society* 1 (1913): 31-51. Perley Derby, *The Hutchinson Family* (Salem: Essex Institute Press, 1870), 49. Joshua Hutchinson, *Brief Narrative*, 12. John Hutchinson, *Story*, 2:235-236. Asa Burnham Hutchinson, *The Book of Brothers or the History of the Hutchinson Family* (New York: Published by and for the Hutchinson Family, 1852), 9-10.

- ¹¹ John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:20. Clark, 24-27. John Hutchinson, *Story*, 2:241-242; 1:14.
- ¹² John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:12. Clark, 25. "Milford Convention," *Herald of Freedom (Concord)*, 13 Jan 1843, 163. Asa Hutchinson, "4 May 1843," "14 May 1844," *Journals*, 107, 277. John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:67, 143, 470, 6. Joshua Hutchinson, *Brief Narrative*, 11.
- ¹³ "Milford Convention," *Herald of Freedom*, 13 Jan 1843, 163. A patriarchal dominance was a common occurrence. For Laurretta Hutchinson's father (unrelated to Hutchinson Family Singers) and his "well-regulated household" see Warner, *Memories, 1792-1872*, 2. Catherine E. Kelly, *In the New England Fashion: Reshaping Women's Lives in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999) 5. Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg, *Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1988), 19, 45.
- ¹⁴ John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:4, 283. Derby, 49.
- ¹⁵ Judson Hutchinson, "30 July 1842," *Excelsior*, 36. Joshua Hutchinson, 11. Asa Hutchinson, "4 May 1843," *Excelsior*, 107.
- ¹⁶ "A Farmer's life and a Farmer's duties," *The Farmer's Monthly Visitor*, 15 Jan. 1839, 10. Viola Hutchinson Campbell, *Memories of a Busy Life* (Plymouth: The Rogers Print, 1926), 26.
- ¹⁷ Coolidge and Mansfield, 1:397. *Constitution, Bye-Laws and Act of Incorporation of the Hillsborough Society For the Promotion of Agriculture and Domestic Manufacutres* (Amherst: Elijah Mansur, 1821), 8. Coolidge and Mansfield, 1:580.
- ¹⁸ Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Jackson* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1945), 8-17. Humphrey Moore, *An Address Delivered at Hopkinton, Before the Hillsborough Society for the Promotion of Agriculture and Domestic Manufactures, October 17, 1821* (Amherst, N.H.: Elijah Mansur, 1822), 11.
- ¹⁹ Truman Abell, *The New-England Farmer's Diary and Almanac, 1822* (Windsor, Vt.: Ebenezer Hutchinson, 1822), n.p. Clark, 25.
- ²⁰ Carol Brink, *Harps in the Wind* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1947), 3-7. John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:3-7. Wright, 11. Moses Porter, 31-34, 36, 39, 42, 45, 46. John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:5.
- ²¹ Workers of the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration for the State of New Hampshire, *New Hampshire: A Guide to the Granite State* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1938), 44. *Celebration of Hundredth Anniversary of the Incorporation of Milford, New Hampshire, June 26, 1894: Including the Proceedings of the Committee, Addresses, Poem, and Other Exercises of the Occasion* (Milford: Cabinet Print, 1894), 52. Fruit farming was the major crop of the region, however, hop cultivation was especially popular along the

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- banks of the Souhegan river, see Coolidge and Mansfield, 1:580. "The Hutchinson Family," *Arthur's Lady's Magazine of Elegant Literature and Fine Arts* (Aug. 1844): 75.
- ²² John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:8-10. Derby, 49. Coolidge and Mansfield, 1:397, 580. *Early Milford Homes* (n.p., 1976?). *Farmers' Museum, or Literary Gazette (Walpole)* 16 June 1800. Charles T. Jackson, *First Annual Report on the Geology of the State of New Hampshire* (Concord: Cyrus Barton, 1841), 557.
- ²³ John Hutchinson, *Story*, 2:236.
- ²⁴ Smith-Rosenberg, "Female World," 70-71. Smith-Rosenberg, "Hearing Women's Words," 28. Lydia Maria Child to Abby Hopper Gibbons, 6 Nov. 1842, *Life of Abby Hopper Gibbons: Told Chiefly Through Her Correspondence*, ed. Sarah Hopper Emerson (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1896) 125. Fanny J. Crosby [Mrs. Alexander Van Alstyne], *Memoirs of Eighty Years: The Story of Her Life, Told by Herself Ancestry, Childhood, Womanhood, Friendships, Incidents and History of Her Songs and Hymns* (Boston: James H. Earle & Company, 1906), 72.
- ²⁵ James Gibbons' in *Life of Abby Hopper Gibbons*, 127.
- ²⁶ John Hutchinson, 2:236. Joshua Hutchinson, 13, 53, 15.
- ²⁷ Quotes from John Hutchinson, *Story*, 2:236, 238. John Hutchinson, *Story*, 2:235-285.
- ²⁸ Joshua Hutchinson, 12-30. John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:12. Richard D. Brown, "The Emergence of Urban Society in Rural Massachusetts, 1760-1820," *Journal of American History* 61 (June 1974): 32, 48.
- ²⁹ Judson Hutchinson, "The Standing Collar" (Boston: Geo. P. Reed, 1851).
- ³⁰ John Hutchinson, *Story*, 2:260-261. Joshua Hutchinson, 41. Newspaper article in John Hutchinson, *Story*, 2:258.
- ³¹ Joshua Hutchinson, 47-50. John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:261-263. Asa Hutchinson, "Asa B. Hutchinson, Last Will, Given Dec. 16, 1869" and "Assignment of Policy, Milwaukee Aug. 30, 1878," Asa B. Hutchinson and Family Papers, 1842-1937, Minnesota Historical Society, MSS microfilm roll 1.
- ³² Joshua Hutchinson, 53-55. John Hutchinson, *Story*, 2:269-274.
- ³³ Charles Burroughs, *An Address on Female Education, Delivered in Portsmouth, New-Hampshire, October 26, 1827* (Portsmouth: Childs and March, 1827), 6. David Goodwin, *Historical Sketch of the Town of Milford New Hampshire, 1846*, ed. Milford Historical Society (Milford: The Cabinet Press, 1987), 7.
- ³⁴ *Catalogue of the Officers and Members of Milford Female Seminary, for the Fall Term of 1835, and the Spring, Summer & Fall Terms of 1836* (Amherst: R. Boylston, 1836), 7-11. Frank Carpenter's 1892 article from the *Home Journal* in John Hutchinson, *Story*, 2:269-275.
- ³⁵ John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:328; 2:237-243.
- ³⁶ Brink, 7.

- ³⁷ Anne M. Boylan, *Sunday School: The Formation of an American Institution, 1790-1880* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 3. Cyrus B. Phillips, Teacher of Music, *The Musical Self Instructor, Containing Five Hundred Questions and Answers Relative to the Science of Music, With Appropriate Examples, Tables &c. Comprising About Twenty Chapters; And Designed Chiefly for Students* (Burlington, N.J.: J. L. Powell, 1828). David Jaffe, "Peddlars of Progress and the Transformation of the Rural North, 1760-1860," *Journal of American History* 78 (1991): 511-535; "The Village Enlightenment in New England, 1760-1820," *William and Mary Quarterly* 47(1990): 327-346.
- ³⁸ Richard Crawford, *The American Musical Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). 1993); *American Sacred Music Imprints, 1698-1810: A Bibliography* (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1990).
- ³⁹ Gilbert Chase, *America's Music From Pilgrims to the Present*, rev. 3rd ed. (Urbana: University of Chicago, 1987) 33. John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:11. Wright, *The Granite Town*, 12. Prof. E. D. Sanborn, *Churches of New-Hampshire: An Historical Discourse, Delivered Before the General Association of New-Hampshire, at Littleton, Sept. 11, 1876* (Britstol, N.H.: R. W. Musgrove, 1876), 21. Arthur Wallace Peach, "The Reverend Joel Winch—Pioneer Minister," *Proceedings of the Vermont Historical Society* 9.4 (December 1941): 249. Adin Ballou, *Autobiography of Adin Ballou, 1803-1890*, ed. William S. Heywood (Lowell: Vox Populi Press, 1890), 42.
- ⁴⁰ Samuel Osgood, "Letter from New-Hampshire, Oct. 1836," *Western Messenger* 4 (Dec. 1837): 238-239.
- ⁴¹ Quote from Harrison Gray Otis in Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 3. Sanborn, *Churches of New Hampshire*, 17, 21. Peach, "The Reverend Joel Winch," 235-240. Examples of switching faiths were common. Lucy Colman went from Universalist to Spiritualist. See Lucy N. Colman, *Reminiscences* (Buffalo: H. L. Green, 1891) 1-13. Polly Hutchinson in John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:22. R. Laurence Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 67-73.
- ⁴² William B. Towne, *An Historical Address Delivered in the Town Hall At Amherst, January 19, 1874 On the Occasion of the Hundredth Anniversary of the Dedication of the Congregational Meeting-House* (Concord: n.p., 1874), 17, 28. *Manual of the First Congregational Church Founded Nov. 19, 1738* (Milford, N.H.: 1916). George A. Ramsdell, *Oration Delivered at the Dedication of the Town House, at Milford, N.H., April 29, 1870* (n.p., 1870), 5. *New England Narrative: A Record of One Hundred and Seventy-Five Years of History Compiled for the Anniversary Celebration in 1963 of the First Congregational Church of Milford, New Hampshire* (n.p., 1963), 20. *Declaration of Faith, Church Covenant, and Catalogue of Members of the Baptist Church in Milford, N.H., August, 1859* (Milford: Boutwell's Book and Job Office, 1859), 12, 15. Derby, 48. *Murder of Caroline H. Cutter By the Baptist Ministers and Baptist Churches* (n.p., n.d.), 13. John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:3.
- ⁴³ Boylan, *Sunday School*, 142-143.
- ⁴⁴ John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:14-15, 21. *Declaration of Faith*, 13. Edith Hunter, *A Brief History of the Public Schools of Milford, New Hampshire, 1738-1972* (Wethersfield Center, Vt.: The Hunter Press, 1973), 24. The Hutchinson Family Singers' uncle Andrew Hutchinson supervised the Milford Sabbath Schools for many years, see *Fifth Annual Report of the New-Hampshire Baptist Sabbath School Union Presented at the Annual Meeting Held at*

Rumney, June 25, 1833 (Concord: Chase and Dunlap, 1833), 38.. Boylan, 22-25, 142-143. Moore, *Selling God*, 62-65.

- ⁴⁵ *Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Meeting of the Baptist Convention of the State of New-Hampshire... June 24th & 25th, 1829* (Concord: Office of the Batholomew Press, Printed by George Hough, 1829), 17, 5-6. Hatch, 3, 5.
- ⁴⁶ *Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Meeting*, 34. *Proceedings of the Baptist Convention of the State of New-Hampshire at their Eighth Annual Meeting in Rumney, June 26 & 27, 1833* (Concord: Chase and Dunlap, 1833), 25. The growth of the Baptist movement in the United States is one of the major success stories of the young nation and is not particular to Milford or New Hampshire. In the 30 years after the Revolution, "Baptist membership multiplied tenfold" in America. Nathan Hatch also holds to a belief that a distinguishing trait of American Christianity is that "religious leaders have pursued people wherever they could be found; embraced them without regard to social standing; and challenged them to think, to interpret Scripture, and to organize the church for themselves." Hatch, 3, 5. Samuel Everett, "The Baptist Church," *New-England Baptist Register* 23:1 (June 8, 1831). "Declaration of Faith," *Church Covenant, and Catalogue of Members of the Baptist Church in Milford, N.H., August, 1859* (Milford: Boutwell's Book and Job Office, 1859), 17-19. John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:21; 2:239-240.
- ⁴⁷ Louis P. Masur, *1831: Year of Eclipse* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 64, 68. Rev. F. A. Cox and Rev. J. Hoby, *The Baptists in America: A Narrative of the Deputation From the Baptist Union in England, to the United States and Canada* (London: T. Ward & Co., 1836), 223.
- ⁴⁸ Daniel W. Paterson, "Word, Song, and Motion: Instruments of Celebration Among Protestant Radicals in Early Nineteenth-Century America," in *Celebration: Studies in Festivity and Ritual*, ed. Victor Turner (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1982), 222-223. Moore, *Selling God*, 49-53.
- ⁴⁹ Cartwright cited in McLoughlin, 136. In recording numbers these religious leaders demonstrated a numeracy that was not seen at earlier points in American history, see Patricia Cline Cohen, *A Calculating People: The Spread of Numeracy in Early America* (New York: Routledge, 1999).
- ⁵⁰ "Christian Soldier," *New England Baptist Register* 3:1 (19 Jan. 1831). John Colby, *The Life, Experience and Travels of John Colby, Preacher of the Gospel* (Rochester, NY: Printed for David Marks, Jr., By E. Peck, 1827), 70.
- ⁵¹ *Proceedings of the Baptist Convention of the State of New-Hampshire at their Ninth Annual Meeting at Jaffrey, June 26, 27 & 28, 1834* (Concord: Eastman, Wenster & Co., 1834), 27. *Proceedings of the Baptist Convention of the State of New-Hampshire, at Their Seventh Annual Meeting in Portsmouth, June 27 & 28, 1832.* (Concord: Chase and Dunlap, 1832), 38. *Proceedings of the New-Hampshire Baptist State Convention, New-Hampshire Branch of the N.H. Education Society, N. Hampshire Baptist Sabbath School Union, and the New-Hampshire Branch of the Baptist General Tract Society, at their Annual Meetings; and also the Organization of the New-Hampshire Foreign Bible Society, At Milford, October 18, 19, and 20, 1836* (Concord: Stevens & Young, 1836), 20, 26-28, 12-13.
- ⁵² *Proceedings of the Baptist Convention of the State of New-Hampshire at their Ninth Annual Meeting at Jaffrey, June 26, 27 & 28, 1834* (Concord: Eastman, Wenster & Co., 1834), 27. *Proceedings of the Baptist Convention of the State of New-Hampshire, at Their Seventh Annual Meeting in Portsmouth, June 27 & 28, 1832.* (Concord: Chase and Dunlap, 1832),

38. *Proceedings of the New-Hampshire Baptist State Convention, New-Hampshire Branch of the N.H. Education Society, N. Hampshire Baptist Sabbath School Union, and the New-Hampshire Branch of the Baptist General Tract Society, at their Annual Meetings; and also the Organization of the New-Hampshire Foreign Bible Society, At Milford, October 18, 19, and 20, 1836* (Concord: Stevens & Young, 1836), 20, 26-28, 12-13. Sanborn, 22. Moore, *Selling God*, 67-73.

- ⁵³ Hatch, 10. Alan Taylor, "From Fathers to Friends of the People: Political Personas in the Early Republic," in *New Perspectives on the Early American Republic: Essays from the Journal of the Early Republic, 1981-1991*, ed. Ralph D. Gray and Michael A. Morrison (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1994), 139-163. Hatch, 64-66. John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1: 239-240. Peach, "The Reverend Joel Winch," 240.

Part Third



Starting out as inexperienced minstrels on an untried experiment as to what their success might be...

—William Lloyd Garrison, 1874—¹

The Hutchinsons' arduous passage from New Hampshire to the stages of Boston and New York began modestly on November 6, 1840. On this date the singers gave the first of what they later claimed to be over 12,000 concerts. Representing the public debut of the family (although its members had performed in church ceremonies and at political celebrations, this was the first time they appeared exclusively as Hutchinsons), it was not an appearance of the soon-to-be-famous Hutchinson quartet of John, Judson, Abby, and Asa. Nor was it the slender trio of brothers who set out to tour New England in late 1841. The 1840 show was an impressive undertaking that featured the entire Hutchinson family—Jesse, Polly, and all of their children. Amidst the sea of voices, no individual's singing stood out. The group's size, their playing of sacred song (part of a mixture of secular and sacred selections), and the concert's setting (Milford's Baptist Meeting House) combined to produce a hallowed atmosphere for the evening. If one unexpectedly walked in on the Hutchinsons' performance, he may very well have thought it was part of a religious service. Yet it was not. The Hutchinson family's singing was offered as entertainment. Enjoying the distraction from their usual evening's activities, the Milford audience thanked the group with a warm reception. The success of this Friday night concert influenced three of the Hutchinson brothers to try their lot as professional musicians.²

It was a propitious moment for such a decision. In the fall of 1840 the youngest Hutchinson boys received unsettling news from their father who told them that it was time for them to make it on their own. Judson, John, and Asa (ages twenty-three, nineteen, and seventeen) were no longer welcome to live in their family's Milford home. Their career choice was unusual since musicians were often considered part of the lower classes. In 18th

century England Lord Chesterfield warned his son: "I declare that I would rather be reckoned the best barber than the best fiddler in England;" this same sentiment was alive and well in antebellum America. The Hutchinsons set out against the prejudice as a trio of young and virtually penniless brothers. Despite their musical intentions, the three brothers did not earn their keep on the stages of Boston or anywhere else in 1841. They did, however, find employment in the hardware and grocery stores of Lynn, Massachusetts.³

Jesse, Jr., Hutchinson and Zephaniah Hutchinson, older brothers of Judson, John, and Asa, had removed to Lynn much earlier. Jesse's tenure in the shoe manufacturing town began as early as 1835 when he was twenty-one years old. By 1840 he was likely found at 8 Exchange Street at his stove store, while his older brother Zephaniah operated W. I. Goods & Groceries from 9 Exchange Street. Jesse had not turned away from his apprenticeship in printing as Perley & Stoneham, a book publisher, was housed at 8 Exchange Street as well. An ad for the printer cited their location as the "Hutchinson Building" signifying at the very least that the Hutchinson brothers had established a name for themselves. Perhaps they even owned the building where the three aspiring musicians went when they arrived in Lynn.⁴

Working in their brothers' stores was one of the only options open to John, Asa, and Judson. The performance climate in New England dictated that the Hutchinson trio, despite their deepest desires, could not turn up at the nearest hall and draw an eager audience. With no reputation and further handicapped by that lack of a European pedigree that American concert goers found a sign of vulgarity, the Hutchinson Family Singers were certain to go unnoticed. The brothers were aware of this situation and realized that the favorable response of their hometown listeners and critics would not translate to towns like Dorchester or Saratoga let alone cities like Boston or New York. None of this stopped the group from

immediately trying their luck in Lynn. An announcement for a performance on February 13, 1841, broadcasted the brothers' "Family Concert" of "Vocal and Instrumental Music, (Sacred and Secular)."⁵

John, Asa, Judson, and Jesse, Jr., performed that Saturday evening in Lynn and, according to John, "the concert was a great success" in front of a "respectable audience." But it was not enough to shake the brothers' belief that they lacked polish and the right connections. While linked to the cultural and religious scene of rural New Hampshire, the Hutchinsons had no ties to more profitable centers of entertainment. They decided a move to Boston would remedy this condition and expose them to a wider variety of musical culture. Soon the Hutchinsons were trying to make a name for themselves in the nation's fifth largest city.

In Boston, the Hutchinsons visited the renowned American composer and music educator Lowell Mason. Seeking Mason out demonstrated the group's preoccupation with their musical and political deficiencies. The eminent Bostonian, the man who brought music education to Boston's public schools in 1838 and whose *Carmina Sacra* sold over 500,000 copies between 1841 and 1853, could have provided the Hutchinsons with the connections and the musical knowledge to assist their career. But the composer did not cooperate. As John remembered the incident, Mason gave the boys a copy of his most recent publication and immediately went back to work on one of his compositions.⁶

Asa, Judson, Jesse, and John were not discouraged by their meeting with Mason. It was the first of many instances over the next few years when the Hutchinsons put aside feelings of disappointment in favor of perseverance. They simply needed to search for other ways to break into the antebellum entertainment circuit. The brothers tried out for Boston's

Handel and Haydn Society—a choral group specializing in performances of European art music composers—hoping to make connections through this organization. After sitting in with the chorus, the siblings chose to turn down an offer to join the society. John felt that he and his brothers would lose their individuality among such robust vocal company. Faced with a stalled music career, the Hutchinsons opted to take care of their worsening financial situation. Jesse, Jr., still possessing his stove shop in Lynn, accepted a job as a compositor at the *Advertiser* on Court Street. Tending bar and other tasks were required of John who worked with a grocer. Meanwhile Judson lead the local Universalist Society's choir. Through it all the brothers kept a regular rehearsal schedule, practicing above the store of their brother Andrew who had been in Boston since the early 1830s.⁷

The Boston adventure was a frenetic and short-lived attempt to break into New England's concert scene. The four brothers soon moved back to Lynn. Jesse immediately attended to his store while the remaining three immersed themselves in music once again by setting out on a fall tour of rural New Hampshire. Using the family farm in Milford as a base, the *Æolian Vocalists*—as John, Asa, and Judson first called themselves—performed in the nearby towns of East Wilton, West Wilton, Wilton Centre, New Ipswich, Hancock, Peterborough, and Nashua during October and November of 1841. While not an extensive trip when measured in miles, it represented the siblings' first tour.

These performances in 1841 presented the brothers a bleak introduction to the lifestyle of itinerant musicians, especially its financial difficulties. The Hutchinsons' concerts featured a wide array of secular and sacred songs, but this was not enough to attract sizeable crowds. One of the Wilton concerts drew barely fifty people and larger audiences were needed to realize profit with tickets priced at 12 ½ cents. The Hutchinson Family Singers'

first attempt at professional musicianship was a financial disaster. Even the trio's use of family connections to secure concert spaces for reduced fees was not enough to stem the flow of money away from the musicians. Asa's comments regarding their musical assault on the countryside were succinct: "Praise was sweet, but pence are sweeter." In the end, the Hutchinsons concluded their tour with almost empty pockets.⁸

Of the few documents that remain from this tour, a drawing of the Hutchinsons performing in East Wilton is most telling (see fig. 1). This concert hall was secured through Deacon Bales, a family friend, who fashioned a "stage" out of a small room. Here, on the same level as the audience, the three brothers played and sang. Immediately in front of the group was a crude table, made out of a rough pine board set atop three barrels. This table held five candles to illuminate the sheets of music from which the Hutchinsons were reading. In the picture Asa plays the bass fiddle, John, to Asa's right, sings, (sheet music in hand, violin on the table), and Judson plays the violin. The audience appears attentive despite their unavoidable discomfort from sitting on wood boards laid over chairs (seating created to increase the amount of sitting room). It was clearly not a packed house and the illustration depicts empty space and coats immediately surrounding most of the listeners.

The East Wilton image unveils a rather unimpressive group of musicians. While they may have sung well, the brothers were not versed enough in their music to perform from memory and relied on sheet music during the concert. This signals that the brothers were probably not comfortable enough with the music to improvise lyrically or instrumentally, a skill that later became the Hutchinsons' signature when playing at antislavery meetings. John, Judson, and Asa appear nervous in front of their listeners, perhaps worried about the small audience that secured them only ten cents. Adding to the dismal scenario in East Wilton,

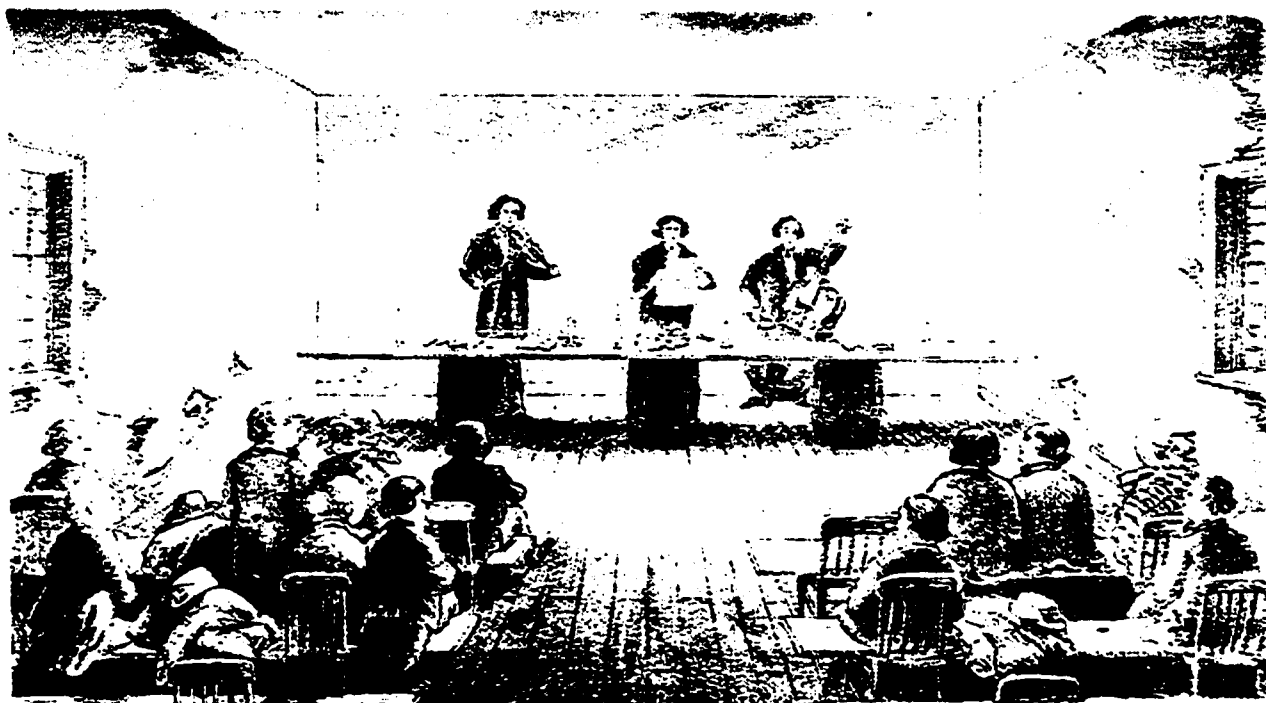


Figure 1
CONCERT AT EAST WILTON
From John Hutchinson's *Story of the Hutchinsons*, vol. I

even this dime was spoken for as the trio had to pay back their brother Ben a twenty-cent per week charge for his sleigh which they had borrowed.⁹

After the tour, which garnered “golden opinions” but not “golden gains,” the three returned to Lynn, not a particularly bad place for aspiring artists to be. One of the southernmost cities in Essex County, located 11 miles northeast of Boston, Lynn was the thirty-ninth most populated city in 1840 with 9,367 citizens. Lynn’s location within an emerging urban area supported by the commercial and financial services of Boston and the ports of Boston and Salem ensured success for the town’s major industry: shoes. The Quaker town was also a hotbed of reforms ranging from temperance to antislavery, which attracted many young, social activists like Frederick Douglass, Henry Wright, and Abby Kelley. These movements filled the town with a youthful daring that would prove receptive to the Hutchinsons’ socially conscious songs. Lynn residents also had a proven passion for music. By the mid-1830s the town featured a regular stream of concerts from “Ancient Music” to offerings from their Mozart Society. The citizens of Lynn were active cultural consumers who could discourse on the greatest entertainments of their day from P. T. Barnum’s promotion of George Washington’s nurse, Joice Heth—“We know of no humbug and gross deception that have of late years been so successfully and so long practised as was that of Joice Heth”—to the latest speaker on the antislavery circuit. Topping off the city’s cultural attractions was Henry Prentiss’s music shop, opened in 1837, which was filled with a variety of instruments and sheet music.¹⁰

Living in Lynn once again, the brothers returned to non-musical employment. Asa worked alongside Jesse, Jr., at the stove business, now relocated about a half mile from the center of town to 32 Union Street. Judson and John opened a small grocery next door. For

this enterprise John spent \$14 to purchase a horse and wagon in order to bring goods from his brother Andrew's Boston wholesale business. This setting provided the siblings means for economic survival. Their newly acquired stability allowed them to sustain their musical dreams. The brothers rented a rehearsal space about a quarter of a mile west of their storefronts. It was here, at the corner of Union and Silsbee Streets, that the Hutchinsons laid the foundation for their future accomplishments.

The kind of life they lived, holding down day jobs in order to fund their music, required sacrifices. The brothers cooked their own food and, according to the records they left behind, did not socialize very often. There always seemed to be music for practice and bills to pay. The brothers added to their weekly rehearsal time by singing at the First Universalist Church where Jesse, Jr., worked as the chorister. This time spent within the context of a live church performance provided the brothers a more relaxed setting (since the focus was on the group and not on the brothers) in which to practice their instrumental technique (John and Judson on violin, Asa on a cello) and to stretch their voices. While his brothers honed their musicianship, Jesse Jr., continued his own efforts to profit from music by forming a singing school that met twice a week in a chapel; The cost for 24 lessons (12 weeks) was \$2 for men, \$1 for women.¹¹

The Hutchinsons' stay in Lynn paid off. Nothing was more important than their exposure to the various musical acts that passed through town and the excitement surrounding temperance reform. Seeing what antebellum listeners liked and disliked added to the brothers' knowledge and experience. For the young musicians, these lessons were invaluable. The stage presence of the Hutchinsons evolved noticeably following contact with The Rainer Family, Swiss musicians who were the most popular family singers in America at the time.

These foreign musicians represented the benchmark for singing families in 1841 and the Hutchinsons undoubtedly envied their celebrity. The brothers saw the Rainers perform in late 1841 and the foreigners' influence is recognizable in the sudden changes in the Hutchinsons' concert style and costume.

The Rainers' rise to stardom started in 1824 between the border of Switzerland and Austria where a family of singers (three brothers and one sister) played a unique blend of Tyrolean folk and German partsongs for the first time. In the years following, their performances evoked visions of romantic Swiss vistas and alpine life for audiences worldwide. The Rainers visit to Great Britain brought critical acclaim in 1827. Here, with the aid of Ignatz Moscheles, one of the best connected European musicians, they performed for British royals, impressing King George IV and capturing the fancy of the Duchess of Kent. As a result, the English desire for singing families reflecting a national style exploded in the 1830s, causing one critic to complain: "There is no end to our unnatural adoptions—Italians, French, and Germans—the Swiss Family This, and the Dutch Family That, and the Russian Family T'other—Chanteurs Montagnards, Siffluers, and Chinchoppers—Alpine Minstrels, and Bohemian Minstrels, and minstrels from heaven knows where."

The price of success for the Swiss troupe was a never-ending stream of emulators. Some, like Moscheles, adapted Tyrolese tunes performed by the Rainers and played them in concert alongside works by his friend Ludwig van Beethoven. Others were more blatant. Calling themselves the Tyrolese Vocalists, one group of imitators toured the United States in 1834. Their visit represented the early beginnings of a family singer craze in America that would peak at the same time as the Hutchinsons' reputation in the late 1840s. In 1839 the original Tyrolean performers made their way to America where they hoped for success with

audiences accustomed to lavishing attention upon foreign-born entertainers. Lowell Mason provided them a ringing endorsement: "The excellence of their performance, the peculiarity of their national music, and their own personal excellence and amiability, seem alike to entitle them to the confidence and patronage of the public." Mason was right, the Rainers were in luck. American music teachers like Mason had been using texts that highlighted the works of the Rainers long before the singers had ever set foot in North America. And, if Americans knew anything of Switzerland at the time, it was through the images of nature provided by romantic writers. Since the Rainers' songs worked mainly upon a romantic evocation of alpine life—in addition to lyrics concerned with mountain living, the group yodeled after each stanza and donned their "national costume"—they quickly secured great popularity in the United States.¹²

The Swiss entertainers introduced American audiences to a different kind of musician. Neither popular performers in the vein of Russell nor representatives of the European art music tradition, the Rainers posed as organic entertainers whose music and talents sprang forth out of their native land. American newspapers were quick to report the link between the singers and their country of origin. A Baltimore writer thought the singers displayed all the "sweetness and mildness peculiar to German music." These characteristics were only accentuated by "the grace of their national costume, the simplicity of manner, and the total absence of effort in their style of singing." Not only did the Rainers make performing look easy, they made it look Swiss (or German, or Tyrolean, depending upon the inclination of the reviewer). By holding to a national distinctiveness that listeners found genuine or natural, the Rainers forged a recognizable identity for themselves on the American stage. When the Swiss

entertainers departed in 1843, they were as renowned in the New World as they were in the Old.¹³

There is little doubt that the Hutchinsons attended one of the many performances of the Rainer family in New England and John once boasted that he was the only Hutchinson to hear the Rainer's Lynn performance. The evidence points to December 1841 as the Lynn show that John wrote about. The Rainers' performance at the end of the year left a marked impression on the Hutchinson brothers. Before they experienced the Rainers', the Hutchinson Family Singers' were well-received, but they clearly lacked direction. After the Rainer's show, the New Hampshire musicians modeled themselves on the Swiss group and began to enjoy the popular appeal of family singers stimulated by the Rainers.¹⁴

Following the Rainers visit to Lynn, the Hutchinsons continued with their musical ambitions in January of 1842. During this month *The Lynn Freeman and Essex County Whig* ran ads announcing two concerts by the Hutchinsons. The notice for the first show signaled that only three Hutchinson brothers were to perform. It is likely that the concert included John, Asa, and Judson on stage while Jesse, Jr., acted as their manager—a common arrangement. The evening probably proceeded much as their recent endeavors in New Hampshire had, but with a slightly larger audience in the more heavily populated city of Lynn. The Hutchinsons were determined to make money in music, but it was not until their next performance that they appeared to be on the right track.¹⁵

On January 29, 1841, the Hutchinson brothers experimented with the format that had been set for the past year. They brought their eleven-year-old sister on stage with them. No doubt the unbridled success of the Rainers influenced this decision. Abby's debut alone did not reveal a direct Rainer influence, but the fact that she made her entrance outfitted in "a

Swiss bodice or a Tyrolean costume” did. The Swiss singers’ style gripped the young New Hampshire entertainers and John later claimed responsibility for teaching his siblings how to sing in the Rainers’ “Tyrolean style of singing.” The costume changes and new vocal style worked. By the end of February, the Hutchinsons were consistently promoting “Family” concerts “by the AEOLIAN VOCALISTS!” that highlighted the three brothers and their sister.¹⁶

The Rainers were not the only influence upon the Hutchinson Family Singers at the time, for the Hutchinsons were branching out and making important new connections. Of these, their alliance with the temperance movement was most vital. The relationship of the Hutchinsons with anti-alcohol reformers began when the singers adopted the temperance pledge. According to John Hutchinson, he and his brothers heard John Hawkins, the legendary temperance speaker, represent the Washingtonian branch of the reform movement and were instantly persuaded to join. This was not a radical move as temperance was widely espoused in antebellum America. Beginning in 1826 with the formation of the American Society for the Promotion of Temperance (the first national temperance organization), the virtues of cold water spread throughout the country. During the 1820s and 1830s, temperance advocates sported strong church ties and usually were not members of the working class. Religious leaders were in the vanguard of the movement as alcoholism was an easily identifiable sin and its renunciation fit easily into the mold of human perfectionism that was at the heart of the Second Great Awakening.¹⁷

The Hutchinson family must have been quite familiar with anti-alcohol reform. New Hampshire’s Baptists called out against drinking as early as 1829: “Intemperance originated with temperate people: it is continued by what is called the temperate use of inebriating

liquors...This unholy leaven should be purged from the Christian church.” The close association of the Hutchinson family with the Baptist church as musicians and as followers guaranteed that they were exposed to the tenets of temperance before 1842. Yet the Hutchinson brothers chose to ignore the message until they came into contact with the Washington Temperance Society. Founded in 1840 in Baltimore by a group of recovering alcoholics, the Washingtonians changed the face of temperance reform from a more staid church setting with sinful admonitions to an animated, dramatized reform featuring mass gatherings, picnics, and parades. As this reform style attracted numerous clerks, laborers, and skilled artisans, the Washingtonian message attracted working-class Americans more extensively than earlier temperance movements. That the Hutchinsons considered themselves temperance advocates only after taking the Washingtonian pledge is important. Years of church-instilled temperance had not led the young men to identify with the cause. While the brothers’ employment in groceries and stove shops located them more as workers than as members of the burgeoning middle class, the Hutchinsons were attracted to the reform spectacle more than anything else.¹⁸

In June, 1841, a Cold Water Army of around twelve hundred people rolled through Lynn. Within the First Methodist Church where most of the day’s festivities were held, the temperance participants rang out with “a couple of appropriate songs.” Yet this event may have sparked the Hutchinson brothers’ temperance convictions, but it did not show them how to fuse their reform interests with their musical dreams. This would come quickly as the Hutchinsons discovered audiences at temperance functions were larger and more eager than any they had experienced. Soon the Hutchinsons’ ads excitedly proclaimed that their upcoming shows would “conclude with a Washingtonian Song in full chorus.”¹⁹

Temperance introduced the brothers to a different kind of musical activism. The Hutchinson Family Singers had sung in political processions, but those occasions permitted them only to rouse support for a party candidate. Temperance gave the musicians more freedom to publicly vocalize their thoughts on contemporary issues. The New Hampshire entertainers were not the first to sing for temperance; music had been a part of the reform movement from the start. But through such tunes as “All Hail! Washingtonians” and “King Alcohol” the Hutchinson Family Singers advanced the popularity of temperance music while bringing their personal anti-alcohol views to light.

This combination of Rainer imitators and temperance advocates worked wonders for the struggling musicians. In early 1842, the Hutchinsons played in Milford and surrounding New Hampshire towns as well as several places in Maine and, of course, Lynn, Massachusetts. By the end of the year they had performed at the genteel vacation destinations of Ballston and Saratoga Springs and even in Boston. Connecting to the Rainers’ signature style gave the Hutchinsons an ideal: the on stage portrayal of an alpine family. The Hutchinsons’ use of nature and of natural imagery in their songs worked well because American cultural consumers were heavily influenced by romantic writers who taught their readers to fear and praise the sublime character of natural scenery. At the same time the singers’ temperance association slowly connected the Hutchinsons to a contemporary issue that preoccupied many in antebellum America. Soon the Hutchinson Family Singers’ reform beliefs would announce their desire to be viewed as American entertainers. In the meantime, the group had started to reach their listeners through several channels.²⁰

WHILE 1842 WAS A TURNING POINT for the group, their road to success was hardly smooth. The increase in adulation was appreciated by the Hutchinsons, but their measure of success was money. During 1842, the group's financial situation remained in a precarious state. The Hutchinson Family Singers' money problem only worsened as costs for their summer tour piled up. Before leaving the group had to secure transportation. John already owned one horse. They secured another along with a necessary harness for roughly \$70. A Carryall, a four-wheeled coach able to transport four passengers, was purchased for \$75. Joseph Tarbell, who was taken into service for three months as the group's hired hand for \$45, was the Hutchinsons' final expense before leaving to tour New Hampshire, Vermont, and upstate New York.

Totaling \$190, the Hutchinsons' expenditures did not stop with the costs upfront.* During the tour the horses needed food and shelter (around 28 cents per day for oats, \$7 for a week in the stable in Albany); the carryall required greasing and occasionally broke down (no more than \$1.50 per instance); and the group faced tolls between 12.5 cents and 36 cents on the roads of New England. When they weren't on the move, their lodging prices varied from \$3 per night to \$14 for a week. Strings were needed for their instruments (Judson and John bought 25 cents worth in July), and new outfits were required for their stage presentation (Abby's new dresses cost between \$1.33 and \$6, while her brothers purchased themselves accessories such as \$3 worth of hats).²¹

Outside of borrowing—which they did often from various family members—the only way for the Hutchinson Family Singers to offset their debts was through performance. Yet putting on a show triggered even more spending. A crier who strolled through town

* \$190 is roughly equivalent to \$4,105.55 in 2001.

announcing the Hutchinsons' arrival charged roughly 50 cents and bills to be posted cost about 75 cents per hundred; a man to hang them, 40 cents. Nearly every stage required a person to take care of candles used for lighting for which the group was commonly charged \$1. There was, of course, a charge for the hall itself, a fee which varied greatly. For the Family Singers in 1842, the expenditure for performance space was between \$1.25 and \$7 per night. Occasionally the Hutchinsons lessened the risk of their endeavor by trading a percentage of their take at the door for lodging. The proportion of ticket sales handed over represented as much as two-thirds of their revenue, but, when exchanged for housing and horse keeping, it was not as extreme as it sounds. In fact several times the siblings came out ahead when their concerts drew small turnouts. On more fortunate occasions, the Hutchinsons relied upon the generosity of ministers who donated their churches for free. Without regard to sectarian differences, the Family Singers benefited from the goodwill of Universalists and Presbyterians as well as Baptists. Nonetheless, the examples of generosity were not frequent enough to bring the summer tour into the black.²²

Free performance spaces were not the only deals that the Hutchinsons were able to negotiate. Increasingly the group realized the power of their voices as they traversed the back roads of New England. Singing while traveling provided the Hutchinsons with plenty of practice time though it occasionally generated dumbfounded looks; when the musicians passed through Boscawen, N.H., in July Asa reported, "We sung all the way through which made the natives stare." At other times, the Hutchinsons' singing worked to their advantage. On their way from Concord toward Franklin, New Hampshire, the quartet stopped at a tavern to have the wheels of the carryall greased. Normally a fee of six cents applied, but the singers belted out three songs and received a complimentary lubrication instead.²³

If the tour of 1842 demonstrated anything it was the tremendous growth of the Hutchinson Family Singers from a group of musically knowledgeable youngsters from a New Hampshire farm to wily entertainers looking to promote and perform at the drop of a hat. By July, the Hutchinson Family Singers clearly began to hit their stride. The brothers' decision to include Abby paid off. Newspapers reported her "powers and skill" and claimed "that she was a legitimate member of this extraordinary and gifted family." Asa agreed with two of the Hutchinson Family Singers' fans, students at Dartmouth, who had seen the group both before and after Abby joined and felt strongly that her addition improved the troupe. Abby was a hit, complementing her older brothers in a way that only a younger sister could. Her feminine presence helped the musicians form a more complete *family* presentation on stage. In the vein of the Rainers, the Hutchinsons both declared that they grew up among natural wonders of New Hampshire and gave their listeners a feeling that they were hearing music that was effortless and innate. Abby accentuated the sense that the Hutchinsons' singing was "natural music." "The young lady *was* good we *know*, for she looked good, and sung good, and the audience felt good," wrote the *Nashua Gazette*, "we can say of the concert as boys sometimes say when they begin to study grammar, 'good, gooder, *goodest*.'" While even the best reviews did not translate into massive profits, the Family Singers had progressed. If they continued at this intrepid pace, they would be granted the "golden gains" which they sought.²⁴

The summer of 1842 was a time of evolution for the performers who were still searching for their own stage identity. On one hand, they were garnering a lot of attention as a lot of Rainer-like entertainers. A New Hampshire admirer wrote that "our little White Mountains has got music among its hills, and Swiss singers among its people, as well as Alps among its *uplands*." On the other hand, the attention that the alpine imagery secured

countered an important fact: the Hutchinson Family Singers were native American musicians.

One of their earliest handbills bluntly proclaimed:

When foreigners approach your shores,
You welcome them with open doors;
Now we have come to seek our lot,
Shall native talent be forgot?

A new generation of Americans staked their claim within American culture in the 1840s. The fact that European performers dominated the nation's stages increasingly bothered American intellectuals. Nowhere was this more clear than in the writings and activities of the New England Transcendentalists. Influenced by European Romanticism and their country's own Puritan tradition, Ralph Emerson spoke zealously about the virtue of self-reliant men while Margaret Fuller found that "there is always great pleasure in any entertainment truly national." Both writers hoped to combat the favoritism provided to European culture in the United States by developing a distinctly American voice in the arts.

The Hutchinsons increasingly represented this cultural nationalism as their association with the Rainers diminished. Some of their listeners warned the singers against what they saw as the their contrived association with the Rainers. "We think them unwise in attempting to sing Tyrolese music," objected a letter in the *Essex County Washingtonian*. As four musicians born and raised in New England the group was poised to gain recognition as American entertainers. But first the four singers from New Hampshire had to develop a way to express their American origins through music.²⁵

Promoting themselves as American musicians was a risky proposition for the Hutchinsons. No socially respectable singer marketed themselves as coming from anywhere in the United States. The belief that European musicians were superior gripped audiences so tightly that to be understood as an American musician was all but a death knell. A critic for

the Albany *Microscope* revealed this thinking in 1842 when he wrote about a concert by the Hutchinsons:

(Their) tickets were put at 25 cents—half the price of the Rainers; and although their music, vocal and instrumental, was as good and as well performed as the Rainers, and drew from those present the most enthusiastic applause, the audiences were quite slim. Why was this? Simply because they were *American citizens*...their slim luck, the last time they were here, was occasioned by the title of the family—The “*American Æolian Vocalists*.” We hope those who object to it, will read it hereafter—The “*English Æolian Vocalists*,” and patronize them.²⁶

The New Hampshire singers did not take the *Microscope*'s suggestion and falsely link themselves to Europe. Instead they repackaged their family singer style for the burgeoning American middle class by dressing simply (not as Tyroleans) and publicly allying themselves with distinctly American concerns represented in antebellum reform. With these moves the Hutchinsons managed to authenticate their level of skill and emerge as American performers. Not coincidentally, the group would gradually lose their foreign sounding name (*Æolian Vocalists*) in favor of the Hutchison Family Singers.

For the Hutchinsons, adopting an American stage presence did not mean losing that association with nature that had been spurred by the Rainers. The foursome continued to play upon alpine imagery on their sheet music covers and in their songs. But now they made it clear that the mountain life evoked was New England's. (see fig. 2 and fig. 3) First published in 1843, the Hutchinson Family Singer's signature song announced “we have come from the mountains of the Old Granite State.” In this work the siblings connected to a developing industry that revolved around natural scenery such as New York's Catskill mountains and the White Mountains of New Hampshire. Nature tourism took root at an incredible pace in the two decades before the Civil War as improved travel routes combined with romantic notions of the natural world. The Hutchinsons' New Hampshire origins and the romantic imagery

FAREWELL VOCAL CONCERT,

BY THE CELEBRATED
AEOLIAN VOCALISTS.

THE HUTCHINSON FAMILY, (THREE BROTHERS AND SISTER)

Not from the valleys of Tyrol, or the Mountains of Switzerland, but from the Hills of New England, would most respectfully announce to the Ladies and Gentlemen of Worcester, that they will give a FAREWELL Concert of

VOCAL MUSIC,
accompanied with Violins and Violoncello at
BRINLEY HALL, this, TUESDAY Eve. Sept. 6th, '42,
when they will introduce a variety of the most popular Sentimental and Secular Solos, Trios, and Quartetts, extant.

PROGRAMME

PART 1.

Quartette—Blow on! Blow on! (a Pirate's Glee)	- - - - -	B. F. Baker.
Trio—Lady of Brandy. (a Serenade)	- - - - -	Orphean.
Solo—I'm afloat, I'm afloat,	- - - - -	White.
Trio—To Greece we give our shining blades,	- - - - -	Phillips.
Quartette—Sleep on! Sleep on! (a Serenade) [by request]	- - - - -	Herrmann.
Solo—The Blind Boy.	- - - - -	Dempster.
Quartette—The Tyrolean War Song,	- - - - -	Rainers.
Trio—A little Farm well till'd,	- - - - -	White.
Quartette—Sweet beaming Hope,	- - - - -	Mason.

PART 2.

Quartette—Near the Lake where drooped the willow,	- - - - -	White.
Solo—Trip to Cape Ann,	- - - - -	Hutchinson.
Trio—The charms of Celia. (a Catch)	- - - - -	Smithers.
Solo—He was such a nice Young Man.	- - - - -	
Quartette—Peaceful slumbering on the Ocean,	- - - - -	Heath.
Solo—The Snow Storm, [by particular request]	- - - - -	Heath.

In the month of December, 1821, a Mr. Blake, with his wife and infant, was passing over the Green Mountains of Vermont. The drifting snow made it impossible for the horse to proceed. Mr. Blake set off on foot in search of assistance, and perished in the storm before he could reach any human dwelling. The mother alarmed, as is supposed, at his long absence, went in quest of him, with her infant in her arms. She was found in the morning dead, a short distance from the sleigh. The child was laying on her bosom, carefully wrapped in her cloak, and was still alive.

Quartette—The grave of Bonaparte, arranged for four voices, by	-	Hutchinson.
"He sleeps his last sleep,		
He's fought his last battle,		
No sound can awake him to glory again."		
Trio—Crows in a Corn-field,	-	Phillips.

(Col. LEAVITT, Agent.)

TICKETS—25 cts.—for a gentleman and two ladies 50 cts.,
to be obtained of M. D. Phillips, S. R. Leland, and at the Door.

CONCERT TO COMMENCE AT 8 O'CLOCK.

J. B. RIPLEY, Printer—PALLADIUM OFFICE, WORCESTER.

Figure 2
HUTCHINSONS' CONCERT BILL, SEPTEMBER 1842

they brought to their music worked well alongside the culture and business of nature tourism; this was especially relevant after 1842 as the Hutchinson Family Singers asserted that the majestic sights about which they sang were those of Henry David Thoreau, not of The Rainer Family.

Throughout the transformative year of 1842 the group continued to forge a close association with temperance and tap into the perfectionist impulse bequeathed to Americans by the Second Great Awakening as reform. On July 4 in Milford, music by the Milford choir—still under the direction of Joshua Hutchinson—and the Hutchinson Family Singers “enlivened the occasion,” a Sabbath School & Temperance Celebration. By the end of the year, the Hutchinsons were showcased at anti-alcohol meetings. Temperance advertisements implored: “The Hutchinson Family, they too must be there; for how can a convention dispense with their sweet, and enlivening music?” Temperance was the first reform to offer the Hutchinsons exposure, a chance to promote ideas in which they believed, and the opportunity to publicly identify themselves with a national (an American) cause.²⁷

The group’s changed identity from European imitators to decidedly American musicians was announced through their ties with the many different newspapers. A combination of repeat visits and growing public interest allowed the brothers to better manipulate the Hutchinson Family Singers’ press coverage. The singers’ sojourn to Albany, New York, in August of 1842 demonstrated their skill and fortune in creating an environment that would insure a favorable reception. At this time a growing demand for the Hutchinson Family Singers prevented John, Asa, and Judson from overseeing the posting of bills, securing a hall, and socializing with important figures. To help with these tasks, the Hutchinsons hired their maternal uncle, Nathaniel Leavitt, a barber by trade, as their manager.

The choice of Leavitt to head up important matters was not based on kinship alone. Through a combination of living, worshipping, and operating a business in Albany, Leavitt was well-connected in his community and, as his dealings with his nephews showed, was quite loquacious—excellent qualities in a manager. Asa spoke confidently of his uncle: “He is the man.” The Hutchinsons were not hurt by the fact that Leavitt was also willing to lend them money. The group immediately borrowed \$12 from their relative and new employee whose family also provided them complimentary housing.

Leavitt brought a bit of toughness to the group, a trait the siblings did not possess. Asa observed that “N. K. Leavitt stood at the Door and then I felt as though the people would not go in unless they paid their fee.” His presence solved one Family Singer dilemma, freeloaders sneaking into concerts. In late August of 1842, Nathaniel Leavitt led the Hutchinson Family Singers through Troy, Schenectady, Ballston, and other towns near Albany. Sent ahead via “the Carrs”—the railroad—Leavitt not only drummed up business for his nephews and niece, he negotiated with innkeepers and other service providers, helping to keep the Hutchinsons’ expenses as low as possible. “Col. Leavitt Gave the Tavernkeeper a blowing up. Told him he was an old dutch hog &c &c.” scribbled an impressed John. It was no coincidence that the Hutchinsons’ fortunes took a positive turn upon Leavitt’s employ, but their manager’s bargaining skills were not as important as his connections.²⁸

In most of the later writings about the Hutchinson Family Singers, the Albany concert on August 29, 1842 is distinguished as the defining moment in their young musical career. At the show they played to a large, respectable audience in a sizably populated city (33,721 in

1840, making it the 9th largest in America)* and came away with their largest payday to date. Their success had been weeks in the making. What capped it off was Nathaniel Leavitt's deep roots within the Albany community. On August 22, the final push to the conclusion of the Hutchinsons' summer touring began. That night, the four siblings gave a "concert of Sacred Music" to a crowd Asa over-estimated at 350. The show was a success in its own right, but it was what commenced following this show that turned out to be more important. "After the Concert we by Special invite by 3 Gentlemen of Albany gave a Serenade to the principle Editors in the City. They made us a present of 6.00." The Family Singers had given private concerts for editors and musicians in other places, but the size of Albany ensured that this situation was different.

Six dollars was not a tremendous sum, but considering the Hutchinsons' misfortunes during 1842, it was a welcome amount. More important was the press and the support that such intimate exposure to Albany's leading citizens provided. The special session with Albany's elite was well worth the lack of sleep which resulted from getting back to the Leavitt's at about 2 A.M. The newspapers of Albany, already inclined to favor the musicians, now became a powerful force ensuring the Hutchinsons' success. Yet before the papers could work their magic, several members of the Albany elite opened their doors and pockets to the young musicians. The day after the special show, Luke Newland, owner of a music store, asked the Hutchinsons to remain in town for another week. Newland assured the brothers that he and his friends would take care of booking concerts for the Family Singers. True to his word, the following day the *Evening Journal* ran the following plea:

A strong feeling has been excited in behalf of these youthful vocalists,
and we feel as if we could not consent to part with them till we have

* The 1840 census lists Boston as the fifth largest with 93,983 citizens, Charleston, S.C., the 10th with 29,261, and New York as the largest with 312,736.

repaid, in some degree, the neglect with which talents so rare and deportment so becoming have hitherto been treated...On these grounds, we have requested them to give us one more opportunity of expressing our sense of their high deservings. They have therefore consented to remain till Monday the 29th inst. We have procured from the Trustees of the Female Academy the use of the Chapel for that evening, and we sincerely hope that on that occasion our fellow citizens will show abundant proofs of their taste, and also of their liberality.

Elihu Russell,
E. Warner,
Geo. Warren,
M. M. Van Alstyne,
Luke F. Newland.

On the same day this piece appeared, the singers "Serenaded Mr. Thurlow Weed, Editor of the Albany Evening Journal" as well as "the Editor of the Albany Atlas." For the remainder of the week the Hutchinsons sang at a temperance meeting, did some shopping (vests, a fur hat, and a new dress for Abby on her birthday), and attended church. The fact that they had captured the fancy of several important figures in town was clear when Mr. Newland and Mr. Walker battled over where the Hutchinsons would worship (and sing) on Saturday, August 27. Having assured Walker that they would attend church with him, the siblings were placed in an awkward situation. Newland had promised the Presbyterian Church that they would appear there. The dispute was not settled until the two exchanged "many hard words" and the Hutchinsons left with Newland. Walker returned later to inform the Hutchinsons that he arranged for them to sing at Reverend Stillman's church that night—an appearance that, Asa noted in his journal, had already been secured by the musicians.²⁹

The next day, Sunday, August 28, the New Hampshire singers found themselves in Stillman's church, the Trinity Methodist, once again. Here they sang in the gallery with the choir and then, at the reverend's request, blessed the churchgoers with a solo selection. As if the Hutchinsons had not used the church to promote themselves enough, Stillman then notified his listeners that the Hutchinsons were to perform the next evening at the Female

Academy. Asa wrote that Stillman continued by announcing “that his acquaintance with us was such as to speak very highly of us, and that we did not come from a theatre or any low place but came from respectable situation and had instilled in to us the Essence of religion.”

Boosted by leading men in the community—both Newland and Stillman were in attendance with their respective entourages—the turnout for the Monday evening concert did not disappoint. Between 400 and 500 persons packed themselves into the Female Academy—“It was Literaly *Crambed*,” reported the musicians’ in their journal. The Hutchinson Family Singers left the venue with more than \$110.* This was good news since they had borrowed \$100 from their Uncle Leavitt a day earlier. Singing a variety of tunes from the dramatic “The Snow Storm” (a Seba Smith poem set to music by Lyman Heath about a mother who dies during a blizzard but found with her child alive wrapped in her cloak) to Judson’s lively “Trip to Cape Ann,” the Hutchinsons bragged that “never was an audience better satisfied—No? Never!”³⁰

The sudden success was gratifying and their enthusiasts in the press and in the church had played an indispensable role. The summer tour of 1842 found the Hutchinson Family Singers facing increased rivalry. In Saratoga Springs, then the vacation spot for the more refined American, the New Hampshire entertainers faced off against Frank Johnson and his band. The black band leader was one of the most talented musicians in antebellum America. Born in Philadelphia, Johnson led a collection of brass players (“a *Rough* sett of Negroes,” according to Asa) from the 1810s until his death in 1844. His trip to London in 1837-38, where he received a silver bugle from the Queen as a sign of appreciation, represented one of the first acclaimed trips for an American musician. Johnson was a formidable foe and his

* The equivalent of about \$2,377 in 2001.

presence in Saratoga Springs undoubtedly rendered a modestly positive piece about the Hutchinsons in the *Daily Saratoga Sentinel* useless.³¹

The competition only stiffened when the group arrived in Albany in August on the heels of a Rainer Family visit. The *Evening Journal* was to the point: "It was a severe trial to these young musicians to be brought so closely in contact with the great talents and established reputation of the Rainer family." Later, during the week of the Hutchinsons' triumph at the Female Academy, the Steyrmarch Family opened their own Rainer-influenced show, appearing on stage in their native costume from Upper Austria near the Steyr River. The Hutchinson Family Singers' direct exposure to musical rivals was partly the result of the group's performances in larger towns and cities, but it was also related to an explosion of cultural productions that was not seen at earlier times in American towns and cities. Without the massive publicity machine put in place by the Albany elite, the Hutchinsons would never have been able to boast that a "Good Many people Envy us—yes."³²

One overwhelming night in Albany gave the siblings hope, but did not alleviate their troubles. Only two weeks before the concert at the Female Academy, an angst-ridden Judson penned: "We have now come to this. We have been singing five weeks and our money is reduced to nothing. We have not enough to pay our bills. Judge how I feel yee who read this. 200 miles from home. No money but .42 cts. Expenses 5 dollars a day." Even the members of the group less sensitive than Judson exhibited great concern about their financial situation. John wondered, "O! Dear what will become of us. These are times that try our soles." That Albany left them with money in their pockets was inspiring, but no guarantee of long-term prosperity.³³

By the close of 1842 the Hutchinson Family Singers had made great strides in their musicianship and were beginning to forge a distinct identity. Yet the year would end on a down note. The Hutchinson Family Singers had planned to ride their success in Albany to cities and towns farther south. No doubt New York was on their minds. However, a worried Polly Hutchinson squashed these grand aspirations. Anxious over the status of her young daughter, Polly demanded that Abby return to Milford. The brothers were keenly aware of the importance of their sister to the dynamic of the group and “concluded to Spend the Winter at *Homestead Home*.” Instead of conquering New York’s stages, the Hutchinson Family Singers settled for a few more concerts in New England, including a benefit on behalf of their Grandfather Leavitt—“ a Concert of VOCAL MUSIC, for the Benefit of the venerable Andrew Leavitt, (*their grandfather,*) a Soldier of the Revolution.” In time, as Abby matured, one imagined that the tug-of-war between Polly and her sons over Abby would end. A far greater problem was Judson’s mental state.

In a way the Hutchinsons were fortunate that their mother wanted Abby back in Milford because, while playing a few dates in Massachusetts, Judson suddenly disappeared. Throughout the Family Singers’ journal of 1842 Judson expressed his homesickness and unhappiness quite clearly: “Oh I have got the blues by gracious...We are 150 miles from home, amongst strangers. No wonder I have got the //.” These feelings were not reserved for his private thoughts. Judson’s entire family acknowledged his troubles and when faced with his unexpected departure, John, Asa, and Abby feared that Judson had killed himself. Canceling concerts amid the confusion, the three siblings set out to locate their older brother. They found him at their parents’ home in Milford. Apparently overcome by

homesickness triggered by the long months away from his sweetheart, Judson had abandoned his siblings without notice.³⁴

Adding to the group's list of woes, the increased scrutiny by the press soon offered a disturbing revelation for musicians building their reputation through an alliance with temperance. During the antislavery convention in Milford on January 4th and 5th, 1843, Nathaniel P. Rogers stayed with the Hutchinsons. In the *Herald of Freedom* he described their family farm as "a sweet place," but was appalled "by the pyramids of hop poles" which "stood along the valley, like so many tents—only they were black—like the miserable traffic they subserve." Rogers "was sorry to see them looming up on the premises." The renowned New Hampshire editor and reformer exposed a gross disjunction between the Hutchinsons' temperance vows and their family's most profitable crop. It was a fissure that the siblings' imminent financial achievements would correct.³⁵

Bringing their lives into line with their convictions would not have been enough to catapult the singers into the spotlight they desired in 1842. Playing to the craving for family singers and following a string of successes, the Hutchinsons began to tap into virtually unexplored territory. With the exception of blackface minstrels, American musicians simply did not frequent the antebellum stage. Since minstrelsy was an urban phenomenon, the Hutchinsons were musical pioneers. They began to make their mark concertizing in the countryside and would ride their rural success to cities. All of the Hutchinson Family Singer's efforts in 1842 would have meant nothing, however, without the opportunities in American cultural life that were created by developments in religion, reform, tourism, and politics during the 1820s and 1830s.

A Different New England

The year 1835 marked an historical dividing line. The world we now live in came into existence then, and humanly speaking, it is in almost every essential respect a different world from that lived in by the preceding six generations.

—Charles Francis Adams—³⁶

The Milford of the Hutchinsons' youth changed dramatically by the time the siblings set out as musicians. Once the model of New Hampshire farming life, by 1840 the town had diversified, growing economically and socially. While agriculture remained the town's economic foundation, by 1850 the local granite quarry had begun to dominate life in the Granite Town (hence Milford's nickname) when the Wilton railroad opened a Milford station. In the two decades before the Civil War, Milford developed into a bona fide suburb of the nearby manufacturing center in Manchester and of the city of Boston. Residents of the small town now chose from a much wider variety of jobs and public activities, thus enjoying many of the rewards of urban living within a region that remained predominately rural. Religion, politics, tourism, and reform all fed a transformation that further exposed the countryside to a market economy and opened the way for entertainment to educate and amuse antebellum Americans on a wide scale. This process brought an emergent middle class ideology to rural regions, turning many small towns into outposts "of urban civilization in a largely rural countryside."³⁷

In the early nineteenth century no single ideology was more influential in America than Christianity which, though factionalized by competitive revivalism, continued to provide an overarching sense of stability. The resurgence of religion seen in the years after the Revolution filled churches and thereby connected citizens within their community, state, and nation. Long after the age of revivalism had died down, Americans were still struggling with the forces these religious exhibitions had set into motion. "As I look back upon it, it seems

like a scourge or plague, so great was the sorrow that followed in its wake," reflected Lucy Colman on antebellum revivalism. The age of religious mass meetings had just about ended by the 1840s, but this did not signal the start of a secular nation. True, many Americans who had been captured by the camaraderie, empowerment, self-reflection, and excitement of revivals were left empty, if not a little directionless, without these religious spectacles. Yet they were hardly without religious sentiment. The democratization of religion espoused by revivals taught Americans that they were adept at understanding the word of God. This laid the groundwork for a commercial, Christian nation. Upsetting the traditional structure of power within the church, revival leaders taught that any and everyone could comprehend the message of God, freeing Americans to find religious meaning wherever they saw fit. This led to an innovative reshaping of American sacred life in which many restrictive religious traditions were shunned and new ideas and methods were embraced.

By placing individuals at the center of the religious endeavor, revivalism healed the disjunction between the legacy of the Revolution—in which Americans claimed responsibility for their own fate and wound up defeating the world's greatest empire—and Calvinist thought that upheld the omnipotence of God. The result was a nation saturated by Christianity. However, soon its most pervasive source was not found in a revival tent or behind the pulpit; songs, books, newspapers, speeches, reform, plays, and pamphlets stretched the word of God deeply throughout the burgeoning world of antebellum culture. Christianity became a national ritual in the decades prior to the Civil War, a fundamental source of cultural significance. An English visitor observed that in America "Christianity is in fact understood to be, though not the legally established religion, yet the national religion."³⁸

Revivals also set the tone for how antebellum cultural productions would proceed. To look back at the dramatic performances of ministers and not see a link with theater is difficult. The relationship was clear to Americans at the time as well. One preacher critiqued a camp meeting as “a theater in the open air, on the green sward, beneath the starry blue, incomparably more picturesque than any stage scenery.” Innovations like the Anxious Bench—which placed those on the brink of conversion in plain view of the congregation creating a pressure-cooker-like setting—produced theatrical environs within a decidedly sacred setting. This did not sit well with everyone. Some complained that “the pulpit is transformed more or less into a stage.” Like music, theater-going was viewed with great suspicion by Americans and the link between revivalism and entertainment was, at first, an uncomfortable fit. Eventually, by privileging emotion over intellect, evangelicalism opened the door for cultural productions such as music that were heralded as pure sentiment.

The widespread appeal of religious entertainment alleviated the moral stain that cultural offerings supposedly brought to American life. Through the 1840s and 1850s, the stigma placed upon cultural endeavors gradually vanished. The pervasive production of pious entertainment surely assisted in this endeavor so that prudent, church-going Americans could occupy their leisure time with virtuous distractions. Revivals, one of the first activities outside of church singing to meld religion and entertainment, represented a big step toward large-scale acceptance of cultural productions. The continued use of religious topics and imagery in popular works of literature and music contributed to their mass appeal. The shift was so noticeable that in 1871 Mark Twain declared: “the gospel of Christ came filtered down to nineteenth-century Americans through stage plays and through the despised novel and Christmas story, rather than from the drowsy pulpit.”³⁹

The transformation of a religious culture was not based upon the entertainment value of revivals and changes in church doctrine alone. Beneath the success of revivals pulsed a publicity campaign undertaken by a variety of organizations. Interdenominational benevolent associations formed in the first few decades of the nineteenth century, such as the American Bible Society (1816) and the American Tract Society (1825) flooded the nation with Christian literature. In effect Americans were prepped for revivals by this dousing of religion. When combined with the theatrics of revival organizers, the words of Christianity proved even more magnetic to antebellum Americans. This intermingling of oral and print media cleared a new path for American culture in the years to come. Later, antislavery and temperance reformers, bearing in mind the overwhelming success of revivalism, employed revival-type meetings alongside ambitious print campaigns.

The problem with drawing large crowds in the antebellum era was controlling them. Revivals attracted hundreds, even thousands, of people, figures that make these events one of the first large-scale entertainments produced in the United States. At these affairs the audience was controlled by a consistent variety. From lectures and theatrical speeches to hymns and picnics, religious leaders captured, manipulated, and kept their audience's attention. But it was not left at that. Organizers made certain that the layout of the revival along with the tent grounds where the visitors lived were properly designed in an attempt to create a morally appropriate environment. If this failed there were always rules for proper behavior which prohibited late-night gatherings, boisterous activities, and every kind of unapproved socializing. Any refusal to abide by these codes was met with an expulsion from the meeting area, an edict enforced by arrangements with the local police. All of these

measures helped to avert the kind of mob behavior which often prevailed in antebellum society.⁴⁰

As the thrill of revivalism ebbed, church leaders explored other ways to connect Christianity with the community. More often than not ministers took up a number of reform causes, a move that broadened their oversight of American society and furthered their message of moral achievement. The perfectionist zeal fostered during the Second Great Awakening contributed to the great impetus for social reform. It was no coincidence that this shift toward social betterment advanced the commercialization of religion. The most popular reform, and one of particular significance for the Hutchinsons, was temperance. Temperance advocates had many goals, the most obvious of which was to curb alcohol consumption. Under the banner of temperance middle-class citizens could monitor the habits of a growing American working-class. Temperance leaders, however, made certain that the message of moral perfection was available for purchase by everyone. Whether it was sitting down for a meal and a glass of water at a temperate establishment, spending the night in a teetotal room, or reading one of many temperance newspapers or periodicals, Americans could easily buy into the religious reform. And there were plays, picnics, and performances to attend which helped ease American audiences towards the acceptance of entertainment. In the same vein as Christian revivals, those involved with temperance, especially the Washingtonian branch, were talented at combining “religion, drama, and box-office.”⁴¹

Abstinence from alcohol was a plea that New Hampshire Baptists took up with fervor. In 1829, at the state convention, the Baptists declared alcohol an “unholy leaven” which “should be purged from the Christian church.” Over the next few years, they increasingly

monitored the drinking habits of their constituency and formed a Committee on Temperance to report at their annual meetings. In 1833 this anti-alcohol commission discovered:

That they have increasing evidence of the utility and ultimate success of the Great Temperance Reformation. They learn with pleasure from the report of the N.H. State Society, that within this state, there are more than 200 Temperance societies, embracing between 35,000 and 38,000 members. That 300 stores and taverns have discontinued the sale of ardent spirits, and many more are ready to do the same, *as soon as temperance people will sustain them.*

Employing powerful speakers, religious imagery, music (usually hymns), publications, and the resources of the church to ensure that their message would not be forgotten, temperance picnics and other such outings gradually replaced the once familiar revival meeting in the New England landscape. The combination of the church, alcohol reform, and entertainment built a network which aided the Hutchinson Family Singers at the start of their musical career.⁴²

Social reform struck a powerful chord with antebellum citizens because it lined up with political ideology as well as the religious currents. A nation steeped in republican principles was necessarily receptive to social reform movements. By volunteering one's time to work for temperance or antislavery, Americans sacrificed themselves for a greater public good. Temperance helped unite citizens at odds over political and religious issues, yet nearly united in their moral dogma. To those involved the movement was about building a vision for the nation to strive toward.⁴³

The connection between religion and politics went far beyond their penchant for human perfectionism, the two largely shared a language and a method. Andrew Jackson's 1829 inaugural speech spoke bluntly about the perfection of man—the President stated “that man can become more and more endowed with divinity; and as he does he becomes more God-like in his character and capable of governing himself.” Perhaps more evocative of the bond was the observation from the leader of the Second Great Awakening, Charles Grandison

Finney. He asked, "What do politicians do? They get up meetings, circulate handbills and pamphlets, blaze away in the newspapers, send coaches all over town with handbills...all to gain attention to their cause and elect their candidates." Finney's frankness continued, "The object of the ministry is to get all the people to feel that the devil has no right to rule this world but that they ought all to give themselves to God and vote in the Lord Jesus Christ as the governor of the Universe." If revival meetings were the first source of mass entertainment, American politicians were the first employed in public relations—both were ongoing experiments in "mass persuasion" within the bounds of a democratic society. And by 1840 it was difficult to distinguish between the two.⁴⁴

The well-known national political campaign of 1840 pitted a descendant of the Virginia aristocracy, William Henry Harrison, against the New York political animal and Vice President Martin Van Buren. Harrison's Whig party, for years seen as aloof and representative of upper-income Americans, made a decided effort to reach out to a vast cross-section of American voters. The ensuing election has since been recognized as a political revival of sorts for the electioneering played upon the same kind of emotional energy that marked the most successful religious spectacles. Much like the religious detractors who linked revivalism to the theater, critics of the 1840 campaign likened it to a magnificent show. A frustrated Democrat wondered if from now on political parties would be "like a circus company with bands of music and dazzling ponies, clowns with pink noses to make folks laugh & banjo singers, a little lofty tumbling to secure votes."⁴⁵ The political extravaganza proved just as popular in gaining the attention of voters as the Christian revivals had been at collecting souls.

The Whig Party employed a variety of means during their successful campaign. They formed Tippecanoe clubs—named for the 1811 Battle of Tippecanoe in which Harrison waged a successful attack against Native Americans—on a local level several months before the election in order to connect with their voters. These clubs published highly partisan papers and sponsored a variety of community-wide events in an unabashed quest for votes. The *Harrison Eagle* was one such product produced in Nashua, New Hampshire, by the Nashua Tippecanoe Club beginning in June of 1840.⁴⁶ Creating political clubs, an effort of both parties, garnered local appeal for national politics by connecting white men directly to a political institution. In turn these clubs gained community attention as large political parades thundered through the cities and towns of the nation throughout the election year. But the Whig party used one media far better than their opponents—this, of course, was music.

George Julian, an antislavery veteran, remembered the sounds of 1840 better than anything else. “The most distinguishing feature of the campaign was its music,” he recalled, “the spirit of song was everywhere, and made the whole land vocal.” Julian continued, “The campaign was set to music, and the song seriously threatened to drown the stump speech. Whiggery was translated into a tune, and poured itself forth in doggerel rhymes which seemed to be born of the hour, and exactly suited to the crisis.” While both parties embellished their campaigns with music, it was the Whigs who widely publicized their musical wares and whose tunes proved that much more captivating. With such music oriented publications like *The Harrison and Log Cabin Song Book* the Whig efforts materialized and through their celebrations Americans were exposed publicly to politically charged songs.⁴⁷

What has caused the great commotion, motion, motion,
Our country through?
It is a ball a-rolling on, on
For Tippecanoe and Tyler too—Tippecanoe and Tyler too;
And with them we'll beat little Van, Van, Van;

Van is a used up man;
And with them we'll beat little Van.

So opened William Henry Harrison's and John Tyler's 1840 campaign theme. The Whig party was so thorough with their imagery that the rolling ball evoked in the song actually existed. Created by some Pennsylvanian Whigs, this ball was roughly twelve feet in diameter, painted blue on the ends with stars to symbolize the states, and sported red and white stripes with numerous sayings inscribed in between these lines covering the rest of it. By linking lyrics to reality, as in the case with Tippecanoe and the blue ball, the Whigs provided links to America's victorious past and to their own soon-to-be victorious future.⁴⁸

In the history of the 1840 campaign, the involvement of a twelve piece band from Milford, N.H., has never figured very prominently. Yet the existence of this band and the many others like it throughout the nation connected people to politics through music. The success of the Milford band in political settings was manifest. John Hutchinson remembered it vividly: "How everybody sprang to the doors and windows! the small boys rushing into the streets, following the trail." The band moved energetically down main street showering the town with the election's music. A whole world was opened to a community that had never seen anything like it before. For several members of the Hutchinson Family Singers and their relatives, the Milford political band was the first extended experience of performing music outside of a church setting.

The campaign gave those in Milford a new kind of mass entertainment and the memories of the 1840 excitement were never forgotten. John recalled the Whig processions as "great affairs." Rolling through Milford came "log-cabins on wheels" (Harrison was promoted as overcoming his humble log cabin origins) and "barrels of hard cider for free distribution to all who came" (despite reports in the *Harrison Eagle* that the candidate sold his

distillery because he thought alcohol was injurious). Putting the final touches on an already elaborate occasion were the veterans of the Revolutionary War who drove teams of horses for the Whig festivities. When the wagons and the music stopped, eloquent orators took over—"How the speakers worked!"

Yet John, only nineteen at the time, was not blinded by the liveliness of the event. When he looked beneath the pomp, the singer was not so confident that the political message was being heard. "There seemed a good deal of unnecessary fuss in all this speaking and parade," he speculated. 1840 was John's first experience and the first experience for many Americans in the new style of political campaigning. The festivities were not so much about the partisan message as they were about securing ballots. When the Milford band played at a political rally in Wilton, N.H., one of the politicians was charged with the task of introducing a Revolutionary War veteran. The speaker waxed eloquently about the glorious generation of 1776, but when it came time to present the war hero, he embarrassingly turned to the elderly gentleman to ask his name. The crowd laughed for they had been entertained, but John, sitting a little ways off in the band, was already sensitive to the darker side of winning over voters.⁴⁹

Laughing was probably the most sincere response in Wilton that day. To be fair, national candidates shouldered a heavy burden. The 1840 campaign featured efforts by both parties to reach as many voters as possible. An endeavor made difficult by the fact that antebellum America sported a distant federal government. With no income tax or large infrastructure projects, the post office represented the most common way in which Americans interacted with their nation's government. Giving away public lands, selecting and removing public officials, providing exemptions and immunities, and dealing with tariffs was the

business of the American government in the first half of the nineteenth century. The suggestion then that many of those attracted to the spectacles paid attention to the political rhetoric solely for the entertainment value does not appear that discouraging. With little at stake in terms of their daily lives, Americans could soak up the political shows, vote, and go back to life as usual no matter which side gained office. At the very least, elaborate campaign rituals brought people into a public setting where various issues could be debated. If they wound up drinking only cider, at least they imbibed where the opportunity to engage in the public arena existed. For musicians like John and his brothers, 1840 deepened the possibilities to employ music in the public sphere. Performing on the campaign trail was different from singing in a meeting house. Largely removed from church influence—though not from religious rhetoric—John Hutchinson and other musicians witnessed first hand the value of American entertainment in public life and played a part in opening a window of opportunity for their craft.⁵⁰

Religion and politics alone did not change life in Milford and the rest of New England. What was once a tiny farming community when Polly and Jesse Hutchinson first arrived was now one of many manufacturing towns that speckled the New England countryside. In terms of the family economy in New Hampshire, the ramifications of these developments were significant. Outwork weaving, undertaken by women for additional income during slow times on the farm, was replaced through mechanization via the power loom in the late 1820s. The principle source of outwork for rural women switched to palm-leaf hats. This change did not affect the Hutchinson family and, outside of the product being produced, it did not immediately affect the routine of farming families in general. Manufacturing did create an entirely different working environment for the children of rural New Englanders. No longer

ties to their family's land, the opening of large manufacturing towns, like Lowell, drew migrants from the countryside. Here the jobs, especially for farmers' daughters, provided a degree of economic and social independence that previously had not been seen. Often living away from home, these young men and women gained experiences that their parents had never imagined. Jesse Hutchinson, Jr., Zephaniah, and David were the first of the Hutchinson family to venture towards the growing urban centers of Massachusetts. All of the Hutchinsons who relocated from Milford to Lynn or Boston took part in an urbanization process that emptied rural America of much of its youth as the nineteenth century progressed.⁵¹

Yet the countryside had staying power. In 1860 64% of New Englanders still lived in rural settings. The development of manufacturing in rural settings helped to stem some of the population depletion. A young Harvard graduate, Francis Silsbee, noted when traveling through Nashua (and Milford) in the summer of 1831 that "within a few years" the site "has changed from a small unpopulous village to a brisk manufacturing town. There are several neat houses in Nashua & the Factories add to its appearance." Waterpower provided towns like Milford an advantage over nearby places and allowed them to develop manufacturing interests. Enterprising men first built sawmills, but slowly cotton and woolen mills became common sights along the banks of New England's rivers. In the state of New Hampshire, Manchester developed one of the largest and most famous manufacturing sites in the history of early America, the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company founded in 1832.⁵²

Along with manufacturing came disputes over how local resources should be divided. Pressing debates captured many towns in New England as they struggled over taxes, dams, and roads. As a new economic entity, mills were forced to negotiate their relationship to towns. Figuring out how to build and bankroll thoroughfares adequate to satisfy the increased

demands of mill traffic was a central issue. In the end, the needs of mills helped improve and expand transportation in New England. The increasing number of roads did not make traveling particularly easier. Deep mud was one of the prime complaints of travelers. Famed musician Henry Russell remembered his treks in the 1830s, lamenting the “corduroy roads’ of early America.” He pointed to the design and construction as the main failing point—“They were formed in a curiously primitive fashion. Trees were felled, stripped of their branches, and laid side by side on the ground; the crevices were filled in with loose stones, mud, or any rubbish that came to hand, and, behold! The road was made.” Harping on the theme, Russell enjoyed telling a story about travelers who, coming upon a hat in the middle of a road, stopped to retrieve it. When they grabbed the hat, a man sunk into the mud underneath was revealed. As they dragged this man out of the mud, he informs his rescuers that his horse is stuck below him in the muck. Russell’s grievances were valid, but, though still difficult to travel, the transportation complex of the entire nation vastly improved in the first half of the nineteenth century. New England was enmeshed with roads by 1820 increasing the flow of goods and services between the city and the countryside. “There is scarcely a poor owner of a miserable log hut,” wrote one excursionist, who does not have “a newspaper left at his door.” Out of these developments a truly national market emerged, turning cultural products like literature and music into items of commerce and permitting cultural entrepreneurs like the Englishman Russell to profitably visit a wide selection of American locations.⁵³

Henry Russell was not the only one to come upon sludge during New England travel. Starting in the 1820s, tourists began to make their way into the largely unsettled parts of northern New Hampshire. Their sojourns into the wild were much different from the trips of

earlier American tourists. Following the lead of the European Grand Tour, well-to-do Americans and foreigners once spent their time exploring urban areas while traversing rural regions quickly. Retired British manufacturer Henry Wansey's 1794 trip to the United States featured only five days of traveling through the countryside as compared to the seven weeks spent in Philadelphia, New York, and Boston. These early trips revolved around access to various social networks, relying upon letters of introduction to gain entrance to noteworthy institutions and events. But in the 1820s, a different network of tourism developed; One more reliant on money than upon social connections. Following the expanding industry up the Hudson River, continuing along the Erie Canal to Niagara Falls, a new kind of sightseeing developed hand-in-hand with the industrialization of the region. Now the focus was no longer upon cities and their many institutions (though West Point was an attraction on this route), but rather upon the experience of travel on the Hudson river itself and the scenery on view during the voyage. Nature tourism was fast becoming the antebellum vacation of choice. Scenery was so popular that by the time of the 1829 election, visitors to Washington, D.C., flocked to the "Transparent Panoramic View of West Point and the adjacent scenery" housed at Pennsylvania Avenue and Thirteenth Street.⁵⁴

The development of scenic tourism proceeded along this model for many places in New England as well. Locales like Nashua and Milford, New Hampshire, benefited from the growing manufacturing sectors of their local economies. The factories and mills tied the region to Boston's markets even further. Enterprising Americans began operating hotels and inns to accommodate the influx of businessmen to their region which also captured the occasional adventuresome spirit. By the late 1830s it was as if not only a factory sprang up next to each waterfall, but also a hotel with stairs leading to the scenic vista. Industrial

development and an increased focus upon America's natural beauties developed simultaneously—the infrastructure of one creating the possibility of the other. Nature and industrialization forged a symbiotic relationship as the romanticism associated with this brand of tourism helped ease the rougher advances of industrialization.⁵⁵

The popularity of New Hampshire's White Mountains for most of the nineteenth century was forged by visitors themselves. Once discovered, scenic tourism in the Granite State took off as word-of-mouth advertisements were bolstered by innumerable impressions of painters and writers who visited the region. This culminated in a craving among Americans to experience New Hampshire's mountains. Early in the nineteenth century the Crawford family set up in a region of the White Mountains that would later be dubbed Crawford's Notch. Here, in the midst of what can only be termed frontier, Abel Crawford and his sons Ethan Allen Crawford and Thomas Jefferson Crawford built several rather crude inns. Settling in the Notch, while cutting the family off from civilization, was tactically sound. For this spot was at the crux of the most direct trading route between Portland, Maine, and the regions of northern New Hampshire and Vermont. Unfortunately for the Crawfords, the Notch was travelable for commercial traffic only during winter when a path of packed snow accommodated large wagon trains. The result was that wagon drivers and lumberjacks were the most frequent guests at the Crawford's establishments in the early years.

By the 1820s a different clientele found its way to this remote part of New Hampshire—tourists. At the time, Mount Washington was reputed to be the tallest peak in North America. This belief first lured thrill seekers and eventually the more genteel scenic tourist followed. The nature seekers believed that there was more to the White Mountains than adventure. By the mid-1830s, New Hampshire's tourism was a fast growing industry.

The Crawford's adjusted quickly. Summoning visions of Swiss alpine guides (who often fired canons to set off avalanches to amuse tourists), Ethan Allen began to greet guests approaching his inn with a blast from his shotgun or a loud burst from a tin horn, regale his guests with stories of the mountains, and take them on guided tours of the regions most impressive sights.⁵⁶

The 1820s and 1830s tourist who traveled to New Hampshire's White Mountains was greeted with "mud up to the knees of the horses." Such conditions led to stagecoaches tipping over or, for riders on horseback, severe scratches and shredded clothing from the overgrowth lining the sides of "the most horrible" roads.⁵⁷ Those who ventured were moneyed as the trips were time-consuming and required guides. They traveled by horse, either on horseback or within a coach, and were treated to rather primitive lodging and meals. It was not uncommon to share a room with a stranger or to sleep on the floor at the Crawford's. Francis Silsbee took his trip to New Hampshire in 1831 following his Harvard graduation, just before commencing a law apprenticeship. Along with a few friends and young ladies (who were chaperoned, of course), the group took two weeks to explore Maine, the White Mountains, and certain parts of the Connecticut River Valley. On their journey they were treated to bread and cheese carried by their guides in leather wallets as there often was no place to eat along the way. Even when there were establishments, the group rushed their meal stops in order to continue their travels—scenic tourism was about seeing as much as possible, not the culinary delights or the more usual gastronomic disasters. While otherwise offering crude accommodations, the Crawford's did not skimp on food service with their guests. British observer Harriet Martineau reported a veritable feast of "mutton, eggs, and whortleberries with milk" accompanied by tea and bread—a far cry from the pork and cabbage served to

another well-to-do woman traveler over one hundred years earlier. The Crawfords and their visitors were at the forefront of changing perceptions of nature and natural scenery that would make the White Mountains America's premier vacation spot.⁵⁸

Aside from touring the natural wonders of the region, which ranged from The Old Man of the Mountain and Mount Khatadin to Crawford's Notch, White Mountain sightseers enjoyed writing and talking about the things that they had seen. Silsbee told the world in his journal, "I should advise every one who wishes to see the sublime & beautiful to come to the White Mountains." A sixteen-year-old Mary Hale, visitor to New Hampshire in 1840, was self-deprecating when she wrote about Crawford's Notch: "It is impossible for a person who has such a weak mind as mine to describe the view that we there had of the beauties of nature." These are examples of an early American fascination with nature shared by countless tourists during the antebellum years. The sudden appeal of nature was no accident. It was the development of an ideology that had been years in the making.⁵⁹

Despite Mary Hale's insecurity, nature tourists were well versed with language to describe what they saw. The mystical attraction of scenic tourism was first spurred by European romantic writers who ably transformed alpine landscapes from frightening visions into the picturesque or sublime. American readers were familiar with the works of Wordsworth on England, and Byron and Shelley about Switzerland—a situation that created "a cult of romantic scenery" in the United States comparable to that which arose in Europe. The trend of marketing nature through literature and art continued in America and focused upon such places as New York's Hudson River Valley and New Hampshire's White Mountains. From 1827 to 1839 Crawfords' guest book lists some of antebellum America's most notable artists and writers, including Thomas Cole, Washington Irving, Ralph Waldo

Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, James Russell Lowell, and Henry David Thoreau. Visits by these men earned New Hampshire a billing as the “Switzerland of America,” luring other famous Americans, such as Daniel Webster and Charles Sumner, to vacation at Crawford’s as well.⁶⁰

The fruits of these artists’ labors are well known. Cole’s *The Notch of the White Mountains* (1839) and Hawthorne’s “The Ambitious Guest” (which touched on the nationally renowned tragedy of the Crawfords’ neighbors who perished in a 1826 mudslide), along with more generally focused works like Emerson’s “Nature” (published in 1836, four years after his sojourn to the White Mountains) and the works of many lesser known painters and writers fashioned a nationwide market for scenery, specifically of New Hampshire’s. The artists and early entrepreneurs like the Crawford family contributed immeasurably to this new tourist industry. By the 1840s, scenic tourism in the White Mountains was a big business, a phenomenon that helped push frontier families like the Crawfords away from their livelihood. The family inn was exchanged for larger, more genteel hotels. Meanwhile the slow and steady production of landscape paintings and nature writings was replaced by mass produced scenic prints and guidebooks.

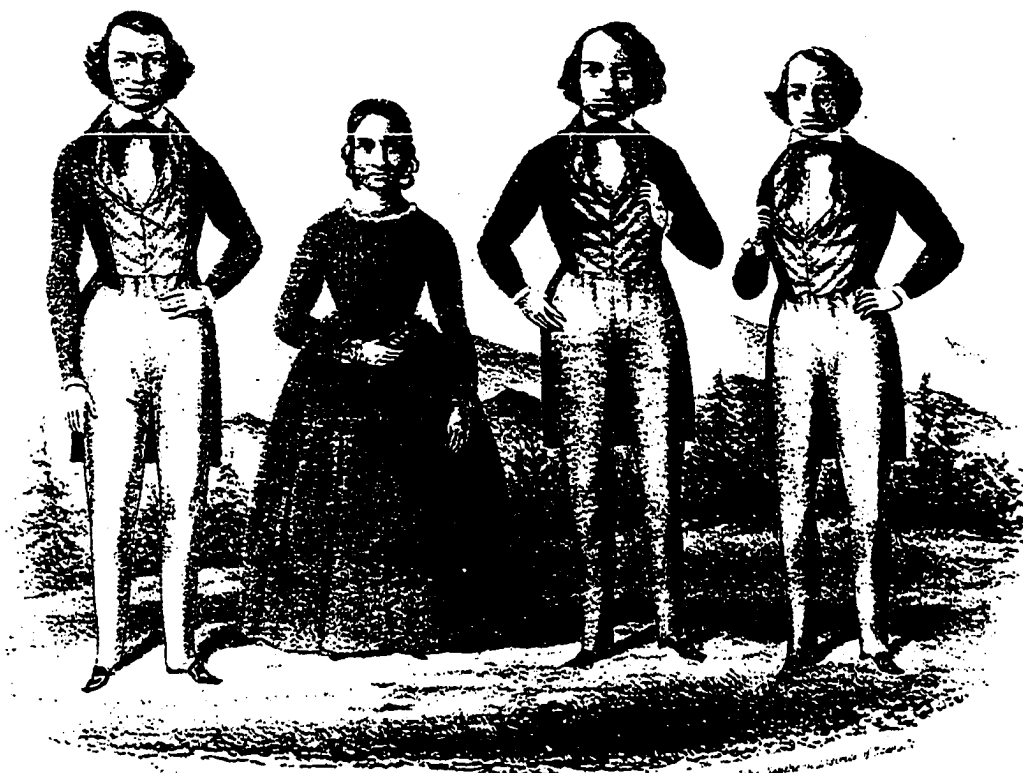
The New Hampshire landscape was transformed by the tourism explosion. New hotels and well-groomed roads certainly changed the way the White Mountains looked, but the most dramatic difference was forged by railroad development. Connecting the remote state to the nation’s railroads reshaped the land and the way in which vacationing Americans navigated their way through space and time. Older modes of transportation generally followed the contour of the land, the direction of the wind, or the push of currents. Railroads altered this relationship, plowing through the New England scenery in a straight line. Along

with traveling at greater speeds and becoming reliant on a fairly accurate time schedule (relative to erratic faircoach service), traveling the rails transformed the environment and the perception of the environment in which people lived. Antebellum Americans moved faster, more directly, and more timely toward their final destinations.⁶¹

The Hutchinson Family Singers embarked on their cultural endeavor just in time to take advantage of the peak years of New Hampshire's scenic tourism. A rural and urban middle class created an identity surrounding reverence toward nature. The Family Singer's signature song penned by Jesse Hutchinson, Jr., in 1843 took full advantage of the group's New Hampshire roots. In the chorus John, Judson, Abby, and Asa sang out "we have come from the mountains of the old Granite State." The fact that the White Mountains were nearly 100 miles away from Milford and that the highest point in their hometown was only 271 feet was immaterial. The Hutchinsons' promotion of their alpine origins tapped into one of the strongest currents of antebellum society. On the majority of their early sheet music covers, a lithograph of the four siblings standing in an alpine scene backed the claims of their song (see fig. 3). The overwhelming success of this imagery was made possible by the frontiersman, writers, and artists who marketed New Hampshire so efficiently.⁶²

The 1850s found the White Mountain region and the "cult of scenery" founded upon it in many ways victims of their own success. With more than five thousand people summiting Mount Washington each summer, the awe and often the difficulty of the journey was lost amid the rail travel, new hotels, and manicured paths. According to Thoreau, scenic tourism—often featuring areas now overrun with tourists—now packaged New Hampshire's wonders along with "a ten-pin alley, or a circular railway, or an ocean of mint julep." The region was transformed from a natural wonder into a popular resort.⁶³ But before this

SONGS OF THE



1843

HUTCHINSON FAMILY.

1. Got where we were born.	38 net.	2. Go call the Doctor, or Anti-Calomel	25 net.
3. Exclaim.	38 -	4. Cape Ann	25 -
5. Mother's Bible.	38 -	6. Soldier's Funeral	30 -
7. Vesper Song at Sea	25 -	8. Vulture of the Alps	35 -
9. Area to grind	25 -	10. Were a cutting	25 -
11. We are happy and free	25 -	12. Our Father's Hearth	35 -

NEW YORK

Figure 3
HUTCHINSON FAMILY SINGERS' SHEET MUSIC COVER FROM 1843

happened the Family Singers staked out an alpine origin for themselves to promote within a cultural market fascinated by the concepts of nature, naturalness, and New Hampshire.

The changes in New England life prior to the Hutchinsons' decision to become musicians were key to their subsequent success. Northern audiences were prepared for musical endeavors thanks to religion, politics, and reform. Within the newly formed markets of reform and nature the Hutchinsons found themes for their music and vast networks to aid their endeavor. Instead of facing a populace who feared music in the 1840s, the Hutchinson Family Singers uncovered a rural and urban middle class thirsting for entertainment.

Notes

- ¹ William Lloyd Garrison to Joshua Hutchinson, 3 Apr. 1874, in Joshua Hutchinson, *A Brief Narrative of the Hutchinson Family: Sixteen Sons and Daughters of the "Tribe of Jesse,"* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1874), 6.
- ² *The Original Hutchinson Family: "Tribes of John & Jesse" and Miss Jenniebelle Neal* (n.p.: C.P. Shaw and H.J. Hutchinson, 1881), n.p. John Wallace Hutchinson, *Story of the Hutchinsons (Tribe of Jesse)*, ed. Charles E. Mann (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1896), 1:35-36.
- ³ Lord Chesterfield in Karen Alquist, *Democracy at the Opera* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1997), 10-11.
- ⁴ A "List of Letters" held in Lynn shows mail available for "Hutchinson J Jr," *Lynn Record* 14 Jan. 1835. "New Stoves, At Hutchinson's," *Lynn Freeman and Essex County Whig*, 17 Oct. 1840. See similar ad in *Lynn Freeman*, 24 Oct. 1840. See advertisements for Jesse, Zephaniah, and Perley & Stoneham in *The Lynn Directory and Register for the Year 1841* (Lynn: Benjamin F. Roberts, 1841), 12, 47-48, back cover. Perley Derby reports that Jesse removed to Lynn in 1836, see *The Hutchinson Family* (Salem: Essex Institute, 1870), 77.
- ⁵ "Family Concert," *Lynn Freeman and Essex County Whig*, 13 Feb. 1841. Ad reprinted in Dale Cockrell, ed., *Excelsior: The Journals of the Hutchinson Family Singers, 1842-1846* (Stuyvesant: Pendragon Press, 1989), xxvi.
- ⁶ Gilbert Chase, *America's Music From Pilgrims to the Present*, rev. 3rd ed. (Urbana: University of Chicago, 1987), 131-133. John Hutchinson, 1:37-38.
- ⁷ John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:39-40.
- ⁸ John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:44-45. Asa Hutchinson, *The Book of Brothers or the History of the Hutchinson Family* (New York: Published by and for the Hutchinson Family, 1852), 19.
- ⁹ John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:44-45.
- ¹⁰ Asa Hutchinson, *Book*, 11. Rev. Elias Nason and George J. Varney, *A Gazetteer of the State of Massachusetts* (Boston: B. B. Russell, 1890), 430-432. Stuart Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 299-300. William S. McFeely, *Frederick Douglass* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1991), 92. "A Concert of Ancient Music," *Lynn Record*, 15 Mar. 1837. "Mozart Society," *Lynn Record*, 10 May 1837. "Joice Heth," *Lynn Record*, 1 Feb. 1837. "Old Hampshire Slavery Society," *Lynn Record*, 1 Feb. 1837. "Anti-Slavery Lecture," *Lynn Record*, 15 Mar. 1837. "At a Meeting of the Lynn Anti-Slavery Society," *Lynn Record*, 20 Sept. 1837.
- ¹¹ "Stoves, Jesse Hutchinson, jr.," *Lynn Freeman and Essex County Whig*, 16 Oct. 1841. John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:39-40. "Singing School," *Lynn Freeman and Essex County Whig*, 19 Jan. 1842.
- ¹² Cockrell, xxi-xxiv. Ignatz Moscheles, *Recent Music and Musicians: As Described in the Diaries and Correspondence of Ignatz Moscheles*, trans. A.D. Coleridge (1873; New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), 93-95, 128-129. Hans Nathan, "The Tyrolese Family Rainer, and the Vogue of Singing Mountain-Troupes in Europe and America," *Musical Quarterly* 32.1 (Jan.

1946): 63-79, quote from page 66. G. J. Webb and Lowell Mason, *The Odeon: A Collection of Secular Melodies, Arranged and Harmonized for Four Voices. Designed for Adult Singing Schools, And for Social Music Parties* (Boston: J. H. Wilkins & R. B. Carter, 1837). Lowell Mason cited in the Rainers' advertisement, *Soiree Musicale, The Celebrated Rainer Family, or Tyrolese Minstrels* (Boston: Clapp & Son's Press, 1840).

¹³ Cockrell, xxi-xxii. Nathan, 70-72, quote from 72.

¹⁴ John Hutchinson, *Story*, 2:296. "Concert," *Lynn Freeman and Essex County Whig*, 4 Dec. 1841. Dale Cockrell has suggested that it was Rainers' influence that precipitated the Hutchinsons' first attempt at concertizing in 1840, Cockrell, xxiv. The Rainers did influence the Hutchinsons only the evidence points to a juncture a little further into their attempt to become professional musicians.

¹⁵ "Vocal and Instrumental Concert," *Lynn Freeman and Essex County Whig*, 19 Jan. 1842.

¹⁶ While the original Rainers were a family troupe of three brothers and a sister, the Rainers who toured the United States starting in 1839 were two men and two women who were likely relatives of the earlier troupe, but not siblings to one another. In fact the Rainers fell apart in 1842 as one of the women married and left the troupe, leaving a young boy to substitute in her place. They were then known as Lewis Rainer and Company, since they were no longer a "family." See Nathan, 71-75. John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:46; 2:296. "Family Concert by the AEOLIAN VOCALISTS!," *Lynn Freeman and Essex County Whig*, 26 Feb. 1842.

¹⁷ The increase in Americans' alcohol consumption—which equaled about seven gallons of absolute alcohol per year in the 1820s—along with the fact that a gallon of whiskey could be had for just a quarter (less than some other beverages like coffee or tea) helped spur the anti-alcohol reformers as well, see Steven Mintz, *Moralists & Modernizers: America's Pre-Civil War Reformers* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 72-75. John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:41-42.

¹⁸ *Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Meeting of the Baptist Convention of the State of New-Hampshire... June 24th & 25th, 1829* (Concord: Office of the Batholomew Press, Printed by George Hough, 1829), 6. John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:41-42. Asa Hutchinson, "July 15th 1842," *Excelsior*, 8. Asa Hutchinson, "August 14th, 1842," *Excelsior*, 61. Mintz, 72-75.

¹⁹ "Great Temperance Meeting—the Ball rolling on," *Lynn Freeman and Essex County Whig*, 10 June 1841. "Concert by the Aeolians," *Lynn Freeman and Essex County Whig*, 22 April 1843.

²⁰ Field Horne, "Saratoga Springs: Evolution of a Resort," *New York Archives* 2.1 (Summer 2002): 21-23. Theodore Corbett, *The Making of American Resorts: Saratoga Springs, Ballston Spa, Lake George* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001).

²¹ Economic History Services <<http://eh.net/hmit/ppowerusd>> 3 Oct 2002. Asa Hutchinson, "Weare July 11th 1842;" "Bethlehem, N.Y. August 7th/1942;" "Rutland July 24th 1842;" "1842 Rutland Vt July 24th," *Excelsior*, 3-4, 47, 23.

²² See various journal entries from Asa and Judson Hutchinson in *Excelsior*, 7-8, 16, 21-23, 28, 30, 32, 37-38, 45-46, 50, 60.

²³ Judson Hutchinson, "Franklin [NH] July 14, 1842 18 miles from Concord," *Excelsior*, 7-8.

- ²⁴ Nathaniel Peabody Rogers, "The Hutchinsons Again," *The Herald of Freedom (Concord)*, 15 July 1842, 83. "THAT CONCERT," *Nashua Gazette and Hillsborough County Advertiser*, 8 Nov. 1842. Asa Hutchinson, "Hanover July 21th," *Excelsior*, 17-18.
- ²⁵ N.P. Rogers, "'The New-Hampshire 'Rainers'" *Herald of Freedom*, 10 June 1842, 63. Cockrell, *Excelsior*, xvii. Margaret Fuller, "Entertainments of the Past Winter," *The Dial* (July, 1842): 50. Leon Chai, *The Romantic Foundations of the American Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), xi, 6. Sacvan Bercovitch, *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975); *The American Jeremiad* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978). H. H., "Letter to the Editor," *Essex County Washingtonian*, 29 Sept. 1842. See also Vera Brodsky Lawrence, *Strong on Music: The New York Music Scene in the Days of George Templeton Strong, 1836-1849* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 1:1vi.
- ²⁶ *Miroscope (Albany)*, 20 Aug. 1842, cited in Cockrell, *Excelsior*, 67.
- ²⁷ "Celebrations on the Fourth," *Farmers' Cabinet (Amherst.)*, 8 July 1842. "Mass Temperance Convention," *Nashua Gazette and Hillsborough County Advertiser*, 10 Aug. 1843. Cockrell, *Excelsior*, 388.
- ²⁸ Asa B. Hutchinson, "Albany August 14th/42," "Schenectady NY Aug 16th/42," *Excelsior*, 62-63. John Hutchison, "John H.," *Excelsior*, 78.
- ²⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, "Table 7. Population of the 100 Largest Urban Places: 1840," 15 Jun. 1998, 6 Nov. 2002, <www.census.gov/population/documentation/twps0027/tab07.txt>. New York State Museum, "Albany Population," 6 Nov. 2002 <<http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/albany/population.html>>. CensusRecords.Net, "New York City Census Records," 6 Nov. 2002, <http://www.censusrecords.net/cities/new_york_city_census.htm>. Sidney Redner, "Population of Boston, 1790-1990," 6 Nov. 2002, <<http://physics.bu.edu/~redner/projects/population/cities/boston.html>>. U.S. Census Bureau, "Table 1. Rank by Population of the 100 Largest Urban Places, Listed Alphabetically by State: 1790-1990," 15 Jun. 1998, 6 Nov. 2002, <<http://www.census.gov/population/documentation/twps0027/tab01.txt>>. Asa Hutchinson, "Albany August 22d 1842," *Excelsior*, 68. Dale Cockrell estimated that the paying audience for the August 22nd show was between 104 and 152 persons not including an undisclosed amount of free tickets that the Hutchinson Family Singers always handed out, *Excelsior*, 69. Asa Hutchinson, "Aug 23d Tuesday," *Excelsior*, 69-70. One example of an earlier private concert was in Bethlehem, NY, near the beginning August, see Asa Hutchinson, "Bethlehem August 7th/42," *Excelsior*, 48. John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:60. *Evening Journal* cited in Cockrell, *Excelsior*, 70. Asa Hutchinson, "23d August 1842," "Thursday Aug 25th," "Saturday August 27th 1842," *Excelsior*, 71-74. Derby, *The Hutchinson Family*, 102. Asa Hutchinson, *Book*, 29.
- ³⁰ Asa Hutchinson, "Sabath day Aug 28th/42," "Monday Aug 29th/42," "Tuesday Morning Aug 30th," "Tuesday Aug 30th/42," *Excelsior*, 75-77. Judson Hutchinson, "Monday Aug 29 42," *Excelsior*, 76. Economic History Services <<http://eh.net/hmit/ppowerusd>> 7 Nov. 2002. Cockrell, *Excelsior*, 69. Rogers, "The Hutchinsons Again," 83.
- ³¹ Asa Hutchinson, "Saratoga Springs Tuesday P.M. Aug 2d," "Sept 1st 1842," *Excelsior*, 37-38, 80. Cockrell, *Excelsior*, 38-40. Richard Crawford, *American Musical Life* (New York:

W.W. Norton & Co., 2001), 423-425. James Trotter, *Music and Some Highly Musical People* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1878), 306-308.

- ³² Asa Hutchinson, "Albany August 28th," *Excelsior*, 74. Cockrell, 74. *Evening Journal*, 10 Aug. 1842, cited in Cockrell, *Excelsior*, 58. Donald Scott, "Itinerant Lecturers and Lecturing in New England, 1800-1850," in *Itinerancy in New England and New York*, ed. Peter Benes (Boston: Boston University, 1986), 65. Asa Hutchinson, "Sabath day Aug 28th/42," *Excelsior*, 75.
- ³³ Judson Hutchinson, "Sunday Night, Aug 14 10½ o'Clock," *Excelsior*, 61-63. John Hutchinson, "July 26 42," *Excelsior*, 29.
- ³⁴ Asa Hutchinson, "Milford Nov 26th 1842," 82-88. "Benefit Concert by the AEOLIAN VOCALISTS," *Farmers' Cabinet*, 28 Oct. 1842. For a similar ad for the benefit concert on October 29, 1842, see Cockrell, 87. Judson Hutchinson, "Whitehall July 25/42," *Excelsior*, 26. John Hutchinson, *Story*, 1:69.
- ³⁵ N.P. Rogers, "Milford Convention," *Herald of Freedom*, 13 Jan 1843, 186. "The Hutchison Family," *Arthur's Lady's Magazine of Elegant Literature and Fine Arts* (Aug. 1844): 75.
- ³⁶ Adams in James Duane Squires, *The Granite State of the United States: A History of New Hampshire from 1623 to the Present* (New York: American Historical Company, Inc., 1956), 1:271.
- ³⁷ Christopher Clark, *The Diary of an Apprentice Cabinetmaker: Edward Jenner Carpenter's "Journal" 1844-45* (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1989), 304. Robert Laurence Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 72-73. Winifred A. Wright, *The Granite Town: Milford, New Hampshire, 1901/1978* (Canaan, N.H.: Phoenix Publishing, 1979), 12. Robert A. Gross, "Transcendentalism and Urbanism: Concord, Boston, and the Wider World," *Journal of American Studies* 18:3 (1984): 362-363, 368-381, quote from 369.
- ³⁸ Moore, *Selling*, 3-11, 17-39, 72-73. Donald G. Mathews, "The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process, 1780-1830," *American Quarterly* 21 (1969): 22-43. Lucy N. Colman, *Reminiscences* (Buffalo: H. L. Green, 1891), 6. Moore, "Religion, Secularization, and the Shaping of the Culture Industry in Antebellum America," *American Quarterly* 41.2 (June 1989): 218-219. William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America, 1607-1977* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 99-100, Lord Bryce cited on page 106.
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Part Fourth



Culture, like property, must be passed on from generation to generation. And the means of cultural transmission in rural New England, education both formal and informal, were conservative.

—Christopher M. Jedrey—¹

Shaking “the whole atmosphere with a terrible force” and creating a disturbing echo that Asa Hutchinson found “most deafening,” a song resounded along the narrow staircase of Baltimore’s Washington monument: “I glory in the spirit/ Which goaded them to rise/ And found a might nation/ Beneath the western skies./ No clime so bright and beautiful/ As that where sets the sun;/ No land so fertile, fair, and free,/ As that of Washington.” The George P. Morris poem which formed the song’s lyrics was a relatively new creation and the visitors who paid the 12 ½ cent admission to climb the memorial on Monday, January 22, 1844, were undoubtedly startled to hear it. When the Hutchinson Family Singers passed a New York merchant in the stairway, his agreeable demeanor proved that the troubadour tourists were not annoying the other guests. So the group marched on offering another selection which, given how tired they were after their trip, was an impressive feat of musicianship and fitness.

With the weather “being somewhat pleasant” and no concert in the evening, John, Abby, Asa, and Judson had decided on sightseeing in the “Monumental City.” Climbing the 180 foot statue dedicated by the citizens of Maryland to George Washington was exactly the kind of activity that occupied the singers’ leisure time. (see fig. 1) Although the city had begun construction on the Washington Monument in 1815, it was not completed until 1841. At the time of the Hutchinsons’ visit, the site designed by Robert Mills (who later created the Washington Monument in Washington, D.C.) was a new attraction, *the* place to

¹ While today it is known as Charm City, in the early nineteenth century, most likely starting around 1827, then President John Quincy Adams used this term to reference Baltimore. In their journals, the Hutchinsons followed his lead.



Figure 1
BALTIMORE'S WASHINGTON MONUMENT CIRCA 1848
(Courtesy of the Cator Collection, Enoch Pratt Free Library)

visit in Baltimore. The height of the monument and the 229-step journey (Asa's and Judson's personal count added one to the official number of 228) greatly impressed the musicians who designated this testament to General Washington as the "Grandest of all monuments." To pass the time as the quartet ascended the windowless staircase, the Hutchinsons did what they knew best, they sang. And what could have been more appropriate than the new selection from Francis Brown based on G. P. Morris's words entitled "The Land of Washington."²

Asa studiously recorded every figure about the site: it was 280 feet above sea level; the diameter at the bottom, 20 feet; the diameter at the top, 14 feet; the statue on top stood 16 feet tall and weighed 16 tons; and the total cost of the building was \$200,000. The bass singer's obsession with numbers was hardly unusual. Antebellum citizens displayed a numeracy far superior to that of any preceding group of Americans. An obsession with facts and figures flooded journals and diaries covering everything from monuments to reform. Mathematics gave Americans a new way to rationalize the world around them and they incorporated them, as Asa did, into their leisure activities as well as their work.³

The Hutchinson Family Singers spent their free time as many antebellum citizens did. Yet as musicians, they often had more spare time than others. By 1844 the quartet was no longer relegated to touring the backwoods of New England and they took advantage of playing in large cities not only for the financial potential but also for the more varied sightseeing. In addition to being tourists, the Hutchinsons spent their time away from the stage playing games from cards to ball (apparently John could juggle three balls thirty-eight times before dropping them); attending to music and non-music related business; reading

newspapers and books (anything from James M. Phillippo's *Jamaica: Its Past and Present* and Lydia Maria Child's *Letters from New-York* to the *Liberator* and the Bible); composing letters and writing in their journals; going to plays (but only virtuous ones such as *The Drunkard*, a popular temperance offering which they saw twice in 1844); attending church; supporting antislavery and temperance reform; and fraternizing with local elites, friends, and fellow musicians. Rarely did the Hutchinsons take a bona fide vacation. Usually they opted to return to Milford to oversee some investments and help out on the farm. One exception was the Hutchinsons' first trip to New Hampshire's alpine environs, the White Mountains, with friends in August of 1844. Three years into a career built on the notion that they had "come from the mountains of the old Granite State," the Hutchinson Family Singers finally experienced the supposed well-spring of their talent.

The group's most regular leisure time was that between rehearsals and concerts. In 1842 while performing in Hanover, N.H., the Hutchinsons visited a Shaker village, met with friends Cyrus L. Blanchard and Mark True, had Asa's bass bow fixed, and attended a rehearsal of some Dartmouth musicians ("The Voices were very good but rather harsh."). When the singers made it to New York a year later they visited Niblo's Garden and the newly opened Croton waterworks ("one of the most magnificent things I have ever seen!!"); attended a Henry Russell performance and met with him after the show; fought amongst themselves (this time Judson and Jesse exchanged blows, John and Asa also took part in the belligerence); and socialized with their new antislavery friends (Roswell Goss, James Buffum, Henry Wright, Mary Gove) and old friends too (such as Luke F. Newland, the man who had helped them in Albany). Whether in the city or in the country, the entertainers kept themselves occupied.⁴

For the most part the siblings gravitated toward group activities. If one person was left behind during a day's endeavor, it was Abby. Traveling with her older brothers accentuated the age and gender discrepancy between Abby and the rest of the group. The brothers doted upon their little sister and, for the most part, watched over her like hawks. There were certain situations, however, that were just not appropriate for a young woman. When the three brothers visited the medical building at Dartmouth to view a variety of human skeletons as well as other "interesting curiosities," they left Abby alone at the hotel. An unchaperoned Abby used this time to satiate her self-proclaimed interest in the college's library where she found "about 5 thousand volumes."

Abby's trip to the library caused trouble. Wandering alone in public was not expected of any woman, let alone a twelve year-old girl. Though a seemingly harmless excursion, Abby's action was not acceptable to her brothers. Not much had changed since the early 18th century regarding the perception of women traveling unaccompanied—they presented a danger to themselves and to society. On business travel from Boston to New York in 1704, a local mistook Madame Knight for a prostitute during her stopover in Connecticut. Two hundred years later unescorted women were still denied basic privileges. A New York restaurant refused to serve Harriet Stanton Blanch when she tried to dine by herself in 1907. Abby's Hanover adventure created panic because she disregarded convention and because she was still a child. Investigating strange places alone was inherently unsafe for the talented young singer. Certainly the moral discrimination of the Hutchinson family could have been questioned by witnesses to the events of that day.⁵

The entry into the group's journal in which Abby recorded her deed was both crossed out and erased. While her brothers' tended to show dismay with one another

through their fists, with Abby they were likely to give a good lecture and eliminate evidence of their own guilt. After all the three wanted to avoid the wrath of their mother, Polly, who lived in fear that an event just like Abby's library outing would happen. Judson, John, and Asa shouldered a lot of the blame for this incident since they left their sister unattended. Abby merely satisfied an innocent curiosity. The Dartmouth library episode highlighted contradictions inherent in Abby's high level of education and the expectations of antebellum women. Abby was aware that she was to exhibit a level of dependence on her brothers. Her schooling had included instruction on "female manners and deportment" and the Milford Seminary prided itself on the fact that "the conduct and habits of the young ladies" were always supervised. The young Hutchinson woman, however, was not a typical twelve year-old. The lessons Abby acquired living on the road with her siblings were far more liberating.⁶

As a member of the Hutchinson Family Singers, Abby worked on stage, a public setting, which was all but forbidden for antebellum women. The only thing that shielded the vocalist from criticism was a belief that her presence on stage was the moral foundation upon which the group was grounded. In this role Abby was seen by her fans as no different from other antebellum women whose virtue saved all men and children from licentiousness. In 1842, before Abby grew accustomed to her part in the Hutchinson Family Singers, time spent around her brothers enhanced the young girl's independent streak. As young white men, John, Judson, and Asa were permitted almost anywhere at anytime and, as their fame and wealth increased, their access to all parts of American society amplified accordingly. Abby, who was in constant contact with her three brothers when touring, admired and learned from them. After the Hanover incident her older

siblings came to understand the situation and wised up. They were certain to leave their sister with a chaperone whenever they went off without her. Such was the case when the three young men went to tea with James Buffum, Mary Gove, and Henry Wright in New York in 1843. After mingling with their reform friends, John, Judson, and Asa arrived back at their 65 Murray Street residence to find Abby still safely in the company of Harriet Martineau Jackson, a dear family acquaintance.

The lifestyle of the Hutchinson Family Singers that developed by 1844, which included touring new sites and spending time with friends, was fueled by a windfall of concert profits, especially from shows in New York City. Where once Asa joked after tallying the group's money that he was "afraid the *Milford* people will envy us if they hear that we have 34.00 dollars on hand," in 1844, the day after the group visited the Washington monument, he recorded a sum of \$894 in his pocket (\$21,039.95 in 2001). The Hutchinson Family Singers had reached a point where they could (and occasionally did) make over \$1,000 in one night. The enormity of this figure is astonishing. Many working families, even those employed in skilled positions, found it difficult to net the annual \$500 necessary to keep up with their cost of living. The Hutchinsons' problem was no longer earning money, but what to do with it. Antebellum financial institutions were decidedly unstable; Asa once reported that his friend's father and singer Henry Russell had each lost \$30,000 when the United States Bank of Pennsylvania failed in 1841. Additionally, the Hutchinsons' hometown of Milford had no bank.

For a while the siblings stored their profits in a shot-bag placed inside of an earthen jar hidden underneath the "cellar arch" of their parents' homestead. This was not a viable long-term solution for the Hutchinsons' increased wealth. The group eventually invested

their money in Milford. Reportedly, the Hutchinsons spent \$2,000 dollars renovating their family's farm and more than \$5,000 to purchase an entire block in town. On this block the Hutchinsons built rental apartments and also a meeting and performance hall named Freedom Hall (also known as Temperance Hall). In the center of town, Joshua Hutchinson operated the family's new store. The ventures of 1844 represented the first of many that the family would undertake. John, Asa, Judson, and their brother David secured more land in Milford in 1849 which they then sold to the Milford school system in 1853. John and Jesse purchased the land immediately surrounding High Rock, a preeminent spot in Lynn, Massachusetts. John lived here for the rest of the century and eventually sold the property to the city's Board of Alderman for \$12,000 in 1902 for use as a park. After their peak performing days had passed, the three musical brothers expended a good deal of capital to found Hutchinson, Minnesota, their first experience in frontier speculation. Investment opportunities were an unexpected byproduct of musical success.⁷

While developing their money savvy, the Hutchinsons never turned miserly. With their own family they were generous to a fault. Inspired by an 1843 visit to the community-centered life at Brook Farm, the Hutchinson Family Singers adapted this model for their own use. The same economic, religious, and political changes that paved the way for New England's cultural enlightenment gave rise to the "communitarian moment"; the period from 1840 to 1849 boasted the establishment of at least 59 new communities aimed at creating a socially progressive alternative to American society, more than in any other decade. Ideas for community life grew out of the critiques of American society inherent in temperance and antislavery reform and were further instigated by American industrialization's increased class stratification. For economic survival, most of the

community experiments derived goods and cash from in-house farming and industry. Sympathizing artists like the Hutchinsons provided socially progressive entertainment to uplift the atmosphere at these communes. In theory these progressive experiments were to be self-sufficient, but communitarian societies in the 1840s usually survived for two years or less. Despite the rather rapid disillusionment that characterized the individual communities, the great hope and vision realized during the formation of these cooperatives infused many Americans with confidence that true equality and freedom could exist.⁸

The Hutchinson Family Singers rearranged the economic and social structure of their family believing that community-centered life offered a chance for the ultimate in social improvement: the creation of a morally enriching environment independent of the greed and individualism rampant in American society. The Hutchinson Family Singers' communitarian arrangement not only included the four members of the singing troupe, but also extended to the entire Hutchinson clan. Along with a pooling of the family's resources, the Hutchinson Family Singers' proposal included a retirement from the stage to a life in agriculture. This was not a long-term plan. The four musicians envisioned switching careers starting immediately in 1844. But their strategy quickly changed. First, the father of the Hutchinsons decided that the luster of farming paled in comparison to the life of an itinerant preacher, his lifelong dream. Instead of including himself in the Hutchinson family experiment, the patriarch opted to sign over his property to his children as long as they promised to care for their mother. Second, the Hutchinson Family Singers realized that the artistic and financial rewards of musicianship surpassed the virtues of farm life. Instead of retirement, the entertainers decided to capture the communitarian spirit by

assigning their concert income to a common family treasury. Although they strayed a bit from their original conception, the Hutchinsons formed the family cooperative.

In April of 1844 the Hutchinson Family Singers performed at an antislavery meeting at the Northampton Association, a communitarian society in western Massachusetts. Here they found everything in "a plain, simple, rough, pleasant condition"—the same could not be said for their own communitarian existence. Not all in the Hutchinson family were enamored with the philosophy of sharing. While Jesse, Jr., participated in debates in Lynn and in Worcester concerning "*the rights of property, and the best means of reorganizing society*," some of his older brothers who had been first in line to formally inherit the property "began to hint that it was not quite fair to deprive them of their interest in the farm." The family's idealism collapsed and by May they bitterly argued over their reorganization. Benjamin, an older brother to the musicians who lived his entire life on the Milford farm, was against the communal experiment. So was John's wife of three years, Fanny Burnham Patch, who, along with Asa, completed the opposition. Judson and Abby agreed with the communal farm's most fervent supporter, John, to continue the venture. Despite intense bickering, the Hutchinson Family Singers maintained the arrangement until the end of December when their brother Benjamin and their sister Rhoda's husband died from typhus fever. The deaths along with objections from the wives of both John and Judson (who recently wed Jerusha Peabody Hutchinson, a distant cousin, in July of 1844) finally brought the matter to a head. Ultimately, the Hutchinson family abandoned their cooperative and divided up the property. John found this a messy affair even though the deed transferring the family property to the children was never legalized. During the short-lived trial of communal

living, the family accumulated a large number of possessions. The only way to divvy the estate to everyone's satisfaction was through auction.⁹

THE FAILURE OF THEIR COMMUNITY existence did not sour the Hutchinsons on reform. The entertainers always gave back to the societies and causes that helped them achieve their success. Led by Judson and Caleb, six of the Hutchinson brothers donated \$9.18 to the New Hampshire Anti-Slavery Society according to an 1843 *Herald of Freedom* "Weekly List of Remittances." The next year \$100 went to the Salem Anti-Slavery Society in April just before the Family Singers performed at their meeting. Yet the performers and their family gave more than money, they continued to give their time and talent. Jesse, Jr., was the most active in the day-to-day affairs of antislavery organizations and, later, the free soil movement. The older sibling, who was most famous as the lyricist for the compositions "Get Off the Track," "The Bereaved Slave Mother," "The Fugitive's Song," "King Alcohol," and "The Old Granite State," often used his poetic gifts within the context of reform conventions. At an antislavery meeting in Lynn he voiced the following proposal:

Resolved, That slavery is a curse,
A nuisance in the nation;
Of all our evils this is worst,
In point of degradation.

Resolved, again, that as the church
Has long this curse defended.
It is, itself, deep in the lurch,
And with this evil blended.

Resolved, That chattel slavery
Is what we've met to fight, sirs;
By this we don't pretend to say
That all things else are right, sirs.

Resolved, that abolitionists
Should at this monster batter,
And quit this firing random shots,
Nor ammunition scatter.

Resolved, That Jesus Christ had built
His church upon a rock, sirs,
And it must live thro's slavery's guilt,
Nor dread invidious shocks, sirs.

Resolved, then, of whatever name,
Like brothers we will stand, sirs,
Till we have driven out the shame
Of slavery from our land, sirs.

Although less involved than their poetical brother in reform associations (though Judson's name occasionally showed on the antislavery societies' voting rolls alongside Jesse, Jr.), the Hutchinson Family Singers' demonstrated a passionate allegiance to antislavery and temperance. Over the two year span from 1844 to 1845 the Hutchinson Family Singers took time out from their very lucrative performance schedule and appeared in at least nineteen different reform functions (about thirty-three reform performances during a span of at least two-hundred and thirty concerts, roughly fourteen percent). To make the claim that this was their only contribution to the reforms would be greatly misleading, for the group sold sheet music and songsters (slim books containing only their lyrics), and sang antislavery and temperance tunes with frequency at their own concerts. The Hutchinsons added to their reform credentials by funding the construction of a Milford hall founded upon the principles of temperance, antislavery, and Come-Outerism (a brand of religious demonstration whose supporters, including the Hutchinson Family Singers, denounced established churches—but not the ideals of Christianity—for refusing to reject their southern ties). Through these various measures, the group continually affirmed their commitment to reform.¹⁰

Dedication to social change came with a price. The Hutchinsons, so reliant on reform for their brand of indigenous American music, increasingly found themselves performing at the crossroads of antislavery and popularity. As their fame increased,

invitations poured in to perform at venues that were basically unfriendly to the Hutchinson Family Singers' abolitionist views. While their more radical antislavery friends, including their brother Jesse, voiced great displeasure whenever the group's lyrical expression of reform was not explicit, the Hutchinson Family Singers' understood themselves to promote antislavery every time they appeared on stage. The most poignant example of this came during the Hutchinsons' 1844 stopover in the nation's capital.

In Washington the group received an invitation to President John Tyler's home on March 31. Tyler, who along with Presidential candidate William Henry Harrison was the subject of the famous political song of 1840 with the refrain of "Tippecanoe and Tyler, Too," ascended to office as the tenth President of the United States following Harrison's untimely death in 1841. Three years later, the Hutchinsons found themselves performing six songs for President Tyler and numerous luminaries of American government. "The Land of Washington," "Happy and Free," "Little Farm," "The Origin of Yankee Doodle," "My Mother's Bible," and "The Old Granite State" resounded in the parlor that evening. None of these songs represented the Family Singers' more explicit reform offerings. In fact, while they had performed at antislavery conventions, placed an occasional thought about "emancipation" in their verses, and improvised many antislavery ditties, the group had yet to compose a song based solely upon antislavery. Nonetheless, Asa was quite confident that the audience understood the entertainers' position, certain that they had received the Hutchinsons' call for "'Liberty' and 'Washingtonianism'" (antislavery and temperance).

Henry Alexander Wise's reaction to the music that night suggests a different scenario. Wise, a staunch proslavery Congressman from Virginia, enthusiastically shook the performers' hands after their singing of the "Old Granite State." Asa was dumbfounded by

Wise's reaction because the tune featured this line: "We despise oppression and cannot be enslaved." Even though they rang out from the reputedly abolitionist singers, these lyrics did not anger one of the nation's preeminent supporters of slavery. Asa, knowing that the group intended the line as a strike against black enslavement, could not fathom any alternative interpretations of these words. Congressman Wise likely understood the song as a reference to the liberty and spirit of the American Revolution, an idea that he could endorse. The Hutchinson Family Singers clearly needed to be much more direct when expressing antislavery sentiment in their music.

The Hutchinsons' invitation to perform for this elite Washington circle hinged upon a judicious song selection that would not offend politicians from various political parties and geographic regions. Despite Asa's feelings to the contrary, their reform rhetoric was quieted out of necessity. The use of a key word like "emancipation" during the group's parlor presentation would have elicited a much different reaction than their stance against a vaguely defined "oppression." The Wise incident was conspicuous because at other Washington concerts the group openly expressed reform sentiment. One newspaper reported "an attempt to hiss their reference to anti-slavery was made, but was promptly put down by the good sense of the audience." Obviously the Hutchinsons did not check their antislavery expression for the entire trip to the nation's capital, but they revealed their reform platform discriminately, according to the situation. Creating an uproar in the President's home was not in their best interest—this was a private space and, while many were in attendance, it was not a public platform. On their own time they were more than willing to voice their antislavery sympathies. The fact remained that anyone familiar with

the Hutchinson Family Singers knew that they were staunch abolitionists. This was a reality upheld by their public performances in Washington.

The capital city extended a warm reception to the New Hampshire musicians. One newspaper asked, "Were you at the concert of the Hutchinsons? If not you have lost a rich and most rare treat." Setting aside the confusion surrounding Congressman Wise's unwanted approval, the Hutchinson Family Singers grew increasingly confident of the power of their music during their stay. "I do rejoice that we are having a moral influence in this city," entrusted Asa to his journal, "The curse of slavery in this land yet rests but soon we may look on this our country and see it is free." The singer's passion for reform grew stronger after talking with the elderly black servant who tended the Hutchinsons' fire at the hotel. The man was free, but his wife and two children were slaves—"O, O, the horrors of slaves and blacks...I must speak out against this damning evil...We will tune our voices for freedom."

Even as they amplified their reform rhetoric in the country's political center, the Hutchinson Family Singers were able maintain a triumphant tour. The *Whig Standard* admitted its bias against the group "on account of their sectional origin," but was won over by the Hutchinsons' charisma and called them "the least dangerous combination of Yankees that we have ever encountered." The singers battled concerns over their reform status due to their close association with William Lloyd Garrison. Many in Washington, both antislavery and proslavery alike, harbored a strong distaste for the immediatism espoused by the Boston editor. 1844 was also a particularly tense time in the capital as it was an election year. The featured debate surrounded the issue of slavery's expansion and the annexation of Texas. The Hutchinsons' visit seemingly could not have come at a worse time for the

antislavery and anti-expansionist entertainers. President Tyler was the very man who would initiate the appropriation of Texas at the start of 1845. Yet by placing contentious political messages within their harmonious singing, the Hutchinsons appear to have softened the blow of their rhetoric. As a part of a song that promoted a moral domestic life, such as "The Old Granite State," a few lines about emancipation were easy for their opponents to overlook. The Hutchinson Family Singers thus displayed an uncanny ability to leave their critics, such as the writer for the *Whig Standard*, charmed instead of repulsed.¹¹

The singers were disturbed that their reform message could be misinterpreted or ignored. After their return from Washington in April of 1844, the group adopted a much more candid reform music. At this time Jesse Hutchinson's piece entitled "Get Off the Track!" received its public release. The song, which became the Hutchinson Family Singers' antislavery theme, was jointly developed by the Hutchinson clan. "Get Off the Track!" debuted in a concert by a few members of the Hutchinson family (not the Hutchinson Family Singers) sometime in February. By late spring the song was in good enough shape for publication and for performance by the famed quartet. Jesse, Jr., wrote the lyrics and placed them atop the tune of "Old Dan Tucker." The sheet music cover proudly announced the work: "a song for EMANCIPATION, sung by THE HUTCHINSONS."

Relying upon the imagery of a railroad driving across the nation, the song linked the story of liberty first revealed in the American Revolution to the "car Emancipation" (see fig. 2). The train of freedom analogy is central to the theme of the song as railroads were a relatively new symbol of progress. In a time when science was often viewed as a means to elevate the human condition, the railroad represented the most advanced technology of the day. People stood in fear and in awe at the sound and might of the railroads. Powered by

GET OFF THE TRACK

Ho! the car Emancipation
Rides majestic thro' our nation,
Bearing on its train the story,
LIBERTY! a nation's glory.
Roll it along, thro' the nation,
Freedom's car, Emancipation.

First of all the train, and greater,
Spreads the donation **LIBERATION**,
Onward cheered amid hosannas
And the waving of free banners.
Roll it along! Spread your banners,
While the people shout hosannas.

Men of various predilections,
Frightened, run in all directions;
Merchants, editors, physicians,
Lawyers, priests, and politicians.
Get out of the way! every station!
Clear the track of emancipation!

Let the ministers and churches
Leave behind sectarian lurches;
Jump on board the Car of Freedom,
Ere it be too late to need them.
Sound the alarm! Pulpits thunder!
Ere too late you see your blunder!

Politicians gazed, astounded,
When, at first, our bell resounded:
Freight trains are coming, tell these foxes,
With our votes and ballot boxes.
Jump for your lives! politicians,
From your dangerous, false positions.

Railroads to Emancipation
Cannot rest on *Clay* foundation;
And the tracks of *'The Agician'*
Are but railroads to perdition:
Pull up the rails! Emancipation
Cannot rest on such foundation.

vii.

All true friends of Emancipation,
Haste to Freedom's railroad station;
Quick into the cars get seated,
All is ready, and completed.
Put on the steam! all are crying,
And the liberty flags are flying.

viii.

Now again the bell is tolling,
Soon you'll see the car-wheels rolling;
Hinder not their destination,
Chartered for Emancipation.
Wood up the fire! keep it flashing,
While the train goes onward dashing.

ix.

Hear the mighty car-wheels humming!
Now look out! *The Engine's coming!*
Church and statesmen! hear the thunder!
Clear the track! or you'll fall under.
Get off the track! all are singing,
While the *Liberty Bell* is ringing.

x.

On triumphant see them bearing,
Through sectarian rubbish tearing;
The bell and whistle and the steaming,
Startle thousands from their dreaming.
Look out for the cars, while the bell rings
Ere the sound your funeral knell rings.

xi.

See the people run to meet us;
At the depots thousands greet us;
All take seats with exultation,
In the Car Emancipation.
Huzza! Huzza! Emancipation
Soon will bless our happy nation.
Huzza! Huzza! Huzza!!!

Figure 2
LYRICS FOR "GET OFF THE TRACK!," *LIBERATOR*, APRIL 10, 1844
(Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society)

steam engines, trains used iron and coal to create a seemingly limitless source of energy and possibility. For New Englanders steeped in the millennialism and human perfectionism of the recent religious revivals, the promise opened by such technology appeared divined. "Get Off the Track!" played upon the crossover between conceptions of religion and science by using Henry Russell's adaptation of "The Old Hundred," a hymn, for its melody and visions of the railroad in its lyrics. *The Herald of Freedom* was correct when reporting of the song that "the people find there is a meaning in the warning." The Hutchinsons asserted through song that emancipation was coming and that it was coming now.

With its references to *The Liberator*, "Get Off the Track!" steadfastly declared that William Lloyd Garrison's brand of antislavery was the train's leading car: "First of all the train and greater, / Speeds the dauntless LIBERATOR, / Onward cheered amid hosannas, / And the waving of free banners." While the Hutchinsons probably wished to state that no one is safe from this powerful charge of freedom, they listed people predominately in occupations filled by middle class Americans—"Merchants, editors, physicians, / Lawyers, priests, and politicians"—who must either jump aboard "the Car of Freedom," "Clear the track!," or else "fall under" the singers' abolitionist train. By singling out these professions, the group targeted their message at antislavery's largest contingent. Reform sentiment, by and large, was the domain of America's middle class, a fact that held true even as artisans and journeymen began to find meaning in temperance and antislavery.

The Hutchinsons undoubtedly expected some backlash from the song since publishers' refusal to print it forced Jesse to publish it himself. Because music from the Hutchinsons was a hot item in 1844, the refusal to publish "Get Off the Track!" demonstrated the depth of fear over the song's content. Jesse's antislavery ditty quickly

became one of the group's most talked about pieces. At an antislavery convention in Salem, the Hutchinson Family Singers offered "Get Off the Track!" to close on both April 11th and 12th. The musicians felt that the tune "went like wild fire" and *The Liberator* reported that they sang their new song "with thrilling effect" (see fig. 3).

The responses quickly poured in. "The Hutchinsons Doomed" ran the April 20th headline in Boston's *Morning Chronicle*. Following the Boston *Atlas*' declaration that the Hutchinson Family Singers' "denunciation of domestic slavery was hardly a sufficient justification to 'get out of the way' so much as to denounce Henry Clay," the *Chronicle* wondered, "How could you, Jesse, 'denounce Henry Clay, the prominent candidate' ever since 1824, 'for the presidency?'" The *Atlas* rationalized the publication of "Get Off the Track!" with the suggestion that the group must have "fallen into the hands of bad advisers" and warned the public "to regard the aforesaid tribe as from henceforth utterly extinct." The sheet music version irked both the pro-slavery public and Whig supporters with its cover lithograph depicting a series of railroad cars named "Liberator" and "Immediate Emancipation" pulling "Liberty Votes and Ballot Boxes" while a train in the background identified as "Clay" falls into a ravine (see fig. 4 and fig. 4a). Clearly illustrating their support for William Lloyd Garrison and immediate emancipation, the song had a very specific target, the beloved New England politician Henry Clay, nicknamed Old Kentucky. Jesse's work parodied a Whig campaign song of 1844 of similar name ("Get Out of the Way!") and identical tune which urged Americans to "Get out of the way, you're all unlucky; Clear the track for Old Kentucky!" By performing this song the Hutchinson Family Singers, along with their brother Jesse, created a political firestorm.

The New England newspapers and their readers were not offended by the

The Salem Convention.

Salem is one of those wealthy, aristocratic, pharisaical, priest-ridden towns, from which the cause of Reform cannot rationally expect much assistance, during its unpopular stages. Hoarded wealth breeds no virtue, but from it proceed swarms of vices, to annoy and distress society. When the devoted and eloquent THOMPSON was in this country, it was in Salem that he was in imminent danger of having his life taken by a murderous mob, incited by the leading influences of that city. Since that memorable period, no very signal change has been wrought in the sentiments of the inhabitants, respecting the anti-slavery cause, though meetings may now be held, by the friends of the slave, without any special risk of being broken up by mobocratic violence.

One of the Hundred Conventions was held in Salem, on Thursday and Friday last. We were not present on the first day, but understand that the audience was small in the forenoon and afternoon; but in the evening, the Lyceum Hall was filled, on which occasion, Wendell Phillips spoke 'in demonstration of the spirit, and with power.' On Friday, throughout the day, the attendance was large, and in the evening the Hall was densely crowded, many persons not being able to gain admittance. The Hutchinsons were present to deepen the impression of the stirring speeches that were made, and closed the meeting with their new song for emancipation, 'Get off the track!' which they sang with thrilling effect. Our Salem friends pronounce the Convention to have been the best ever held in that place, and feel confident that it will produce a salutary and permanent effect on the public mind.

On Thursday evening, Messrs. Foster and Pillsbury addressed a public assembly in South Danvers; but no sooner had they begun to expose the pro slavery position of the church and clergy, than stones were hurled through the windows, of considerable weight and size, though, fortunately, no persons were struck by them. All the lawless and riotous proceedings, attendant at the present time on anti-slavery gatherings in New England, are in defence of the American church and clergy - a fact which palpably demonstrates the inhumanity and corruption of the latter.

Figure 3

REVIEW OF "GET OFF THE TRACK!"

THE LIBERATOR, APRIL 11, 1844

(Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society)

"GET OFF THE TRACK!"



THE HUTCHINSONS,
Representative of the
NATHAN P. HUTCHINSON.

JESSE HUTCHINSON JUNR.

Figure 4
GET OFF THE TRACK!
(Boston: Jesse Hutchinson, Jr., 1844)



Figure 4a
CLOSE-UP OF "GET OFF THE TRACK" COVER

Hutchinsons' vocalization of antislavery sentiment. The troupe's public stance against slavery was common knowledge and they were embraced by nearly all antislavery advocates in the region. The trouble developed when the Hutchinson Family Singers sought to further define the political inclinations of their listeners. When they first started to sing for the movement, the Hutchinsons served as singing reporters who highlighted events at reform meetings. As they became more familiar with antislavery gatherings they began to serve as crowd control, quieting the inevitable disruptions staged by proslavery backers with their harmonious singing. Reform-minded New Englanders approved of these functions and, until the Hutchinsons sang out against Henry Clay, antislavery advocates of all persuasions were comfortable reveling in the existence of the entertainers.

The singers' message in "Get Off the Track!" noticeably divided a group of listeners who had once welcomed them with abandon. Henry Clay was a cherished Whig politician whose reputation in 1844 was rivaled only by that of former President Andrew Jackson. Garrisonian abolitionists viewed Clay with suspicion for owning slaves and speaking of emancipation while Southerners feared his liberal antislavery thinking (Clay freed most of his slaves prior to his death in 1852). Outside of these two groups, a large number of Americans revered Clay for his ability to get politicians on both sides of the slavery issue to compromise, a talent which he demonstrated time and again throughout his career. These Clay supporters were the listeners and readers appalled by the Hutchinson Family Singers' declarations in "Get Off the Track!" Their moderate antislavery advocacy was affectionately tied to the gradualism espoused by Clay, not the immediatism put forth by Garrison. As soon as the Hutchinsons declared that "Railroads to Emancipation/ Cannot

rest on Clay foundation," the ensemble alienated a good number of antislavery listeners whose reform identity they had once helped shape.

To those who agreed with the Family Singers' Clay denunciation, the song was a hit. Their old friend Nathaniel P. Rogers (to whom "Get Off the Track!" was dedicated) wrote in June that the piece was one of the greatest ever composed:

It represented the moral rail road in characters of living light and song, with all its terrible enginery and speed and danger. And when they came to the chorus-cry, that gives name to the song, when they cried to the heedless pro-slavery multitude that were stupidly lingering on the track, and the engine 'Liberator' coming hard upon them, under full steam and all speed, the Liberty Bell loud ringing, and they stand like deaf men right in its whirlwind path, the way they cried 'Get off the track,' in defiance of all time and rule, was magnificent and sublime... I should say only that it was indescribable... The multitude who heard them will bear me witness, that they transcended the very province of mere music... God be thanked the Hutchinsons are in the movement.

This did not deter the *Atlas* from their continued assault on the group, publishing and then blasting the lyrics to the song and, prior to a Hutchinson Family Singer concert in October, speculating "whether they will sing such offensive trash." The *Express* in New York was no kinder: "we had always supposed they had shrewdness enough not to embody so gross an expression of their sentiments in music, intended to be sung in public." What was first posed as the downfall of the Hutchinsons' career by Boston papers was not settled in print, but on stage where audiences approved the Hutchinsons' music by continuing to pay for tickets and providing thunderous ovations for "Get Off the Track!" Reports from New York recorded "unbounded applause" and "great satisfaction" after the group played their the song. Despite the criticisms, the antislavery anthem was firmly entrenched in the Hutchinson Family Singers' programs. Soon the quartet featured another antislavery song from Jesse called "The Fugitive Slave" which was dedicated to Frederick Douglass.

Asa no longer needed to worry about whether or not the Hutchinson Family Singers' antislavery messages were being heard. When Jesse's "The Bereaved Slave Mother" is included, the singers featured three songs that unmistakably defined their antislavery views (see fig. 5). Sticking to their convictions won the group a good deal of admiration. The *National Anti-Slavery Standard* highlighted the Hutchinson Family Singers' commitment to the movement when describing a supposed interaction of the Hutchinsons with their critics. The paper printed the following conversation:

"You had better quit such nonsense," said one. "If we can't sing the truth," said they, "we can't sing at all." "It will ruin you," said another. "Then we will go home and dig potatoes," they answered. "We sing for Liberty or not at all." But consider, you can never go South if you sing this." "I am an Abolitionist now, and have dissolved the Union, and do not wish to go," one of them replied.

Certainly the antislavery newspaper overplayed the ensemble's valor, yet the statement had some validity. As wealthy entertainers, the Hutchinsons were now comfortable enough with their station to stand their ground and face a career upheaval rather than tone down their message. To the torment of their detractors, the Hutchinsons' star power only increased after the "Get Off the Track!" controversy.

Jesse Hutchinson's songs were not the first antislavery music to be published in the 1840s. Jarius Lincoln, an agent of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, had put together a collection of *Anti-Slavery Melodies* in 1843. Lincoln felt that "the Anti-Slavery community needed something of the kind." He was right, but his compilation did not fill this need. Soon Lincoln was writing William Lloyd Garrison at the *Liberator* in an attempt to boost his sales (only \$40 worth of the book had sold, not nearly enough to cover his \$200 expenditure). It was the antislavery music of the Hutchinson Family Singers that captured the public's consciousness. The New Hampshire singers' antislavery message was not

THE BEREAVED SLAVE MOTHER.



W. T. CHILDS.

NEW YORK: HENRY PRENTISS.

1844.

THE BEREAVED SLAVE MOTHER.

Figure 5
THE BEREAVED SLAVE MOTHER
(Boston: Henry Prentiss, 1844)

unique, but it was the most relevant and popular music that the movement produced. The Hutchinsons offered both a subtle reform agenda mixed into a sentimental style and a more brash political commentary on current events. This two-pronged approach satisfied both ardent antislavery advocates and those who preferred not to discuss the issue.

In 1848 Henry Wright described a New England farmhouse in which he was staying in a letter to his Irish friend. While writing he relayed to his reader: “In the parlor is a piano, and on it someone is playing at this moment—Ho! The car Emancipation / Rides majestic through the nation.” With the creation of their own music for antislavery in 1844, the Hutchinsons became central figures in abolitionist circles. They were as well-known as Frederick Douglass and, at times, just as disputed. The most common controversy that followed the group focused on the place of reform in the Hutchinson Family Singers’ music. The contested space that music increasingly occupied in the 1840s signaled changes and a struggle to shape these changes. Over the course of several decades, music had attained a level of importance in antebellum life that had not been seen before. Few doubted that music had developed into an important means of communication, but the arguments over the Hutchinsons’ music had to do with more than a struggle over reform ideas. “Merchants, editors, physicians, / Lawyers, priests, and politicians”—The Hutchinson Family Singers were helping to define what it meant to be a middle class American.¹²

RESONANCE THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY

Music—The most social of all the arts, which has the misfortune to be ridiculed by Mammon-worshippers, because it sometimes leads to unthriftiness, and by the unmusical, because they cannot appreciate its value.

—“Dictonaria,” *Boston Post*, 1830s—¹³

In 1846 George Hood published a major work chronicling music from 1620 to 1820. In it he wrote: “The history of music in New England, for the first two centuries, is

the history of Psalmody alone; and this is so intimately connected with the history of the church, that he who would fully know one, must understand the other.” The thirty-nine year old’s overview connecting the church to American music was not outrageous; in fact, extending this conclusion to encompass the entire United States would still be accurate. Hood’s exclusion of the years following 1820 is far more problematic. He claimed that the sheer volume of sacred music printed during this time made any evaluation of it too difficult. What his excuse failed to recognize was the surge in popularity of other styles of music. Since these genres were not psalmody, they did not fit Hood’s interpretation.

The historian was too quick to dismiss the new developments in music. Americans’ embrace of musical forms other than psalmody at the time of his publication did not indicate that the relationship between the church and music had been lost. Popular song, the genre which dominated the music scene after the 1830s, was by no means ungodly. While some songs drew upon traditional tunes from England and Scotland, others borrowed freely from sacred melodies, especially church hymns. Though American musical life no longer revolved around the church, the imprint of church music was indelibly stamped on the moral content of the lyrics and on the melodies heard in the antebellum era.¹⁴

While the shift from sacred music to a fascination with many kinds of music happened over a long time, the most dramatic change took place in the decades prior to 1840 as the immoral reputation of entertainments diminished. Concerts of music were primarily the domain of the urban genteel in the 18th century. By the mid-nineteenth century music was an entertainment that crossed boundaries of region and class. “Music, like everything else, is now passing from the few to the many,” penned the forty-year old editor of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* Lydia Maria Child. Middle class and working

class Americans tested boundaries and affirmed their identities in songs and other musical offerings. Country dwellers, who formerly enjoyed music only in church, suddenly were playing on their own parlor pianos or listening to various artists perform while urbanites of all classes rushed to concerts showcasing diverse musical styles.¹⁵

Child, writing in 1842, described a society largely freed of the stigmas once attached to music. Only a few years earlier, this was not the case. In 1817 a fourteen year-old Adin Ballou attended a singing school opened by an itinerant instructor named Samuel Frost. Ballou thought that learning music was “a desirable privilege” even if he was only being trained to sing in church. To the young teen’s religious father and many other parents of his generation, it was a “public mockery.” Music was understood as leisure and leisure was an undesirable quality for hardworking agrarian families whose clergy admonished them about the downfalls of entertainment. Changes in church doctrine and presentation made certain that the work of ministers and laity in the antebellum era diminished the gap between religion and entertainment, devotion and cultural refinement. The pomp of revivals, political campaigns, and reform movements pushed Americans toward a new understanding of music and amusement. Twenty-seven years after Frost taught Ballou the fundamentals of singing, *The New Hampshire Magazine*, “devoted” to “moral and religious reading,” ran a piece entitled “The Claims of Vocal Music.” The author asserted that musical faculties can be developed in all children (not just in those with special talents) and insisted that music education was desirable for everyone. Since the Boston Public Schools already offered system-wide musical instruction, the article merely repeated what many had come to accept: music “is the most important branch of culture in our age.” A claim that would have been radical in 1817 did not cause a stir in 1844.

The magazine went on to proclaim the value of music in many settings; “in the social circle, around the family fire side, and in the hour of solitude, it [music] opens to the singer a source of enjoyment to which others are strangers.” Where formerly the value of music in all environments, including church, was considered dubious, in the 1840s the nation embraced new ideas. The worth and benefit of musical endeavors to society were now lauded. Americans responded by filling their free time with a variety of aural offerings. Much like the Hutchinson Family Singers, antebellum citizens occupied their free time reading, writing, playing games, visiting notable sights (from the White Mountains to the new Greenough statue in Washington, D.C.), passing time with friends, and occasionally attending the theater. Their interests diverged a bit concerning music—for the Hutchinsons music was work; for the rest of the nation it was pleasure.¹⁶

In a time long before the era of recorded sound, music became a central part of Americans’ lives because it was easily transferable (you could take your knowledge of singing with you anywhere in the country and you could apply your training to any kind of music you saw fit), entertaining, social, and also a widely held skill. Beneath the explosion in musical interest of the 1830s and 1840s was a significant breakdown in the cultural divide between the countryside and the city. Music had always been an important part of America’s urban cultural landscape. Julia Ward Howe, who composed the famous poem “Battle Hymn of the Republic” and set it to the melody of “John Brown” in 1862, had the good fortune to receive music lessons as a child that were “the best that the time could afford.” Howe’s relatively privileged New York City upbringing afforded her easy access to a music education. Her childhood forms quite a contrast to the many rural girls and boys nurtured by parents often opposed to any musical endeavor. Where rural families

expressed concern about the role of music in their children's lives, starting early in the nineteenth century those urbanites who could afford it pushed music upon their children.

This discrepancy between rural and urban areas resulted from the different opportunities available in each region. Rural families, in transition during an age of industrialization and unable to provide economic stability for their sons and daughters, sought to bequeath to their children a moral sense. Polly and Jesse Hutchinson did not know where to send their youngest children for employment, but they did their best to guarantee that their children would not subvert the moral welfare of the family. Urban families cared about the morals of their offspring too, yet the paths for their children's careers were largely set. Their boys would seek a life in commerce or law and their girls would secure one of those successful lawyers or merchants as a husband. The prerequisite for an urban child's success was a comprehensive education.

The upbringing of Margaret Fuller, daughter of Massachusetts Congressman Timothy Fuller, illustrates why urban Americans with enough means saw fit to provide music education to their children. Born seven years before Judson Hutchinson in 1810, Fuller learned a variety of musical skills and her family understood music training as part of a normal progression for a girl living in Cambridge and Boston. Writing to her father in Washington, D.C., a young Fuller proudly announced her first musical achievement: "I can sing one part while Aunt Abigail sings another." This led Margaret to "guess" that her father would now "buy my family pianno forte." After the purchase, Timothy Fuller, often away from home, admitted to his wife that he dreamed of listening to Margaret play. And when the Fullers had to decide on a new school for their daughter they made certain that Margaret attended one where exceptional music instruction was available.

Representative Fuller argued that the study of music was one of many steps to ensure that Margaret would garner “all accomplishments” while maturing into a well-rounded young woman. He did not aspire for his daughter to develop into a concert performer—in fact women on stage was a contentious issue that overshadowed the careers of Abby Hutchinson and Jenny Lind—yet musical proficiency was seen as crucial to Margaret’s childhood. The goal was for Margaret to capture what Timothy Fuller understood to be the highest levels of sophistication and culture. Her family and many others like it were defining the level of gentility appropriate for middle class Americans. This process began in urban areas but spread to more remote places as the century progressed. Abby Hutchinson’s 1836 education at the newly established Milford Female Seminary, which encompassed geography, history, mathematics, languages, manners, and music, was a prime example of this trend.¹⁷

Music was a unique educational subject as neither men or women were expected to craft careers from their musical ability. Despite a widespread musical proficiency, most Americans had no professional connection to music. Margaret Fuller was thus unique when she wrote extensively on music as a theorist and as a critic. Unlike mathematical instruction, which was given to boys for use in commerce or law and to girls for use in domestic life, the goals of a music education were the same regardless of gender, stopping at the acquisition of the skill. Music was entertainment for the home by which both sexes could wile away the hours. Since the first few decades of the nineteenth century lacked examples of respectable and accomplished American musical performers, few parents encouraged their children to become musicians. A performer’s life was an economic struggle for those in rural regions and even required musicians living in cities to supplement

their earnings with alternative employment. Prior to 1840, successful American-born musicians were limited to a handful of blackface minstrels. Their profession, however, was not considered decent and therefore their music was inappropriate for the burgeoning middle class.¹⁸

National interest in music blossomed with the popularization of musical instruction for children, especially in New England. Prior to the adoption of music education by public schools (Boston was the first in 1838), not all were able to enjoy the benefits of a advantaged urban childhood as did Margaret Fuller, Julia Ward Howe, and George Templeton Strong (the New Yorker whose journal documents music in the city starting in 1836). But this did not mean that antebellum Americans, as a group, were devoid of musical training prior to 1838. It is fair to assume that most Americans learned their musical skills as the Hutchinson children did, in church or through a singing master charged with the task of enhancing the sounds which rang out within the local place of worship. This ensured that both rural and urban regions would house musically literate Americans. As the children of rural America, like Jesse, Zephaniah, and David Hutchinson, flocked to new and old urban centers, they brought with them values and skills honed in the countryside.

Musical training provided the impetus for the cultural transformation of the countryside in the first half of the nineteenth century. William Ellery Channing predicted that music would provide “every family” with “a new resource” and that “home will have a new attraction” when all children learned music. Channing was right. Released from more time consuming tasks by the increase in manufactured products and by new technologies, many rural families found themselves with hours of unscheduled time. The journal of the

Edward Jenner Carpenter, a twenty year-old cabinetmaker's apprentice living in western Massachusetts documents a young man preoccupied with leisure activities in 1844 and 1845. While Carpenter could ill afford to spend 25 cents on concert outings in the town of Greenfield, he still heard performances of sacred music, caught a few black fiddle players, danced, and attended several functions featuring bands or glee club singers. It is both amazing that Carpenter, who was a laborer and not a part of the burgeoning middle-class, was interested in these events and that a remote town like Greenfield hosted such varied musical activities. The many musically literate citizens combined with the increase in free time helped music quickly develop into one of the antebellum society's principal activities. Whether in a city or a town, Americans embraced music. Carpenter's example reveals not only a diverse rural music scene, but one not limited to the wealthy.¹⁹

Yet it was not Americans like Carpenter who made music important. The formation of a northern middle class catapulted music into the forefront of American cultural life. Urban Americans first recognized music as a distinguishing feature of the middle class. Whether conveyed through an enlightening concert or sheet music in their parlor, music became a sign of moral and cultural refinement that separated middle class Americans from others. As an urban middle class developed in the first half of the nineteenth century, it was only a matter of time before the increased industrialization of the countryside spurred a similar process. The adaptation of middle class values within rural areas diminished the ideological barriers between city and country. An improved transportation and commercial network that connected urban and rural regions (which meant that music related products from pianos to sheet music were readily available in the country) reduced the physical separation. This allowed performers like the Hutchinsons

and Henry Russell to successfully tour the countryside. The increased exchange between city and country made it easier for rural Americans to develop an intense identification with their urban counterparts. Music, once confined to the domain of genteel urbanites and to religious settings, was now a common part of middle class life in northern states. By the 1840s, whether it was singing in the church choir, belting out a few verses with friends, or gathering around a parlor piano, it was clear that a musical enlightenment—one that started prior to the Revolution with itinerant singing masters in the nation's hinterlands—was complete.

Despite the increase in performances, most rural dwellers were still more likely to produce their own music than to attend a concert. Relative to large cities, most towns had poor concert infrastructure which made them less attractive for musicians even when conditions had improved by mid-century. The Hutchinson Family Singers' first tour in rural New Hampshire featured miniscule profits and churches as concert stages. Even when the Hutchinsons were at the peak of their popularity in the mid-1840s, they often did not play more than one, maybe two, nights in a small town. There simply were not enough bodies to fill the seats. The Hutchinson Family Singers and others preferred to perform multiple shows in cities like Albany and Boston and to reserve off days from the city for concerts in the surrounding countryside. This formula guaranteed groups wide exposure with minimal time spent in locations with potential for poor profits.

Reducing the influence of the church on town affairs represented a crucial step in transforming the countryside. The Hutchinsons' donation of a large meeting hall to the town of Milford represented a larger movement in rural areas to separate the town center from the church. Removing music from religious settings loosened church control over

music and broadened its use from worship toward entertainment. Whether it was in a class offered by an itinerant music teacher or playing on a piano at home, taking music out of the church increased the opportunity for a less sacred sound in America. This was not necessarily a sign of secularization. As entertainment was removed from the church, antebellum citizens continued to prefer moral selections. The 1830s and 1840s featured a wide range of cultural productions available for “pious consumption.” These pieces moved music away from church hymns in topic, though not in tune. The Hutchinson Family Singers’ signature song “The Old Granite State” was founded upon the Second Advent hymn “The Old Church Yard.” Instead of intoning that “You will see the Lord a coming,” the Hutchinsons professed, “We have come from the mountains.” A similar adaptation took place for “Get Off the Track!” Based on Henry Russell’s minstrel song “Old Dan Tucker,” the Hutchinson Family Singers’ antislavery anthem sat atop music that Russell claimed he adapted from “The Old Hundred.” The hallowed sound of the Hutchinsons was furthered by their harmonizing which reminded one British critic of “metrical psalms” and gave their singing “an antique, primitive, solemn effect.”²⁰

Many popular songs were either based on or were adaptations of sacred music since even the slightest religious association helped chasten their upstanding, yet secular, lyrics. In addition, religious melodies, especially hymns, were used for popular music since they represented the closest Americans had to a shared musical language. The best way to get people humming was to compose a song from familiar material and there was no sound more pervasive in antebellum America than the music learned for worship. As one of the building blocks of popular music, the influence of church music only increased in the 1840s and 1850s. More so than other music used by composers of popular songs, church tunes

fulfilled the needs of many Americans: it was sanctioned by the church and thus was proper and it was already a part of their musical vocabulary.

Of course the catalogue of popular song in antebellum America was not filled solely with music derived from sacred sources. Traditional music represented another source of melodies from which popular music was crafted. The Hutchinson Family Singers' "King Alcohol" gave new lyrics to "King Andrew" and Judson's "For Oregon, Jon or Jonathan" flowed over the music of "Yankee Doodle." The last source of melodies was original music created by antebellum composers. The most popular of these compositions shared the simplicity of traditional and sacred melodies which turned a tune like Judson Hutchinson's music written for the G. P. Morris poem "My Mother's Bible" into an easily recognizable work.²¹

THE PREVALENCE OF SENTIMENTAL SONG by mid-century stymied predictions made earlier by music-minded Americans. In the early nineteenth century many music connoisseurs wished for the European art music tradition to dominate within the United States. When writing about Ludwig van Beethoven, American editor John Rowe Parker predicted "that he will extend the art of music, in a way never contemplated even by Haydn or Mozart." Parker was correct, but even though one of the greatest musicians to ever live was at the peak of his powers during this time, Beethoven's musical style did not win over a majority of Americans. Nearly twenty years after Parker's statement, Transcendentalist music critics Margaret Fuller and John Sullivan Dwight spoke for many music lovers in the 1840s and 1850s when they celebrated Beethoven's prowess. However, it was far too late. Antebellum concert goers flocked to the rapidly growing industry built around popular

song. One music teacher relayed that "Beethoven's Sonatas...are by no means daily companions" when compared to the likes of the "Old Folks at Home," a tune that she could not get out of her head. Notions of erudition and exclusivity increasingly impinged upon the experience of art music performance making this brand of music less attractive than popular songs and the musicians who performed them.²²

Music, like religion, reform, and domesticity, was crucial to the formulation of a northern middle class ideology in the 1840s and 1850s. Flowing from city to country (with a few exceptions such as the Hutchinson Family Singers who brought them from the country to the city), the newly formed ideas were conceived to accentuate differences among disparate groups of Americans, namely the middle class and those they deemed lower. With easily accessible tunes, aural entertainment was much easier to reproduce for rural Americans than other social activities enjoyed by the urban middle class. When Mary Palmer Tyler hosted a dinner party in rural Vermont, she had to borrow extra dishes and flatware and hire two women in an attempt to replicate a cosmopolitan atmosphere. Tyler's guests escaped the scene only after suffering through a late dinner, poor service, and entertainment courtesy of a shrieking baby. Had she chosen to serve tea and cake while her visitors shared a hearty song, Tyler would doubtlessly have enjoyed more success. Vermont lacked people experienced with large soirees; so while Tyler employed two women as help, they were not as valuable as she needed them to be. Hosting elaborate parties or donning the latest fashions was difficult for rural dwellers to replicate on a scale similar to their urban equivalents due to cost and a lack of know-how. Music was less demanding since most Americans, rural and urban, had exposure to and training in music. With the opening of music stores in locations like Nashua, New Hampshire, securing the necessary piano or

guitar and some sheet music (products that were also delivered from urban shops to the countryside) was relatively simple for rural dwellers. Social gatherings surrounding music were an ideal way for rural residents to mingle in a manner consistent with their city brethren.²³

It is not surprising then that perhaps even more than their urban equivalents who always had a much wider selection of entertainment available outside of their homes, rural citizens took to music production as a social activity with a passion. When Margaret Fuller trooped through frontier regions in the summer of 1843, she was unpleasantly surprised by what she found: pianos within the most rugged of huts. Fuller was not shocked that there was music within these far off Great Lakes' communities, but rather that these families decided to lug a piano out to the middle of nowhere. She went on to suggest that since so few people knew how to tune a piano, an appropriate substitute would be the guitar, a readily portable instrument which "requires less practice, and could be kept in tune." "The piano," Fuller thought, "many carry with them, because it is the fashionable instrument in the eastern cities." Strumming a guitar would provide the women of the frontier with "all they want as a household companion to fill up the gaps of life with pleasant stimulus or solace, and be sufficient accompaniment to the voice in social meetings."²⁴

Guitars were hardly foreign to rural Americans. In 1801 Elizabeth Phelps Huntington entertained two guests who were "both very fond of musik" in her Litchfield, Connecticut, home by playing the stringed instrument while all three sang together. The very same Elizabeth Phelps had previously shied away from other forms of urban socializing; when visiting Newburyport, Massachusetts, she made an early exit from an elaborate dinner party. Music was one ritual that she accepted. Margaret Fuller attributed rural Americans'

passion for music to a desire to imitate their urban idols, but she also acknowledged that “singing in parts is the most delightful family amusement.” “I love music better than ever,” wrote New Hampshire resident Adaline Rice Parker in 1841, “We have a number of very good vocalists in Lee and Nottingham, and have had several *social sings*. I enjoyed them exceedingly.” More personal than the milieu at large parties, the intimacy of musical offerings in the home blended well with the ideal of a closely-knit community, a notion cherished in many rural regions. Music was thus one of the most quickly adopted activities of urban refinement by country dwellers.²⁵

By the 1840s experiencing music was a frequent and, at times, unsolicited event for Americans in all regions. When visiting Northampton in 1846, a sleeping Anna Quincy Thaxter was awakened in the middle of the night “by the sound of music—Up we rose, instantly and with alacrity standing at the window, listened with much pleasure to eight or nine songs from some gentlemen, who seemed to be singing for their own amusement...After all this we did go to sleep at last.” In addition to the numerous and varied musical offerings in the city’s concert halls, Lydia Maria Child reported that “during your ramble” in New York “you may meet wandering musicians...a poor Tyrolese with his street organ, or a Scotch lad, with a shrill bag-pipe.” The engagement of Americans in musical pursuits—whether the pleasant sounds of excited and probably inebriated men, a band playing for special events such as the Fourth of July or in support of political campaigns, numerous concerts of secular and sacred offerings, or the more sociable home entertainment among friends—significantly changed the face of American culture. While cities are often considered the loci for social change in antebellum society, the United States

was still a rural nation. Not until the countryside rang out with song could music be deemed a national ritual.²⁶

Anna Quincy Thaxter was born in 1825, four years before Abby Hutchinson, and grew up in Hingham and Dorchester, Massachusetts. Anna's life is fascinating as representative of one of the first generations to enjoy varied entertainments in the countryside. Like Edward Carpenter's journal, Thaxter's diary notes a profusion of leisure activities. Anna loved to visit friends, take part in card games, read, sing, play piano, and attend concerts and lyceum lectures. These activities were used to both fill Americans' free time and to break the monotony of daily tasks. Reading and sewing, often construed as solitary pursuits, were shared in communal settings by Anna, her friends, and relatives. To have a man or woman recite Shakespeare or Dickens aloud in the parlor while women were sewing was hardly unusual. One Saturday morning Thaxter visited her friend Lucy's house to read aloud from Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* while Lucy ironed. Entertainments readily available within the home developed into popular activities since they enlivened the most mundane of tasks.

Music, especially singing, was particularly well adapted for this kind of work and easily blended into domestic settings. "This evening we sang to Mr. Dafe, sewed & c.," Thaxter recorded. Music was an important part of her life. Both Anna and her friend Charlotte had taken piano lessons in the years prior to 1845 and they even had "a beautiful new piano" at their disposal. The girls' interest in music was increasingly fed by the latest developments within the popular music scene. For Anna and her rural associates, a myriad of musical events were available, yet, unlike Edward Carpenter, the Thaxter group shunned such sordid musical offerings as those presented by Greenfield's black fiddlers in their

barbershop. Anna Thaxter enjoyed only reputable entertainments and remained highly conscious of possible conflicts with her religious beliefs. When her friends and neighbors went to see Mr. and Mrs. Charles Keans's production, Anna recoiled from the invitation with uncertainty: "I did not know how I should feel about it, as I am still somewhat undecided about the theatre." The Keans were famous actors who often produced works of Shakespeare, yet the thought of going into a theatre disturbed Anna's conscience. One of the young girl's companions offered a comforting solution to the dilemma—"Mrs. Peters invited me to go and hear the Hutchinsons the next time they sang."²⁷

Anna Thaxter tracked the many musical performances of Dorchester in 1846. In January she heard William Dempster, the Scottish corollary to Englishman Henry Russell, perform "Scottish songs, very beautifully" and "enjoyed it, very much." Throughout the year she attended oratorios, parties featuring music, the opera, and the local philharmonic society. She also enjoyed the singing in church and listened to a variety of instrumentalists from children's groups to solo violinists. On one occasion Thaxter and friends went to see a group of soldiers who were camped in a nearby field. Anna wrote that she visited the military site not out of a fascination with arms, but "rather to hear the music...We were so much fascinated by the music." None of these events, however, rivaled the excitement delivered by one special concert in the fall.

In early October, Anna's friend Charlotte read aloud an account of the Hutchinson Family Singers' recent trip to England penned by Harriet Martineau. On October 24, 1846, five of Thaxter's acquaintances, including Charlotte, went to see the Hutchinsons perform. Anna, either for a lack of tickets or some other very good reason, could not attend. Greatly influenced by the press concerning the troupe, the twenty-one year old was

decidedly anxious to listen to the New Hampshire singers—"They have been treated with a great deal of attention in England, and I really want to hear them." A few weeks later Anna finally got her chance. After having tea at Charlotte's home, Anna Thaxter accompanied a group to town to see the famed musicians. "It was a beautiful, warm, moonlight evening, and the music was delightful," scribbled an exhausted Anna, "Abby Hutchinson is as simple and natural as possible."²⁸

The concert had a lasting effect on the Thaxter group. A month later Anna and friends "practised 'Excelsior'" in the forenoon. This song, with lyrics based on a poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and with music composed by Judson Hutchinson, was one of many Hutchinson Family Singers' selections available from the publishing firm of Firth and Hall. During the musicians' tour of England, Charles Sumner reported to Longfellow, the Hutchinsons' "Anti-Slavery songs commended them; but yr Excelsior was more popular than all else." Thaxter's reaction to the Dorchester performance exhibits how well newspaper and journal coverage of the entertainers worked hand in hand with their performances. The end result was a 38 cent sheet music purchase from the Hutchinsons (see fig. 6). Live performances of the Hutchinsons helped advertise their sheet music; sales of their music personalized the cultural experience, allowing people to bring a piece of the Family Singers home, and furthered the connection of antebellum Americans to music. The success of this marketing strategy undoubtedly pleased the singers and their publishers.²⁹

As soon as the Hutchinsons became fashionable in 1843, publishers quickly scooped up the rights to their music. Oliver Ditson, one of the premier music publishers of the nineteenth century, first met the Hutchinson Family Singers in September of 1842. Ditson started his business in 1835 and by 1877 had bought out three of his major competitors,

HUTCHINSON FAMILY.

1. Out where we were born.	ct. 38 nett.	2. Go call the Doctor, or Anti-Calomel.	ct. 25 nett.
3. Excelsior	38 "	4. Cape Ann	25 "
5. Mother's Bible.	38 "	6. Soldier's Funeral.	50 "
7. Vesper Song at Sea.	25 "	8. Vulture of the Alps.	38 "
9. Axes to grind.	25 "	10. Were a cutting.	25 "
11. We are happy and free.	25 "	12. Our Father's Hearth.	56 "

NEW YORK

PUBLISHED BY FIRTH & HALL 111, FRANKLIN ST.
& FIRTH, HALL & FOND 239 BROADWAY.

Figure 6
PRICE LIST FOR HUTCHINSON FAMILY SINGERS' SHEET MUSIC

William Hall & Son, J. L. Peters, and Firth, Son & Co. Both Ditson and his son Charles Healy, who eventually took over after his father's death, were philanthropists held in high esteem by their employees and welfare organizations. This may account for some of Oliver Ditson's attraction to the reform singers from New Hampshire. No matter what the circumstance behind their initial meeting, the Family Singers could not have established a relationship with a more successful music firm. When Charles Healy Ditson died in 1929, he had amassed a fortune of close to seven million dollars—an amazing figure considering his wealth was calculated in 1931, two years after the great stock market crash, and the bulk of his estate was tied to securities.

Publishers like Boston's Oliver Ditson were quick to track their customers' latest fancy by following the trends of the music scenes in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia very closely. They knew that nothing sold sheet music better than the hubbub surrounding live performances. Between singing at antislavery meetings and high profile urban shows, the Hutchinsons created an incredible buzz. This was why, with the exception of "Get Off the Track!," the group's music was sought after by several publishers. Ditson, Firth & Hall, Henry Prentiss, G. P. Reed, Steven W. Marsh, A. P. Ordway, C. Holt, Jr., Jacques & Brother, and Wm. H. Oakes were some of the publishers who worked with the Hutchinson Family Singers during the 1840s. A few years into their career, a single performance of a piece would prompt a publisher to boldly print "AS SUNG IN THE CONCERTS OF THE HUTCHINSON FAMILY" on the cover to boost sales. A poem by Mary Howitt to honor the New Hampshire singers was even reformulated as a song by T. Bircher and published in Boston under the title "Band of Young Apostles, A Poetic Address to the Celebrated

Hutchinson Family.” In a time when the consumption level of Americans was increasing, the marketability of the Hutchinson name was widely acknowledged and exploited.³⁰

Little is known of the group’s contracts with publishers and, unlike their concert receipts which were often detailed in their journals, their income from music sales remains a mystery. In the years following the break up of the original Hutchinson Family Singers, Asa Hutchinson kept an active account with Oliver Ditson to publish new works. In 1864 Asa arranged a contract for the sentimental ballad “Tenting on the Old Camp Ground.” Ditson wrote to Asa, “We will allow you 2 ½ cents per copy on all copies sold + supply you with copies you want to sell at your concerts for 8 cents per copy.” With little to help calculate the number of pieces sold, there is no way to estimate how much either Asa or Ditson profited from their relationship. It must not have been a poor arrangement for the publisher as he urged Asa to “send on the ‘Stripes + Stars’ + the other songs you refer to as fresh + new...will publish + allow you the same copyright as on ‘Tenting on Camp.’” Asa’s arrangement in the 1860s most likely shared many characteristics with those negotiated by the Hutchinson Family Singers in the 1840s.

Once their reputation was established in 1843, the covers of the Hutchinsons’ musical offerings featured elaborate lithographs (see fig. 7 and fig. 8). Fans of the Family Singers could purchase Oliver Ditson’s copy of “The Old Granite State” in 1843 for a pricey 50 cents or settle for a plainer cover from Jacques & Brother for the same price. Either way the Hutchinsons’ listeners could take the music of the Hutchison Family Singers’ home to duplicate the efforts of their much loved entertainers. The sheet music purchase provided the Hutchinsons’ admirers with both a blueprint of the group’s sound and a decorative piece to adorn their parlor. In most cases, the sheet music covers illustrated the entertainers



Entered according to Act of Congress in 1843, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the Southern District of New York.

Figure 7
THE OLD GRANITE STATE
(New York: Jaques & Brothers, 1843)

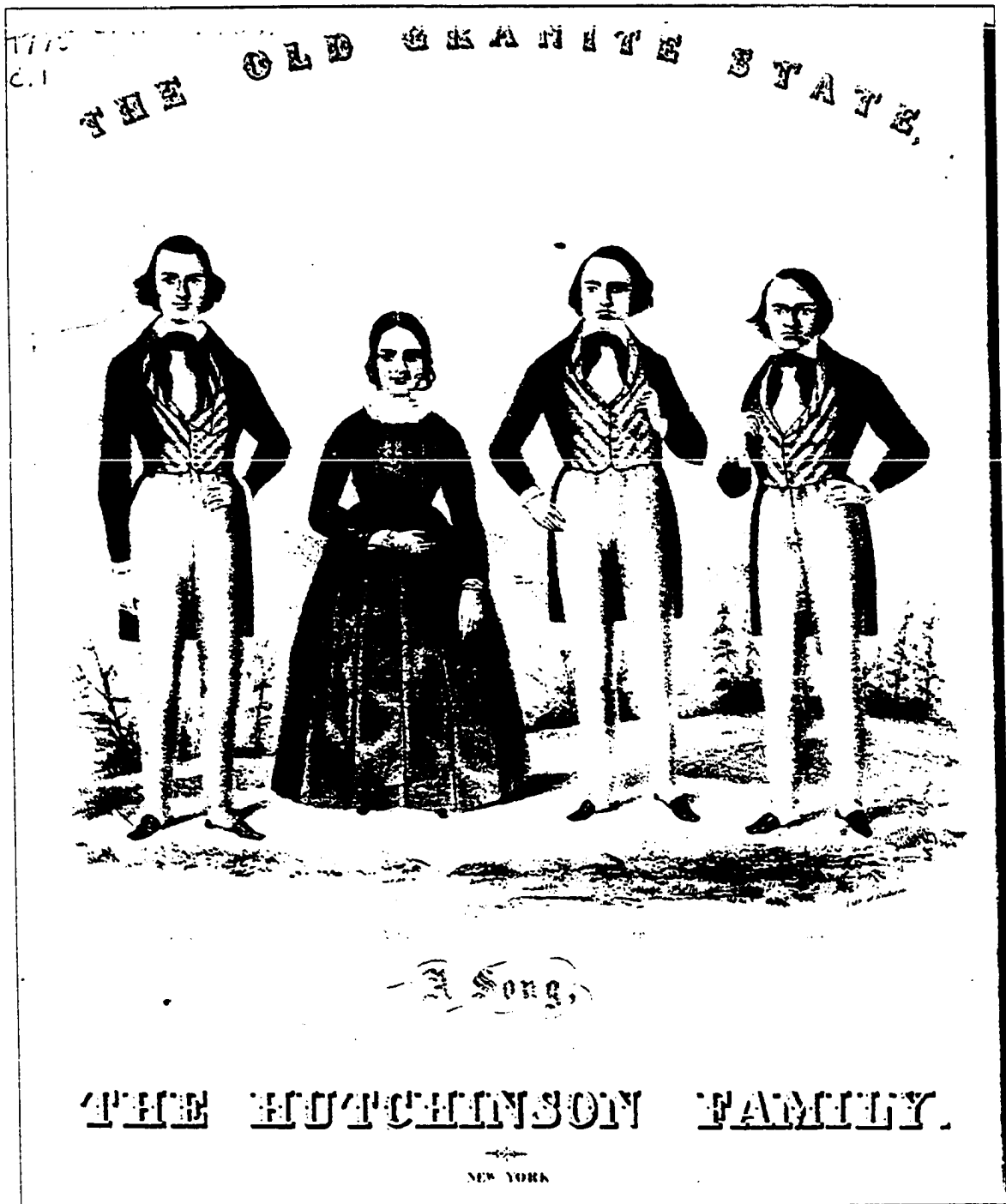


Figure 8
THE OLD GRANITE STATE
Cover with Lithograph
(1843)

themselves. An 1847 announcement in *Godey's Lady's Book* broadcast that a piece of "new music" called "The Spider and the Fly, with a portrait of Abby Hutchinson" was available from publisher Charles Holt, Jr., in New York (see fig. 9). Antebellum sheet music functioned much as modern-day posters and recordings by generating a visual and aural identification with the artist; the proliferation of sheet music guaranteed that the culture of antebellum America was visible and readily heard.³¹

THE CREATION OF A THRIVING CULTURAL BUSINESS that covered everything from novels to music developed upon a set of ideas which allowed certain Americans, who had been previously described as "people of the middling rank," the "middling ranks," and the "middle condition of mankind," to identify themselves as a middle class. The ideals espoused by many songs of the age shaped and bolstered these notions which influenced the northern middle class to bring sheet music into their homes. The Hutchinson Family Singers' realized the height of their fame from 1844 through 1849 by appealing to ideals held by a broad spectrum of listeners beyond those concerned with reform. No matter how influential antislavery advocates became during the 1840s, these reformers never received the support of an overwhelming majority, not even within New England. Reform was an important part of middle class life in antebellum America, but it did not speak to the largest portion of the northern middle class. Outside of the worlds of temperance and antislavery, the New Hampshire vocalists played to values even more central to their middle class listeners. The group built upon their reform successes by singing about the sanctity of the home, the sacredness of children, and the wonders of the sublime. All this was accomplished on stage without the hypocrisy and absurdity which many music lovers found

THE SPIDER AND THE FLY,



A COMIC SONG.

as sung with rapturous applause, by

MISS ABBY J. HUTCHINSON.

THE WORDS BY

JESSE HUTCHINSON, JR.

THE MUSIC ARRANGED AND ADAPTED

BY

Price 25 Cts. Sold.

S. O. DYER.

PUBLISHED BY CH. HOLT, JR. 156 FULTON ST. NEW YORK.
Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1847 by S. O. Dyer, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the Southern District of New York.

Figure 9

THE SPIDER AND THE FLY
(New York: Ch. Holt, Jr., 1847)

in singers and musicians trained in Europe. The Hutchinsons did not grimace or create any exaggerated facial expression during performance. Audiences found them natural, simple, and sincere, traits required to appeal to a broad base of Americans. The *Salem Register* perfectly summarized their appeal: "The Hutchinson Family are exactly what Americans—the children of a young, bold republic—ought to be; full of fresh, original character; free from conventionalities, whether of society or of opinion; vigorous in intellect, ardent in spirit; and combining, with all the simplicity and tenderness of the child, the wisdom and expansive views of the man."³²

Efforts to reach a broad range of listeners began when the Hutchinson Family Singers performed their "family song," Jesse, Jr.'s, "The Old Granite State," in 1843. This piece not only celebrated the Hutchinsons' association with the sublimity of alpine life and "their wild mountain singing" that resulted, it evoked a fondness for home and family. The song provides a detailed family history, explaining that the siblings had "eight other brothers, and of sisters, another" and that the Hutchinson family totaled fifteen including their parents. Lest the audience presume that the group was a collection of rebellious children, the singers explained "We have left our aged parents" and "We obtained their blessing and we bless them in return." In case it wasn't clear precisely whom the Hutchinsons were talking about the song named each Hutchinson child and repeated the lines "We're the sons of Mary, /Of the tribe of Jesse, /and we now address ye, /With our native mountain song." The repetitious reference to family and their inspirational upbringing within the backwoods of New Hampshire spoke to the core values of many Americans. The "Old Granite State" became so well-known that by the 1850s a collection from George Clark listed the Hutchinsons' song as the tune for several songs such as

“We’ve Had a Cordial Greeting” and “We’re for Freedom Though the Land.” Rather than list “The Old Church Yard,” the Second Advent melody that the Hutchinsons’ borrowed, Clark saw fit to name the composition of the Hutchinson Family Singers instead. The piece composed by Jesse Hutchinson was so cherished that some believed it to be a “national possession” and even proposed it for the American national anthem.³³

While music was only a sign of middle class identification, the home was the cornerstone of the antebellum middle class. The Hutchinsons’ ability to evoke a serene and proper home life enhanced their popularity. Reverend W. W. Satterlee’s funeral oration for Elizabeth Chase Hutchinson, Asa’s wife, typifies this kind of domestic concern: “Home is the rock upon which the social superstructure must rest; we measure a nation’s social life by its home life, and we estimate home life by the elevation, or degradation, of woman.” The home was the starting point for any discussion of antebellum society and women ruled over most household activities. Through the exaltation of women, the American middle class established limits between itself and other classes and began to understand their homes and activities as distinctive. Any disruption of this righteous domestic life, it was held, would corrupt the nation.

Publications such as Catherine Ward Beecher’s *Treatise on Domestic Economy* and Andrew Jackson Downing’s *Cottage Residences* reorganized antebellum domestic space to accommodate the new vision of home life and leisure. The interior of a home was developed into a sphere of contentment and emotional fulfillment. A large parlor placed prominently in the front of the house was the main room for entertainment and socializing, while the kitchen and pantry greatly removed scenes of domestic work to the back. Judged by size, the kitchen and the parlor, the largest rooms in almost all plans, were central to the

function of the home. The sanctification of the home was reinforced by architectural pattern books, decorating manuals, descriptions in sentimental fiction, and also popular magazines such as *Godey's Ladies Book* which began to publish house plans and sketches in 1847.³⁴

While both men and women were active in the parlor, it was women who bore the brunt of organizing a family's leisure environment and activities. From pieces of sheet music on display next to a hand-colored print torn from *Godey's* to singing while sewing and passing the time entertaining guests on the piano, women played a large role in parlor than men. It is no surprise then that women became significant cultural consumers during the 1840s and that cultural products from novels to music often targeted women. While the three handsome Hutchinson brothers held a certain appeal to their female listeners, Abby Hutchinson elicited more response from antebellum women. The young singer appealed to women through her embodiment of sentimental womanhood.

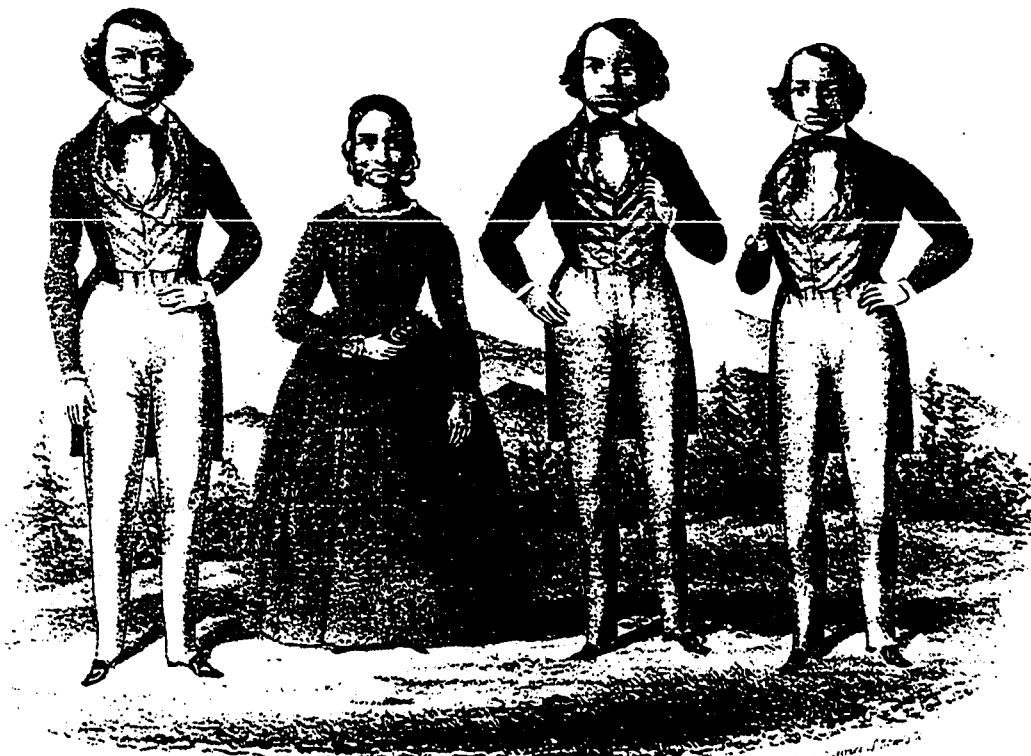
When Anna Quincy Thaxter stated that "Abby Hutchinson is as simple and natural as possible," she authenticated the female vocalist's stage presentation. Clearly Abby personified the values and manners required to gain public respect. All of Abby's actions, from her singing and her walk across the stage to her style of dress, were devoid of the disingenuousness of which European-trained musicians were often accused. "She was simplicity itself and totally unspoiled by admiration and applause which her touching singing brought forth," remembered one biographer. Abby awed her fans with the impression that she was open, honest, and that she had nothing to hide; she was the quintessential middle class woman. An 1844 description of Abby connected her life to that of her typical female listener: "She employs her time in reading, studying, sewing, or housework, as inclination

or convenience may dictate; and she is as much at home in either of these, as in charming an audience of thirty-five hundred people." What *Arthur's Lady's Magazine* did not relay was that Abby was really not like other middle class women. The vocalist was home for less than two months of the year and she was a public figure.³⁵

A true heroine to her female fans, Abby's personification of the "sentimental style" was based in a notion that valued simplicity for its believed link to what was natural and genuine. Depictions of Abby in Hutchinson Family Singer sheet music always portrayed her in self-effacing garb that was most popular in her day. Her dresses were drawn out, slender at the waist, and ballooned with fabric over her hips creating the illusion that her upper body sat atop a cushiony platform (see fig. 10) Abby's appearance gave her listeners the insight they needed into all of her character. From her clothes alone, antebellum audiences felt they could judge whether or not the sweet words coming from the singer were sincere. In the end, most marveled about every part of Abby's presentation. The *Philadelphia Citizen* did not know what to admire most about this Hutchinson woman debating between "the richness and sweetness of her voice," "her perfectly easy, simple unaffected manner," and "her modest and tasteful costume." In the end the decision was a cinch: "Even the would-be-fashionables, who think they must applaud the protracted trills of an Italian screamer, have some chords of humanity left, that will vibrate strains responsible to the melting plea of Abby as she so sweetly and feelingly sings."³⁶

Abby's sentimental manner also had an allure for men. Antebellum men were drawn to the Hutchinson Family Singers because of the moral elevation they thought Abby radiated. This righteous sparkle was a trait that every pious woman brought to American life, but as a woman in the public's eye, Abby reached more people than the average

SONGS OF THE



1843

HUTCHINSON FAMILY.

1. Out where we were born
2. Excelsior
3. Mother's Bible.
4. Vesper Song at Sea
5. Away to grind
6. We are happy and free

38 net.	2. Go call the Doctor, or Anti-Colonel.	25 net.
38 -	4. Cape Ann	25 -
38 -	6. Soldier's Funeral.	50 -
25 -	8. Vulture of the Alps	25 -
25 -	10. Were a cutting.	25 -
25 -	12. Our Father's Hearth	25 -

NEW YORK

Figure 10
HUTCHINSON FAMILY SINGERS' SHEET MUSIC COVER FROM 1843

American woman. Men were key to the group's popularity because in many ways they functioned as a gatekeeper, especially in rural communities still unsure about the respectability of entertainments. Early in the Hutchinsons' career it was Abby's womanly aura and the respectable showing of the singers at a first concert that had attracted only male listeners that convinced the townspeople of Hanover that the Hutchinson Family Singers' performances were decent enough for women to attend.

The Hutchinson brothers' decision to include their sister in the ensemble accentuated her moral womanhood by placing her on stage next to three men. In the eyes of their listeners, Abby was clearly the group's moral foundation. One article declared after hearing Abby sing: "Every one who came into her sphere of influence was elevated and refined." After a Thanksgiving visit by the Hutchinsons to a New York prison, one inmate said: "If we had been devils, and Abby had come along with us, she would have made us wish to become angels." Cassius Clay, a Kentucky antislavery advocate, told Abby that her voice was "more eloquent than speech in freedom's cause." The maturing Hutchinson woman fascinated many men seeking moral redemption and the fact that she was unmarried only enhanced her charm.

No one demonstrated the male fixation with Abby better than Ludlow Patton. Patton was the son of eminent minister William Patton, one of the founders of New York's Union Theological Seminary. Ludlow was trained for the gospel ministry but chose instead a career in business that culminated with a seat on the New York Stock exchange and his own firm, Ludlow Patton & Co. An eighteen year-old Patton first heard the Hutchinson Family Singers in May of 1843 when Abby was a few months from her fourteenth birthday. Ludlow recalled: "I was thrilled throughout that afternoon by their singing and always,

thereafter, embraced every opportunity to hear them sing.” His infatuation with the group, and with Abby in particular, made him compulsively clip every newspaper article on the group that he could find, a collection still extant at Milford’s public library. Ludlow followed the Hutchinsons as often as his job permitted and eventually his devotion paid off. The young man, no doubt spared the status of a crazed groupie by his wealth, wound up marrying Abby Hutchinson.³⁷

While critical to the public appeal of the Hutchinson Family Singers, Abby was not solely accountable for the group’s success. She was an important piece; perhaps the keystone in the entertainers’ arch. But, at their best, the Hutchinson Family Singers were a collective production that supplied their listeners with a “perfect sense of propriety which they exhibit in all their demeanor.” A quick note in *Godey’s Lady’s Book* from 1844 showcased the vitality of the ensemble: “They excel in the singing of simple ballads, which they sing in such perfect harmony...that there seems among them but one voice, one heart, one soul.” The Hutchinsons’ uncanny ability to appear as a harmonious entity on stage was attributed to their “pure moral and religious” upbringing which rightly steered the singers and their “dangerous gift of great musical talent.” Their concerts not only promoted enjoyment, but “doing good” as well. This “goodness” in the form of their moral courage in their reform work and the wholesome family life that they promoted in their music were traits that helped the Hutchinsons capture both reform and non-reform listeners.³⁸

In 1844, when the Hutchinsons visited President Tyler’s parlor, it was their communication of moral elevation and refinement in their songs and presentation that ensured their success. Had they gone to Tyler’s Washington home and sang fervently about antislavery they would have been quickly escorted out. Instead they gave a touching

performance. The singers' confusion over the adulation of proslavery advocates following their appearance at the Tyler home was a product of their own fixation with abolitionism. Their accomplishment in Washington that night had less to do with their prudence regarding antislavery than their ability to advance a set of ideals around which a new American middle class was rallying. Stated more simply, the Hutchinson Family Singers made the children of the President of the United States cry. This story begins and ends with the Hutchinsons singing one of their staples "My Mother's Bible," lyrics by George P. Morris and music by Judson Hutchinson:

This book is all that's left me now,
Tears will unbidden start;
With faltering lip and throbbing brow,
I press it to my heart.

For many generations past,
Here is our family tree;
My mother's hands this bible clasp'd,
She dying gave it to me...

The mines of earth no treasure give,
That could this volume buy:
In teaching me the way to live,
It taught me how to die.

Asa confided in his journal that this song "brought tears to the President's children relief. Their mother is dead!" John Tyler's first wife Letitia Christian died in September of 1842 and, while he would wed in June of 1844, the Family Singers arrived at the home of a Presidential widower and bachelor in February. That the modern reader or listener finds these lyrics sensationalist and perhaps trivial makes sense as does the reaction of the Tyler children and many other of the Hutchinsons' admirers who found the words to be pertinent and moving.

In April of 1845 the Hutchinson Family Singers played the same song for the women at Sing Sing prison in New York and this time John wrote that "When we sang 'My

Mother's Bible' to the female convicts, every one was in tears." One of the prison's officials, Mrs. E. W. Farnham, thanked the group in a letter to the *Tribune*:

Among the inmates of the Female Prison the deepest emotion was kindled by the beautiful song, "My Mother's Bible." The exquisite beauty of the words, with the touching character of the music, and more than all, the deep feeling manifest in the half-tremulous tones of the singers, seemed to conjure before each unfortunate creature a picture of domestic peace, holiness and virtue such as she might have participated in long years ago, but to which her heart was now a stranger...We rejoice that such influences can be brought to aid the feeble struggles after a better state we see continually made among our unfortunate people.

An observation from an 1821 book on human thinking described the sympathetic reading or listening situation well; a person follows "in imagination, the unfortunate man to his dwelling, and partakes with him and his family in their domestic distresses." In the case of "My Mother's Bible" the domestic distress was that of a grieving child. Sentimental songs spoke to the very essence of the new social order that was forming in the antebellum America. The Hutchinson Family Singers and many other popular musicians and composers accessed a virtual warehouse of commonly shared assumptions regarding family, children, and death. This allowed them to win over and affect the most extensive audience possible.³⁹

Certainly the Tyler children cried over the loss of their mother when listening to the Hutchinson Family Singers. But what about the rest of the listeners that night in Washington? Or those in Sing Sing? Or Anna Quincy Thaxter? Or the female factory worker who after hearing the troupe wrote that the Hutchinsons "discoursed sweet music, so sweetly?" These cultural consumers identified with the ideas and situations in these songs so closely that they would never have dismissed them as meaningless drivel. The *New York Tribune* suggested in 1843 that the Hutchinsons "need not fear in New-York to give us songs embodying Sentiment as well as those of a descriptive or humorous character." Sentimental

or affecting music was what many Americans wished to hear. The Hutchinsons sought sympathy for the figures in many of the songs that they performed from "My Mother's Bible" and "The Snow Storm"—about children who have lost their mother—to "The Bereaved Slave Mother" and "The Vulture of the Alps"—about mothers who have lost their children. Through songs like these the Hutchinson Family Singers broadened their audience far beyond reform-minded listeners allowing one girl in Lowell to observe: "They have become great favorites with the public."⁴⁰

The Hutchinson Family Singers accomplished all of this through a magnificent blend of sentiment, humor, sincerity, and reform. A writer for the *New Englander* once scribbled his impressions of the group during one of their performances. He was irritated by the brothers' violin playing: "Confound the fiddled! they spoil the melody. File saws while the canary pours out its rich music, if you will, but never, Oh never, scrape catgut when the human voice can be heard." He was, however, amazed by the rest of the concert:

There is an indescribable liquid sweetness in Abby's voice which is truly charming. In its softer tones it seems like the subdued and distant voice of an angel from the "upper deep." Judson sings the air, and makes the air sing Judson. He looks like a live Yankee; his face is long, thin, and closely shaved; his hair is rather long, and brushed behind his ears, which are not long; he is pressed, as are the other two brothers, in a superfine black cloth coat and pantaloons, a white vest, silk neckerchief, with collar turned down a la Byron. He is unmarried, and is now giving us the "Bachelor's Lament," amid roars of laughter. He is no mean mimic. The three brothers are now giving us a funny thing, and, by-the-bye, it is a poor thing. Some of the sourcrout school are wondering if it ain't "vulgar." John sings tenor. He looks like a sailor in a citizen's dress. He sings the pathetic and thrilling song, "The ship on fire," admirably. It is the very best thing to which I have listened for many a day. It must be heard to be appreciated. John is not quite so tall as Judson. He has dark hair; I think his eyes are blue. He wears a goatee, or tuft of dark hair under his chin.

But I must halt again for they are singing now "the Crows in the Cornfield," a piece which calls into exercise their powers of ventriloquism, and the room rings, reels, and reverberates with jollity. "I Long to be at Home" is a plaintive piece, which moistens the eyes of those who, like myself, are absent from home. Now we have "Uncle Sam's Farm" - a good song and well sung. Asa sings bass, and is not

surpassed by either of his brothers. He has a deep, full voice, that comes not only from his chest but from the heart. My impression is that he is the eldest of the group. Jesse, who is the author of several songs which this family sing, was not present - at any rate, I did not see him. There are some peculiarities which are prominently developed by this company. One is the happy and perfect blending of their voices in a confluence of sound like the mingling of waters; another is the moral courage they manifest by introducing songs in praise of the holy but unpopular reforms of the day.

The concert combined Abby's allure, Judson's humor, and John's sincerity to portray a variety of songs all performed to engage the audience with their topics. Even Judson's portrayal of a bachelor encouraged sympathy, albeit of a comical persuasion, for the bumbling spinster in the song. This particular show of the Hutchinsons impressed upon the reader some false feelings. Simply because Judson acted out the part of "The Bachelor's Lament" so effectively the journalist presumed that Judson was not married when in fact he had been married for over five years. He also relayed his guess that Asa was the oldest of the troupe. The singer's stern demeanor and deep bass voice tended to evoke visions of strength and maturity. Indeed Asa's voice was the foundation for the singers, yet he was the second youngest, only older than Abby. The writer presumed an intimate knowledge of the Hutchinsons by listening to their music. Such close identification with the Hutchinson Family Singers' music ensured many ovations.⁴¹

The Hutchinsons' ability to create sympathy for themselves and the characters in their songs hinged upon notions of family and interpersonal relations that middle class Americans cherished. The humor of Judson's "Bachelor's Lament" played upon the notion of a man having trouble finding a woman willing to marry. The song was funny because it explored one of antebellum most fundamental social expectations: young men and young women get married. The troubles of the bachelor were comical because the listeners understood that no matter how many rejections he endured, it was inevitable that the

bachelor would be a husband. "I Long to be Home" resounded with American's reverence for domestic life. In what was perhaps the easiest means to evoke sympathy in the 1840s, the piece described a person yearning to return home.

The New Hampshire musicians were not the first to profit greatly from these sentimental topics. The 1840s were filled with examples of these types of cultural productions. In musical theater, blackface minstrels, who earlier represented the voice of urban workers, significantly changed their presentation and music in an effort to reach a broader spectrum of listeners. Borrowing the term "minstrel" (as in the Virginia Minstrels) from more genteel musicians, blackface groups in the 1840s altered their names and developed a new kind of blackface performance. The Hutchinson Family Singers always exhibited a strong animus toward the blackface tradition, but the genre eventually performed the same cultural work that musicians of the middle class like Henry Russell and the Hutchinsons achieved. The most famous minstrel composer of this era, Stephen Foster, penned a captivating brand of sentimentalized music about southern life. On the plantations of Foster's songs one finds a comforting (and distorted) vision of family and home that is down-to-earth and where the slaves are contented. These visions were powerful, capable of summoning so much emotion that even Frederick Douglass, who held blackface minstrels as thieves preying upon African American life, was moved by minstrel tunes. "Ethiopian songs," Douglass said, "are heart songs, and the finest feeling of human nature are expressed in them. 'Lucy Neal,' 'Old Kentucky Home,' and 'Uncle Ned,' can make the heart sad as well as merry, and can call forth a tear as well as a smile. They awaken the sympathies for the slave, in which anti-slavery principles take root, grow and flourish."

By the 1850s sentimental songs dominated American music with an overwhelming popularity. Yet not everyone welcomed the shift of blackface performers away from their urban working class origins. As blackface minstrels moved closer toward the sentimental style, they were criticized by their racist supporters for becoming too refined. The *Spirit of the Times* declared that blackface minstrelsy should only set out to accomplish “what is the legitimate object of their costume and colored faces, namely the personification of the witty Negro.” In the end, the seemingly unquenchable thirst for sentimental cultural productions and their potential for profit guaranteed that during the late 1840s minstrel groups and family singers like the Hutchinsons performed for middle class consumers.

Much in the same way that a deluge of materials had taught Americans how to respond to the sublime in nature, the rural and urban middle class received instruction from literature and music on how to respond to sentimental discourses. Sympathy, at times expressed with tears, was a common response. As was the search for performers who were “natural” and “simple.” The widespread appeal of music and the value placed upon sentimental and domestic visions provided the opportunity for a group like the Hutchinson Family Singers to capture the northern middle class. It was no accident that the *family* singing craze burst onto the cultural scene in the decades before the Civil War. Music was an old form of communication reworked in antebellum America to convey social, religious, and political messages as well as, more subtly, issues concerning the shape and boundaries of class. In the 1840s, with the creation of a northern middle class that bridged the gap between urban and rural regions, it was middle class Americans whose music was most pervasive throughout the nation.

Appealing to listeners in the city and in the country, the Hutchinson Family Singers' music reached a large number of northern Americans from Lowell factory workers to the President of the United States. Yet their message was aimed solidly at the middle of American society. The entertainers' espousal of reform gained them their initial access to a good number of middle class listeners; their use of sentiment and domestic life in their songs further linked them to a developing set of values prized by these Americans. The Hutchinsons, raised by a family of farmers in New Hampshire, voiced the protests and concerns of the nation's middle class. Americans responded by filling their leisure and their homes with the visions and the sounds of John, Judson, Asa, and Abby.⁴²

Notes

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Part Finale



FAREWELL VOCAL CONCERT,

BY THE CELEBRATED
AEOLIAN VOCALISTS.

THE HUTCHINSON FAMILY, (THREE BROTHERS AND SISTER)

Not from the valleys of Tyrol, or the Mountains of Switzerland, but from the Hills of New England, would most respectfully announce to the Ladies and Gentlemen of Worcester, that they will give a FAREWELL Concert of

VOCAL MUSIC,

accompanied with Violins and Violoncello at

BRINLEY HALL, this, TUESDAY Eve. Sept. 6th, '42,

when they will introduce a variety of the most popular Sentimental and Secular Solos; Trios, and Quartetts, extant.

PROGRAMME

PART 1.

Quartette—Blow on! Blow on! (a Pirate's Glee)	B. F. Baker.
Trio—Lady of Beauty. (a Serenade)	Orphean.
Solo—I'm afloat, I'm afloat,	White.
Trio—To Greece we give our shining blades,	Phillips.
Quartette—Sleep on! Sleep on! (a Serenade) [by request]	Herrmann.
Solo—The Blind Boy,	Dempster.
Quartette—The Tyrolean War Song,	Rangers.
Trio—A little Farm well till'd,	White.
Quartette—Sweet beaming Hope,	Mason.

PART 2.

Quartette—Near the Lake where drooped the willow,	White.
Solo—Trip to Cape Ann,	Hutchinson.
Trio—The charms of Celia. (a Catch)	Smithers.
Solo—He was such a nice Young Man.	
Quartette—Peaceful slumbering on the Ocean,	Heath.
Solo—The Snow Storm, [by particular request]	Heath.

In the month of December, 1821, a Mr. Blake, with his wife and infant, was passing over the Green Mountains of Vermont. The drifting snow made it impossible for the horse to proceed. Mr. Blake set off on foot in search of assistance, and perished in the storm before he could reach any human dwelling. The mother alarmed, as is supposed, at his long absence, went in quest of him, with her infant in her arms. She was found in the morning dead, a short distance from the sleigh. The child was laying on her bosom, carefully wrapped in her cloak, and was still alive.

Quartette—The grave of Bonaparte, arranged for four voices, by	Hutchinson.
"He sleeps his last sleep,	
He's fought his last battle,	
No sound can awake him to glory again."	
Trio—Crows in a Corn-field,	Phillips.

(Col. LEAVITT, Agent.)

TICKETS—25 cts.—for a gentleman and two ladies 50 cts., to be obtained of M. D. Phillips, S. R. Leland, and at the Door.

CONCERT TO COMMENCE AT 8 O'CLOCK.

J. B. RIPLEY, Printer—PALLADIUM OFFICE, WORCESTER.

Figure 1

A FAREWELL PERFORMANCE FROM THE HUTCHINSON FAMILY SINGERS IN 1842

We left Boston Saturday afternoon, August 15, leaving friends all well, many of whom came to the ship's side as we lay in the harbor to bid us goodbye. We sang a song at parting in the time of "Cranbambuli" in which we bid farewell to New England and expressed a hope that we should have a safe passage in the "Great Cambria" to the Mother Country. At the close of the song the entire company who had come to bid adieu swung their hats and handkerchiefs and gave such a shout as to carry a thrill to every bosom. (My dear sister Rhoda was with the number that left us.) As soon as the shout was over it was most enthusiastically responded to by the English, Scotch, Canadians, and Yankees about our vessel. Copious gushing tears were shed on the occasion and it was of no ordinary moment the scene presented itself.

It was a bittersweet farewell for the Hutchinson Family Singers as they left the personal comfort and professional security of the United States for a tour of England and Ireland in the summer of 1845. While the group had miraculously gained the respect of American audiences despite their lack of a European pedigree, the singers were still eager to test their skills in an international venue. The Hutchinsons were hardly the first American musicians to travel to England. Black band leader and expert bugler Frank Johnson received gifts from the Queen for charming the royals and many others during his 1837-38 trip across the Atlantic. Minstrel performer Thomas Dartmouth Rice jumped Jim Crow in London in 1836 (see fig. 2) and later the Virginia Minstrels realized professional triumph even though the group dissolved during their 1842 tour of Britain. The Hutchinson Family Singers thus joined a handful of American entertainers who reversed the flow of culture from Europe (Henry Russell, the Rainer Family, Ole Bull, Jenny Lind, and many others) with their foreign tour.¹

The steamer *Cambria* first set out to Halifax and then crossed over the Atlantic to Liverpool. Traveling with the Hutchinsons was none other than their Lynn neighbor Frederick Douglass. The fugitive slave and noted abolitionist, author of the recently published *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845), left his native soil to show off his fiery oratory to antislavery brethren in England and to avoid a possible recapture, a fear that

*I come from America a long time ago,
 Since which I learn to wheel about & jump like a cat.
 You need to study Blackstone day morn & arter noon.
 No charm do I know where Chatham died & dance in the saloon.
 Wheel about & turn about & do jive so.
 Every time I wheel about I jump like Jim Crow.*



JIM CROW, the American Mountebank
 performing at the Grand Theatre.

Figure 2
 T. D. RICE IN LONDON
 (Courtesy of the Library Company of Philadelphia)

his biography stimulated. On board, Douglass and his white antislavery companion James Buffum were placed in the steerage, refused a cabin on account of Douglass's race. While the two sarcastically remarked that they were fortunate to be saving money, their station on the ship mattered little as the *Cambria* rode over the Atlantic like a "wild sea gull." Terrible seasickness struck James Buffum as well as John and Judson who were secured in cabins.²

The Hutchinsons sang quite often onboard to the delight of the other passengers. Douglass's presence among slaveholders and slavery's supporters on the *Cambria*, however, guaranteed confrontation. On the day before the end of their journey, the matter came to a head when the captain invited Douglass to speak. Considering that the very same man had placed Douglass in steerage, his offer may seem peculiar. However the captain saw fit to appease all those aboard his vessel and a significant number wished to hear the "negro abolition preacher." The captain rang the bell and Douglass made his way to the saloon deck to begin. Immediately two crowds, those who wished to hear the former slave and those who wanted to quiet him, began to jostle. As it was impossible to speak over the ensuing ruckus, the Hutchinson Family Singers stepped in and sang a song which, Douglass reported to William Lloyd Garrison, "like the angel of old, closed the lions' mouths, so that, for a time, silence prevailed." The short break from the turmoil permitted the captain to introduce the abolitionist speaker and Douglass, after thanking God for their safe passage across the Atlantic, was immediately challenged by proslavery men in the audience from Connecticut, New Jersey, and Cuba. Long after Douglass stopped trying to speak, the *Cambria's* captain had to send for the irons and threaten to lock up passengers before the crowd regained its civility.

American newspapers screamed of a "Riot on Board the *Cambria*," but Asa Hutchinson noted rather incidentally in his diary that "Frederick Douglass attempted to speak on the quarter deck but was gagged down by a few slave holders and their employees." The singers, friends of the famed orator for several years, were used to his volatile receptions. Douglass would realize a modicum of revenge when he gained admittance as a visitor to the house of Westminster in Liverpool along with some of his *Cambria* opponents who were clearly uncomfortable in his presence. In England, Ireland, and Scotland, Douglass utilized the extensive cross-Atlantic antislavery ties to secure venues. That he was met with a warm reception is not surprising. While Ireland and Scotland housed very few black residents, a robust antislavery sentiment permeated the United Kingdom.

Following Douglass's lead, the Hutchinson Family Singers blazed a path through Great Britain (see fig. 3). Playing upon the sympathies of antislavery reformers, the Hutchinsons yet again utilized the movement to promote their musical activities. A review of their first English concert found them to be "regular Yankees," "tee-totalers," and "emancipators." Relying on the same images of the group that worked so well in America, the Hutchinsons did not alter their performances for British listeners. The group also fostered the same kind of lore that had spread in America. A Manchester newspaper continued the exaggerated notion that the Hutchinson Family Singers were, at heart, farmers: "In the spring they put the seed in the ground, during the summer go out to sing, and in autumn return to gather in the harvest."

Whether singing comical pieces, sentimental songs, or crying out in the name of reform, the Hutchinsons established themselves in a major international market. Charles

GREAT MUSICAL ATTRACTION,
AT THE NEW TOWN HALL, LONGTON:

UNDER THE DISTINGUISHED PATRONAGE OF
HER GRACE THE
DUCHESS OF SUTHERLAND,
 R.E. HEATHCOTE, Esq. | C. HARVEY, Esq. | P.B. BROADE, Esq.
 T.H. PARKER, Esq. | J. HARVEY, Esq. | J.A. WISE, Esq.

MRS. E. BLOORE
 Has the honour to announce that he has succeeded in making arrangements, (at a
 great expence,) with those truly celebrated **AMERICAN VOCALISTS, the**
HUTCHINSON FAMILY,
 who will give
A GRAND CONCERT,
IN THE NEW TOWN HALL, LONGTON;
ON FRIDAY EVENING, APRIL THE 24TH. 1846;
 Reserved Seat, 5s. Front Seat, 3s. Back Seat, 2s.

A Plan of the Reserve Seats lies at Mr. WATTS'S, opposite the New Town Hall
 where places may be taken. Parties from a distance may have places secured for them
 by writing to Mr. E. BLOORE, and remitting the amount of the Tickets required.

Carriages to set down and take up at the grand entrance
 in Chancery Lane.

Kirkman's New Patent Fowls, Pianos &c. will be used on these occasions.

Tickets may be had of Mr. Watts, and Mr. Widdowson, Longton; Mr. Dean, Stoke;
 Messrs. Abbott and Son, Halesley; Mr. Brown, Burslem; Messrs. Hyde and Crew,
 and Mr. May, Newcastle; Mr. Smith, Avenham Inn; and from Mr. G. Simpson, at
 the Philharmonic and Music Repository High Street, Hanley.

Figure 3
 HUTCHINSON FAMILY SINGERS' ANNOUNCEMENT FROM 1846 FOREIGN TOUR
 (Courtesy of the Wadleigh Memorial Public Library)

Sumner relayed to Henry W. Longfellow that their friend George Putnam “heard them [the Hutchinsons] six times, & saw Dickens, Foster, Milnes & others, among their audience.” The Hutchinson Family Singers’ American origins were transparent in the Old World. “No man can listen to the Hutchinson family without feeling that America, has a national music, and none without delightedly acknowledging that ‘the family’ are happy in their illustrating of the harmony of New England.” John, Abby, Judson, and Asa earned warm salutations in Great Britain. “Right welcome is the Hutchinson Family” announced the *London Morning Chronicle*.³

Yet the Hutchinsons were not spared rather harsh criticism from British critics. Some claimed that the American family’s repertoire consisted mainly of “English compositions that had their day 20 years back,” while others found that the “Hutchinson family...certainly cannot pretend to compete with any of our most finished specimens of professional glee-singing.” The foreign reports that made it to American shores, however, celebrated the accomplishments of the Hutchinson Family Singers. There was plenty to acclaim. The group made the most of their visit, meeting English luminaries such as novelist Charles Dickens, renowned antislavery leader George Thompson, and popular authors William and Mary Howitt. By associating with famous company, the Hutchinsons enhanced their already large celebrity. The Howitts, who would prove lifelong friends, began publishing glowing accounts of Abby and her brothers in *Howitt’s Journal of Literature and Popular Progress* during the Hutchinsons’ visit to England: “they have the durability of the granite with the cordial spirit of home,” one piece proclaimed. When the Hutchinsons arrived back in America in July of 1846, they returned to a public anxious for more information about the “world” renowned Hutchinson Family Singers.⁴

Eager fans also had the opportunity to follow the Hutchinsons' journey through several letters from the group. Judson wrote to the *Lynn Pioneer* about the stark differences among classes that he discovered in Ireland and England (a theme that Asa harped upon in his private correspondence). He complained of the Hutchinsons' boat ride from London to Liverpool during which the group was surrounded by many poor Irish peasants and forced to share the open deck with animals: "Humanity was on a level with beasts,—nay not on a level;—for the horses had awnings over them, and Humanity none." Jesse, Jr., who joined the Family Singers on their voyage, wrote to the *New York Tribune's* editor Horace Greeley describing the early stages of the diseased Irish potato crop. These pieces personally informed the Hutchinsons' restless American admirers about what the siblings were seeing, doing, and thinking.

What the public never discovered was the mixed emotions stirred by the Hutchinson Family Singers' time abroad. Conquering new listeners was a tremendous feeling, but they had left many friends and family members behind. The trip was particularly difficult for John and Judson whose wives and children had remained in the United States. Asa was also anxious for he left for England in the midst of a budding romance. Aching, Asa wrote from London to his antislavery friend who was responsible for introducing the musician to his new flame: "O, don't I love the yankees? particularly the girls? God bless them more especially Lizzy. I say don't you remember how I told you once in Nantucket...how I loved Lizzy Chace? I haven't forgotten it---if you have---neither have I forgotten her---neither shall I till I forget that I exist." Born on March 14, 1828—the same day as Asa—Elizabeth B. Chace (also spelled Chase) was raised in the family of a sea captain in Nantucket, Massachusetts. She and Asa met just prior to the Family Singers trip

to Great Britain. Asa's certainty that his feelings toward Lizzie were reciprocated accentuated his worry that he had "lived so long a bachelor." The two lovers—who wed in 1847—along with John, Judson, Abby, and Jesse, Jr., delighted upon the Hutchinson Family Singers' return home in July of 1846.⁵

While Frederick Douglass had also left his wife and children behind during his trip abroad, the former slave's family reunion was particularly special upon his return. In England, Ellen Richardson led a successful campaign to raise funds to buy Douglass's freedom; as an escaped slave Douglass had remained legally bound to his owner Thomas Auld. The purchase upset many American abolitionists who denounced Douglass's and British antislavery leaders' dealing with a slaveholder. Fortunately some, including the usually fanatical William Garrison, understood the transaction was not about "trafficking with slaveholders," but securing Douglass's emancipation. The Hutchinson Family Singers delighted East Boston's wharf with "a pleasing and impressive" rendition of "Home Sweet Home" when they arrived back in the United States; Douglass, several months after the Hutchinsons, experienced a more emotional homecoming when he leapt off of the *Cambria* and rushed home to Lynn to embrace his wife and children for the first time as a free man.⁶

Douglass no longer worried about recapture, but his newly acquired liberty would always be plagued with racism. Prejudice against black Americans was so pervasive that even in Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love and a stronghold of antislavery sentiment, concerts by the Hutchinson Family Singers generated great controversy. Such was the case in 1846 when the musicians jumped back into the American limelight. In December, after a couple of performances that drew racially mixed audiences, the city's mayor informed the trustees of Musical Fund Hall that any further desegregated shows would lead to a great

riot. When the Hutchinson Family Singers caught word of the brewing situation, they flatly refused to perform for an all-white venue. The manager of Musical Fund Hall, intimidated by thoughts of an uprising, chose to close his theater to the singers. The Hutchinsons' show did not go on.

The musicians' noble stance met a hostile response. The Hutchinsons' incessant public antislavery declarations, their promotion of racial accord, and their popularity made them easy and attractive targets for proslavery and racist critics. One New York paper dubbed the singers "Garrison's Nigger Minstrels." Similar to other antislavery leaders, the Hutchinson Family Singers were visually scorned. A Philadelphia cartoon lampooned the Hutchinsons for acting as if blacks were equal to whites. The image suggests that the singing troupe's defended a bunch of unintelligent and disloyal black fans when refusing to perform for an all-white hall in Philadelphia. While Abby and one of her brothers perform in the background, a black man and a black woman, surrounded a group of disgusted white onlookers, engage in a conversation: "Dat white gal got as moss good eddication as me," says the black woman, "I tink I larn dem tunes and join the singers myself" (see fig. 4). The two talkers' conclusion that the woman is too "specatable" to sing in public clearly questions the Hutchinsons' worth and moral character, especially that of Abby. To finish the dialogue, the black woman is accused of betraying her race after she suggests that she will marry a white man.

The Philadelphia incident, which sparked the cartoon and led to much debate, is also one of the rare instances for which Abby Hutchinson's thoughts are still available. Mary Howitt, the Hutchinsons' literary friend in England, published one of the private letters that she received from the young vocalist. Written in May from Plymouth,



THE HUTCHINSON FAMILY.

"Wot you tink Missy Phillis; dat consart am berry good music?" "Berry well, Sambo. Dat white gal got moss as good eddication as me. I tink de superlatives ob her voice am berry obnoxious." "Ah, dat am de truff. Be- kase dey gib de bobbolition song dat am de reason dat de music sound so doloriferous dis ebening." "I tell you wot, Sambo, I tink I larn dem tunes and join de singers myself. Den I gib dem de rail colored sound wen I sing de same." "Phew! Missy Phillis—you aint in arnest 'bout dat—wot you want to 'spose yourself for to go 'round wid singers arter dat fashion? Young lady, like you, is too 'spectable to 'tand up dar and sing song for odder people." "Praps you is right, Sambo. Praps I better marry dat white gemman dat advertises for a wife in de Tribune. Missus tinks dat I better hab de white gemman." "Wot dat you say, Missy Phillis! You tink you stoop to hab a white man, wen dis darkey hab been payin' 'tention to you for six monfs. You is de most onscordable colored female dat I ebber seen sense Dorcas Gumbo died."

Figure 4

CARTOON FROM *TURNER'S COMIC ALMANAC FOR 1848*
(Courtesy of the Library Company of Philadelphia)

Massachusetts, where she was enrolled at the Edes Female Seminary, the seventeen year-old's correspondence spoke of Asa's recent wedding, provided updates on John, Judson, and Jesse, Jr., and begged Mary and her husband William to visit America. Most telling, however, was Abby's revelation concerning the canceled Philadelphia performances: "I suppose our English friends heard through the papers of the excitement we had at Philadelphia. We were very sorry that anything of the kind should happen, and more on account of the coloured people than for ourselves. It is so wrong that they should be excluded on account of their complexion." Speaking on behalf of the entire group, Abby backed up the Hutchinson Family Singers' public antislavery stance and righteous actions with her personal compassion for the plight of African Americans.

In 1848, the decorous and altruistic manner in which the Hutchinsons normally presented themselves was temporarily spoiled in the eyes of many abolitionists. Invited by the Board of Alderman of New York City, the Hutchinson Family Singers found themselves involved in a tribute to Henry Clay. The very same man that the group once ridiculed in "Get Off the Track!" was now the object of the Hutchinsons' welcome. Jesse Hutchinson, Jr., prepared a special song for the occasion, a greeting called "To Harry of the West": "Come, brothers, rouse, let's hurry out / To see our honored guest;/ For lo! in every street they shout,/"Brave Harry of the West!" On a personal level the Hutchinsons' justification for their presence at the Clay function was similar to that of the evening spent in the parlor of then President Tyler. Although the New Hampshire vocalists did not sing their most fervent abolitionist tunes during the course of the day, the group did perform a number of songs, including "The Old Granite State" with its call for "the equal rights for all," that they felt advanced the cause of black emancipation. While a New York paper

interpreted the Hutchinson Family Singers' work that day as an antislavery slap in the face for the feted guest, others began to question the musicians' commitment to reform.

That the Hutchinsons may have sung in support of abolitionism could not override the fact that they sang in support of Henry Clay for Wendell Phillips, William Lloyd Garrison, and the rest of the antislavery vanguard. Frederick Douglass roared:

We find it hard to fancy the angel-hearted Abby singing the praise of a notorious trafficker in human flesh. We charitably believe that her heart was not there, and if it was, the angel was not. We have frequently seen her and her younger brothers strongly tempted to violate their principles, and have witnessed with heartfelt pleasure their calm and beautiful meekness, as they have turned to the infernal imps, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" and we fondly hoped they would hold out to the end. As they commenced in the spirit, we hoped they would end in the same; but alas! a love of popularity has triumphed over their love of principle. Their moorings are loosed, and there is no telling where they will stop.

The debate within the antislavery movement raged between fervent support and condemnation of the Hutchinsons' deed. For every person who found the Hutchinson Family Singers' "act so derogatory to their anti-slavery reputation" there was another who saw the Clay performance as "an opportunity to try and obtain that influence on the side of freedom." Unfortunately for the singers, the leaders of the antislavery movement appeared to be the people most offended by their actions in New York City.⁷

Resolving the situation was no mean political feat. The "Dictators at 21 Cornhill" (the address of the American Antislavery Society), likely jealous of the Hutchinson Family Singers' enormous wealth and influence, tried to bring the entertainers back under their reins. The organization demanded that they "through some appropriate medium, frankly and unhesitatingly express their regret." Wishing to save their friends' and fellow-reformers' anger, the Hutchinsons publicly atoned at an antislavery gathering in New York. Henry Wright reported the event in a letter to some of his Irish friends: "...I am in the

Minerva Rooms, on Broadway, in New York city, the commercial emporium of the Western continent. I am sitting by a table, in front of a platform, on which sit Wm. L. Garrison, as President of the American Anti-Slavery Society, Francis Jackson, Wendell Phillips, and others. The hall is full, and we are in a most exciting and pleasant scene. I can term it nothing less than 'The Hutchinsons' Repentance.'

At the meeting, the Hutchinsons, in true Family Singer fashion, surprised those in attendance with an impromptu song for emancipation. William Garrison responded to their offering: "Do they wish us to take this as evidence of their repentance? Are they sorry for what they have done?" And, "If they are sorry for the deed, we shall hear from them again." The Hutchinson Family Singers did not sing again that afternoon or evening. Allowing the anticipation to build, the group waited until the next day, May 17th, 1848, to sound out "their eulogy of Henry Clay." Remorseful over their implicit support of Clay, the Hutchinson Family Singers, the favorite vocalists of the antislavery movement, were welcomed back with open arms; "Anti-slavery claims them for her own, and should and will, I trust, have them to be *all* her own."⁸

The Hutchinsons had survived yet another outcry, but their continued success began to erode the groups' dynamic. As the stakes seemed to increase with enlarged audience size (occasionally over a thousand listeners at a time), the Hutchinsons, who previously bickered as all siblings do, fought more often. Years later Abby told Mary Howitt that "we sang like angels sometimes on the stage, and then rushed off and say to each other—why didn't you sing better, and some other sharp speeches which singers and sinners only know how to make." The infighting worsened after arriving home from their foreign tour in 1846 and then, quite suddenly, Abby's personal life upset the performers' career.

On February 28, 1849, Abby Hutchinson married Ludlow Patton in a ceremony in New York City. The Hutchinson Family Singers' many fans and the press mourned this momentous event as the loss of sweet, innocent Abby. "ABBY HUTCHINSON NO MORE" ran in a New York newspaper as if the nineteen year-old singer had died. "This nest of brothers, with a sister in it," reported *The National Era*, "has been robbed." William Lloyd Garrison's commentary was more nonchalant than most: "Thanks for a slice of the wedding cake, and our best wishes for the happiness of the parties." The overall dramatics displayed by a majority in the media, however, were appropriate. Not only was the "American Jenny Lind" no longer single, but her union with Ludlow basically assured an end to the Hutchinson Family Singers.⁹

The marriages of John, Judson, and Asa did not have the same effect on the group as the marriage of their little sister Abby. Married antebellum men were not required to remove themselves from public life; in 1841 a resilient seventy-four year old John Quincy Adams declared that "while a remnant of physical power is left me to write and speak, the world will retire from me before I shall retire from the world." Abby Hutchinson did not have this option. She was expected to "retire to the shades" and "happiness...of private life." Her husband wrote to Frederick Douglass at *The North Star*: "I want Abby as my private companion, and not as an amusement for the crowds." Patton's feelings were not rantings from an overprotective spouse, they represented a normal expectation for recently wed women—Abby was supposed to retire from public performance. Abby would have faced reprimand had she chosen to stay on with her brothers. A little more than a decade after Abby's marriage, the media mocked Mary Todd Lincoln for refusing to retire to "private womanhood" following her husband's assassination. Abby wished to avoid a similar

fate. She understood that by marrying, she embarked on a new phase in life. A journalist summed up Abby's situation when he hoped that the vocalist's "musical powers, sweet face, and modest deportment, will descend to another generation."¹⁰

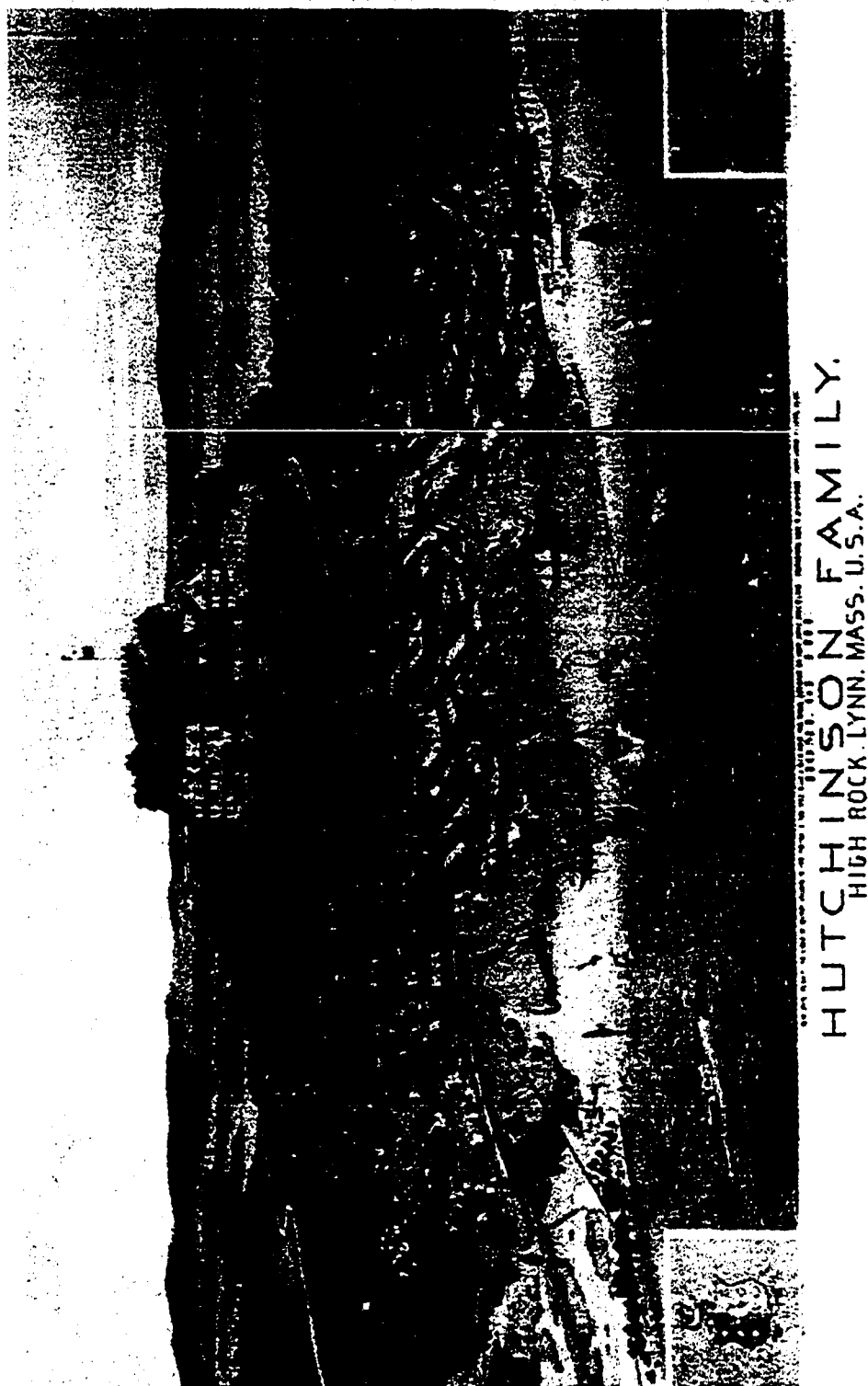
Marriage was the driving force behind Abby's retirement from the group, but Frederick Douglass, acting as a close family friend, also informed the *North Star's* readership of Abby's long time affliction with a severe illness. Further details were not disclosed, but Abby convalesced enough by the fall of 1849 to move from her Milford home for treatment at a water-cure establishment. Apparently the relocation worked because in 1850 the young singer took the stage again with her brothers. At this time, however, the group's dynamic was exceedingly fragile. Despite a few public appearances with her siblings, Abby's retirement was real. She rarely performed with the troupe after 1849 and her publicly broadcast 1851 message professionally disassociated herself from the singing troupe and ended any lingering skepticism about her retirement.

As Frederick Douglass had predicted, the brothers presented "a lonely aspect" without their sister. The three, especially John and Asa, lost patience with one another easily. Meanwhile newspaper reports throughout the 1850s record Judson's severe bouts of mental illness. The Hutchinson's celebrity which had shone so brightly was beginning to fade. One result of their decline was that the Hutchinson family became more guarded about their private lives. This led to some confusion in 1851 regarding the death of Jesse Hutchinson. Initial reports listed Jesse, Jr., the famous composer of the Hutchinson Family Singers most popular songs, dead, but it soon was corrected: "Jesse Hutchinson, father of the Hutchinson Family—not the younger Jesse, as incorrectly stated in the papers—died Sunday, at Milford, N.H." Jesse passed in February at the age of seventy-three and,

unfortunately, the newspapers' predictions of tragedy for the family of Jesse, Jr., were not that far off.

In September of 1851 Susanna Hartshorn Hutchinson, Jesse's wife of fifteen years, also died. The experience sent Jesse, Jr., searching for answers to heal the pain in his life. He settled on traveling as the manager of a family singing group called the Alleghanians. Jesse became involved in a lot of speculation on his trip to California as the Alleghanians' manager; his name was linked to endeavors such as "Dr. Robinson's remedy for the fever and ague" as well as the production and sale of "unbolterd (or Graham) flour." On his return to Lynn, Jesse stopped over at the Cumminsville Water Cure in Ohio to visit Judson whose "state of raving insanity" following a Hutchinson Family Singer concert in Cleveland landed him in this establishment. On May 20, 1853, Frederick Douglass recorded that "Jesse Hutchinson died yesterday at a Water Cure establishment near Cincinnati." Stricken by an unknown disease probably picked up during his travels, Jesse departed while visiting his brother. The Hutchinson family had lost one of its most creative sons. In October, the Hutchinsons moved Judson, still "in a state of insanity," from Ohio back east with the intention of placing him in the Insane Asylum located in Worcester, Massachusetts.¹¹

Jesse's passing did not prevent the trio from an ambitious concert campaign. Asa and John purchased their older brother's property on Lynn's High Rock for \$6,700 (see fig. 5) and then, provided Judson was in the right frame of mind, continually kept the Hutchinson Family Singers on tour. While the trio certainly missed their sister's singing on stage, their fame, which had reached such great heights in the 1840s, assured them a positive reception as long as they lived. In Pittsburgh a man reported: "This musical trio have taken our city by storm. Their concerts have attracted hundreds who are not often



HUTCHINSON FAMILY.
HIGH ROCK, LYNN, MASS. U.S.A.

Figure 5
JOHN HUTCHINSON'S HOME AT HIGH ROCK, LYNN, MASSACHUSETTS (1881)

seen in a concert-room, and their success has created quite an excitement in our musical circles.”¹²

Years of suffering from mental anguish caught up with Judson Hutchinson in 1859. Winter in New England is often bleak and a relentless cold spell was hampering John’s efforts to fix up one of the cottages at High Rock. Judson was visiting Lynn, and John, concerned about his brother’s recent depression, tried to preoccupy him with tasks such as building a fire to dry out the newly plastered walls. His effort to stave off Judson’s mental descent failed. On Tuesday afternoon, January 11, as the Hutchinsons sat down for tea, they noticed that Judson was missing. After lowering himself into the cold and unfinished basement of his small house next door, John discovered Judson: “I could see his form, apparently standing as though he was in one of his moody fits of abstraction. As I got within a few feet of him I saw a line about his neck.” “Alas!,” stated the *Liberator*, “for this sad termination of his earthly existence” when announcing the “Melancholy Suicide.” The *New York Times* avoided any mention of the cause of death choosing instead to simply announce the “Death of Another Member of the Hutchinson Family.”¹³

Judson’s demise completed the split of the Hutchinson Family Singers that began with Abby’s departure. By 1857 John and Asa each believed that their wives could take over Abby’s long vacant spot in the troupe. But when the two could not agree on which woman was best suited for the spot all three brothers embarked on performances independent of each other (see figs. 6, 7, 8). Asa and John developed the more noted spin offs of the Hutchinson Family Singers with their wives and children. While the three brothers still appeared in concert together, the Tribe of Asa and the Tribe of John

GONGOLARI!

"Music hath charms to sooth the savage breast,
Bend a rock, or calm a hornet's nest."

THE ORIGINAL

JUDSON J. HUTCHINSON

—AND—

KATE H. HUTCHINSON!

—OF THE—

HUTCHINSON



FAMILY!

With the Accomplished Pianist and Tenor,

WILLIAM V. WALLACE,

Would most respectfully say, that they are coming this way, and on a certain day or evening, intend to
play and sing.

At

Hall,

to give a poor, and all who listen to this

Figure 6

AD FOR JUDSON HUTCHINSON AND FAMILY FROM THE 1850S

HUTCHINSON FAMILY!
"TRIBE OF ASA,"
 IN THEIR
22d ANNUAL TOUR!

Respectfully announce to their friends and patrons, that they will give ONE

CONCERT
AT THE TOWN HALL, MILLVILLE,
Tuesday Evening, Feb. 3, 1863.

ALL WILL APPEAR:

Asa, Lizzie, Abby, Freddy and Little Densett
 When they will sing their New Songs of
PATRIOTISM, UNION, FREEDOM, &c.

AMONG WHICH ARE

The Song of Greeting.....
The Stripes and Stars.....*Rosa Dean Packer*
"Fling out to the glad winds, the Red, White and Blue."

The Seasons.....
Whistling Chorus.....
Over the River.....
The Cumberland.....*Prof. Lowmell*
*"At anchor in Hampton Roads we lay,
 On board the Cumberland Sloop-of-War," &c.*

NEW VERSION DIXIE'S LAND—"Brave Boys are They."
*"Fight on, Brave Soldiers, till our Flag
 Waves over every Rebel rag," &c.*

NEW BALLAD—Your Mission.....
*If you cannot in life conflict prove yourself a Soldier true,
 When battle field is silent, you can go with careful tread,
 You can bear away the wounded, you can cover up the dead.*

KINGDOM COMING—in the Language of the Contrabands
"De whip is low, de handcut broken, &c."

"ABRAHAM'S DAUGHTER; or, Raw Recruits."
(Song by the Young Hutchinsons, is character.)

SONG—"Can I Go, Dearest Mother?"
The Northern Young Loyalist's Appeal to Enlist.
*Let the doubting heart be still,
 We must conquer or must perish—
 We must conquer, and we will*

The Ship of State.....
*"What Ship is this so proudly sailing by?
 'Tis the good Ship Constitution, Hallelujah."*

Spirit of '62.....
SCOTCH SONG—"Logie O'Buchan".....

SAXE'S HUMOROUS SONG—How Goes the Money?
Explanatory Views of the cause of the appearance of the
AURORA BOREALIS.

Hannah's at the Window, Binding Shoes.....*Lucy Landon*
The Little Bird Song.....

NEW QUARTET—"Emancipation's Coming"
Closing with the new Union Song,
**"We'll Rally 'Round the Flag, Boys; or,
 Battle Cry of Freedom."**

ADMISSION, 25 CENTS
Children, 15 Cents.
 Doors open at 6½. To commence at 7½ o'clock.
S. C. CHASE, Agent.

NO POSTPONEMENT
J. S. Job Print, Ledger Buildings, Phila.

Figure 7
 AD FOR THE TRIBE OF ASA
 (Courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society)

CONCERT!

"We come again with Songs to greet you!"

JOHN W. AND FANNIE B.

— WITH —

**HENRY AND VIOLA
HUTCHINSON**

— OF THE —

HUTCHINSON FAMILY!

(From "Old High Rock," Lynn, Mass., formerly "Old Granite State.") respectfully announce to their many friends and the public generally, of this place and vicinity, that they will give their first and only concert this season at

Odd Fellows Hall, - - Duxbury,

On TUESDAY EVENING, Feb. 15th, 1859,

When they will present such a combination of

Musical Attraction

As cannot fail to please.—"From grave to gay, from lively to severe."

And sing you stirring measures, we'll sing you pensive strains; And sing of truth and freedom, we'll sing of hymen's choir; And sing you songs of honor, we'll sing you mournful lays; We'll sing of home and friends as dear—we'll sing of by- gone days.	And when our task is ended, we'll bid a kind adieu, Then bid to other regions, and sing our songs anew. But long will we remember the friends who greet us here— Their helpful hands, their cheering smiles, their brave hearty cheer.

Figure 8

AD FOR THE TRIBE OF JOHN

(Courtesy of the Wadleigh Memorial Public Library)

developed into the major purveyors of the Hutchinson Family Singer name. Judson's death completed the separation of the Hutchinson Family Singers into two separate troupes. In fact when Asa and his group joined up with other musicians in 1859, they would choose the Luca Family, black musicians, who had debuted at the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1853.¹⁴

In 1862, the Tribe of John (John, his wife, Fanny, and their two children, Henry and Viola) secured a certain celebrity when the group was granted permission to sing to Union soldiers during the Civil War. Lydia Maria Child wrote a glowing letter to John, expressing enthusiasm for his commitment to donate his time to the northern troops. John and his family were rather excited as well and took up their mission with verve. The only problem was that the Union Army, from the high command down to the lowest level soldier, was conflicted over the role of slavery in the nation's grand war. When the Hutchinson Family Singers (Tribe of John) performed a song set to the lyrics of John G. Whittier's "Ein Feste Burg Ist Unser Gott" which urged the end of slavery, John and his family received orders to leave. "By command of the Major General commanding U.S.A., the permit given to the Hutchinson Family to sing in the camps, and their pass to cross the Potomac, are hereby revoked," wrote Brigadier General Franklin.

John and his family did not forsake what they perceived as their mission to spread the word of freedom. Later, during Reconstruction, they played in the newly freed South for the War Department and the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands. The Tribe of Asa, not to be outdone by John's ensemble, continued their advocacy on behalf of black families during the war by performing at several benefits for African American associations based in Philadelphia. The abolition of slavery and the end of

Reconstruction took away the most salient causes for which the two brothers sang. The aftermath of war brought about a victory of sorts for the South as a spirit of reconciliation took precedence over the economic and civil rights of the recently freed men and women. The two Hutchinson brothers responded to the changed times by shifting their focus to temperance; Asa out of Hutchinson, Minnesota, and John from Lynn, Massachusetts.

Unfortunately for Asa, he had little time left to sing for reform. In 1874 Lizzie, one of the important voices in the Hutchinson Family Singers (Tribe of Asa) and Asa's wife, died. He soon remarried and made some faulty investments in Colorado silver. Early in 1884, Asa's daughter Abby Hutchinson Anderson, died from consumption at the New York home of her aunt and namesake Abby Hutchinson Patton. And in November of 1884, Asa Burnham Hutchinson died. The *Glencoe Register* recorded that "at the foot of the casket stood the old violincello that had for so many thousand times responded to the delicate touch of the fingers now stiff in death." John and Abby were now the only living members of the Hutchinson Family Singers.¹⁵

After her retirement in 1849, Abby occasionally found reason to sneak back on stage with her brothers. The vocalist felt more comfortable appearing on stage at benefit concerts such as the Hutchinson Family Singers' 1852 show on behalf of the poor in Brooklyn. Abby also agreed to sing with her brothers for profit as she did for a stretch in 1858 in New York. However the young woman's post-Hutchinson Family Singer days were not filled with reunions. She spent much of her time after the Civil War traveling the world with her husband, Ludlow, who retired from his business in 1873. When in America, Abby donated her time for the benefit of the New York's Girl's Lodging House,

attended woman suffrage conventions, and was active in Sorosis, a New York club for women founded by Jane Cunningham Croly in 1868.

Abby and Ludlow often summered at the Hutchinson homestead in Milford, New Hampshire. The old house was a Hutchinson Family Singer museum of sorts by the 1890s. Kept year round by Rhoda Hutchinson, the house was described by a visitor in 1891 as littered with "testimonials and trinkets which had from time to time come to the singers" and "also documents fast becoming discolored and mementoes whose intrinsic value has long since departed." Outside of an occasional song in a public setting, such as Abby and her brother John singing at John G. Whittier's funeral, Abby was quite content to live her final days in relative obscurity. When she died in 1892, Abby Hutchinson Patton was better known as a charitable and modest woman than as a world-renowned singer. During "Sorosis's first memorial day" in 1895, the memory of Abby they celebrated was that of a woman of privilege and culture, a far cry from the twelve-year old girl who captured the hearts of her sympathetic listeners. Ludlow Patton, the man largely responsible for providing Abby a true life of leisure, outlived his wife by fourteen years, leaving behind a sizable estate.

The last remaining member of the Hutchinsons, John, lived out his final days in Lynn, Massachusetts. Outlasting his wife, Fannie, his son, Henry, and all his siblings, John was aged and lonely at the end of the century. Always searching for the spotlight, John's death represented his final opportunity for more recognition. According to the *New York Times*, "while attempting to light a gas stove Mr. Hutchinson fell after he had opened the valve." Whether or not John chose the path of his brother Judson or suffered a heart attack

as some claimed will never be known; after October 20, 1908, the last member of the Hutchinson Family Singers was gone.¹⁶

"THE PRINCIPAL MEMBERS OF THE ORIGINAL and well known Christy's Minstrels" returned to New York from Philadelphia in 1855 to give a series of twelve "Chaste and Fashionable" concerts at 663 Broadway in Academy Hall. The entertainers were among several successful groups who furthered the transition of blackface minstrelsy from a depraved form of musical theatre to a more moral presentation. Headlining their New York program was a burlesque entitled "The Hutchinson Family." Despite the Hutchinson Family Singers' gradual decline following Abby's departure, the group was never a stranger to the city. They played many concerts, including several benefit performances for the city's charities such as the Five Points Mission. In 1855, New York audiences remained well-versed in the Hutchinson Family Singers' mannerisms and presentations, making the group an easy target for minstrel players.

Burlesque shows in antebellum America differed greatly from those staged after the Civil War. In the 1840s and 1850s burlesque was a catch-all phrase covering several types of theatrical comedy. The term did not denote the highly controversial productions featuring female performers that began in the 1860s. While the exact content of the Christy's Minstrels show is not known, it undoubtedly mocked the Hutchinson Family Singers' reform inclinations and highlighted their recent controversy over blacks in the audience in Philadelphia. Keeping with the tradition of burlesque parody, the Christy's show surely removed the Hutchinsons from their lofty post as reform musicians and rendered them in a less than beatific manner.¹⁷

At one time the Hutchinsons and blackface minstrels played to decidedly different groups of listeners. The Christy's "Chaste & Fashionable" routine, however, no longer represented the American working class origins of blackface minstrelsy. The development of a northern middle class created a great demand for sentimental and other more pious cultural productions. Blackface minstrels shaped their performances accordingly to attract more middle class consumers who had more money to spend on cultural activities. The end result was a domesticated minstrel who, in the form of sheet music, was invited inside many a parlor.¹⁸

Despite the tendency of many cultural producers to target middle class audiences, the development of a middle class culture did not represent a true consensus. Antebellum Americans never agreed upon who was best suited to market the language of sentiment. But many preferred music as a medium to deliver this message. Sentimental sympathy, the kind often evoked in the songs of the Hutchinsons, eventually functioned as a tenet of Christianity: it was inherently moral and good. By the 1850s, the peak years for sentimental culture, members of the northern middle class replaced the sanctification that they once received in church or at a revival meeting with pious cultural productions readily available in music and literature.

The two decades prior to the Civil War witnessed a massive increase in the scale and range of cultural productions. While sentimental offerings represented a significant percentage of the available cultural products, they did not speak for all Americans. And eventually the allure of sentimental cultural productions would wear thin, even for middle class Americans. In the post-war years a more theatrical culture production emerged that was less bound by the ideals of domesticity, the sentimental, and a pious cultural

consumption. Productions such as burlesque and vaudeville began to take over the popular scene. Even if the original Hutchinson Family Singers had remained together, this cultural transformation along with the emancipation that followed the Civil War would have quieted the group's once impressive resonance with their middle class listeners.¹⁹

When John, Abby, Asa, and Judson launched their career in the early 1840s, popular music, in the form of song, was emerging as a clear rival to sacred music that had dominated in the music of the northern states. By tapping into the resources of temperance and antislavery, the Hutchinsons linked themselves to organizations that wielded a certain degree of cultural authority. When Nathaniel P. Rogers wrote glowing reviews of the Hutchinson Family Singers, he authenticated their concerts for a significant number of middle class reformers. Later, more mainstream newspapers and journals such as *Godey's Lady's Book* further sanctified the New Hampshire musicians. Along with music publishers and their own songster, the Hutchinson Family utilized a vast array of media and people to spread their name and their music. Outside of their intimate connection to antebellum reform, the Hutchinsons were just like many other popular American icons who employed a variety of means to inform the public about their cultural wares.

The Hutchinson Family Singers' story unearths one path that native-born artists shaped to build a career around culture. The Hutchinsons' success followed the development of the rural and urban middle class and proves that while one of the marks of gentility was the notion of being quiet, the northern middle class did not apply this rule to music. To these cultural consumers, a sentimental song was an important part of what it meant to be a middle class American. In the 1840s by playing to ideas valued by the northern middle class, the music of the Hutchinson Family Singers significantly shaped the

“soundscape” of their time. Presenting a powerful mixture of music and social activism; celebrity and public consciousness; and wealth and generosity, the Hutchinson Family Singers, in the words of Mary Howitt, “calculated to produce a moral era,” one that addressed the needs and concerns of middle class Americans in the North. The four musicians from Milford crafted a lucrative life in music within the contested space surrounding the development of the northern middle class.²⁰

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NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES

Arthur's Lady's Magazine of Elegant Literature and Fine Arts (Philadelphia)
Eclectic Magazine of Foreign Literature, Science, and Art (New York)
Essex County Washingtonian
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Frederick Douglass Paper (Rochester.)
Godey's Lady's Book (Philadelphia)
Herald of Freedom (Concord.)
Liberator (Boston)
Little's Living Age (Boston)
Lynn Freeman and Essex County Whig
Lynn Pioneer
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National Era (Washington, D.C.)
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United States Gazette (Philadelphia)
Utica Daily Gazette

SHEET MUSIC AND BROADSIDES

The following selections represent a general overview. For a more extensive look into the sheet music and broadsides of the Hutchinson Family Singers, see the extensive collections at the American Antiquarian Society, New Hampshire Historical Society, New Hampshire State Library, Wadleigh Memorial Public Library (Milford, N.H.), and the Lynn Museum.

Æolians' Concert, at Brinley Hall, on Tuesday Evening, Sept. 26.: The "Hutchinson Family"....Respectfully Announce That They Will Give a Vocal Entertainment at Brinley Hall, on Tuesday Evening, Sept. 26, 1843. Worcester: Ægis Print., 1843.

Concert: A Branch of the Hutchinson Family, associated with the Missess Caroline and Ellen Rogers, and Ossian E. Dodge, Would Respectfully Inform the Citizens of Boston That They Will Give Their 2d and Last Musical Entertainment at the Melodeon, Wednesday Evening, Jan. 17, 1849. Boston: White & Potter, 1849.

Concert. The Home Branch of the Hutchinson Family...At Niblo's Saloon, On Monday Evening, April 6th, 1846. New York: Tribune Job Printing, 1846.

Concert. The Hutchinson Family Concert! : John W., (Nineteen Years Before the Public.) Fannie B., Henry J., and Viola G. Hutchinson... Will Give Two More and the Last of Their Popular Entertainments with a Change of Programme, at Washburn Hall, on Friday & Saturday Evenings, Feb. 10th & 11th. Boston: J. H. & F. F. Farwell Steam Job Printers, 1860.

Farewell Vocal Concert, By the Celebrated Aeolean Vocalists.: The Hutchinson Family, (Three Brothers and Sister)... at Brinley Hall, this, Tuesday Eve. Sept. 6th, '42. Worcester: J. B. Ripley, 1842.

For One Night Only. The Hutchinson Family Respectfully Announce to the citizens of Exeter...Tuesday Evening, May 24, 1849. Exeter: News-Letter Office, 1849.

Friday Night, Jan 12, 1855.: Second Concert of the Hutchinson Family!! At Tremont Temple! Boston: J. S. Potter & Co., 1855.

Grand Concert By the Aeolian Vocalists. The Hutchinson Family Respectfully Announce to the Ladies and Gentlemen of Nashua & Nashville...On Saturday Evening, Oct. 29. N.p., 1842.

Great Musical Attraction, At the New Town Hall, Longton...the Hutchinson Family...On Friday Evening, April the 24th, 1846. N.p., 1846.

Howard Street Tabernacle.: Saturday Evening, the 17th June, 1843. Hutchinson Family...Will Give a Vocal Concert, at the Tabernacle, in Howard Street, Boston, June 17th, 1843, When They Have the Assurance of the Attendance of the President of the United States. Boston: Farwells' Press, 1843.

Hutchinson, Abby J. "The Shepard's Cottage." Music by Charles E. Horn. New-York: C. Holt, Jr., 1847.

———. “The Spider and the Fly.” Words by Jesse Hutchinson, Jr. Music by S. O. Dyer. New York: Charles Holt, Jr., 1847.

———. “Kind Words Can Never Die.” New York: Horace Waters, 1855.

Hutchinson Family. ““Go Call the Doctor, & Be Quick!’ or Anti Calomel Song.” Music by J. J. Hutchinson. New York: Firth, Hall & Pond, 1843.

———. “The Grave of Bonaparte.” Music by L. Heath. Boston: Oliver Ditson, 1843.

———. “King Alcohol.” Words by Jesse Hutchinson, Jr. Boston: Oliver Ditson, 1843.

———. “The Old Granite State.” Words by Jesse Hutchinson, Jr. New York: Jacques & Brother, 1843.

———. “The Old Granite State.” New York: Firth and Hall, 1843.

———. “We Are Happy and Free.” Music by James B. Taylor. New York: Firth, Pond & Co., 1844.

———. “The Seasons. A Farmer’s Song.” Words by Jesse Hutchinson, Jr. New York: C. Holt, Jr., 1846.

———. “My Own Native Land.” By J. S. Black. New York: Firth, Pond & Co., 1848.

———. “Mayor Wood.” New York: Horace Waters, 1855.

Hutchinson Family!/: Asa B., Lizzie C., Abby, and Little Freddy,... at Washburn Hall, Worcester, on Friday Evening, November 23, 1860. Boston: J. H. & F. F. Farwell, 1860.

Hutchinson Family Respectfully Announce to Their Friends, and the Citizens of Concord and Vicinity...On Friday Evening, Oct. 16: Being Their First Appearance in Concord Since Their Return From Europe. N.p., 1846.

Hutchinson, Jesse, Jr. “The Fugitive’s Song.” Boston: Henry Prentiss, 1845.

Hutchinson, J. Judson. “Excelsior.” Words by Henry W. Longfellow. New York: Firth & Hall, 1843.

———. “My Mother’s Bible.” New York: William Hall & Son, 1843.

———. “The Vulture of the Alps.” New York: Firth & Hall, 1843.

———. “The Standing Collar.” Boston: Geo. P. Reed, 1851.

Hutchinsons. “Axes to Grind.” New York: William Hall & Son, 1843.

———. “The Bereaved Slave Mother.” Boston: Henry Prentiss, 1844.

———. "Get Off the Track!" Words by Jesse Hutchinson, Jr. Boston: Jesse Hutchinson, Jr., 1844.

Hutchinsons are in Town!: No Mistake... at the Cameneum this, Wednesday Eve. January 12th, 1853. Portsmouth, N.H.: Daily Morning Chronical Job Office, 1853.

Kittredge, Walter. "Tenting on the Old Campground." Adapted and Sung by the Hutchinson Family, Tribe of Asa. Boston: Oliver Ditson & Co., 1864.

Last Appearance of the Æolians.: The "Hutchinsons" by Request Will Give Another Vocal Entertainment, at Westminster Hall, on Friday Evening, Sept. 22, 1843. Providence: B. T. Albro, 1843.

Last Concert by the Hutchinson Family On Monday Evening, Feb. 12. Baltimore: Bull & Tuttle, 184?.

Last Concert by the Hutchinsons, at the Melodeon, Boston. Monday Evening, Nov. 9, '46. Boston: White & Potter, 1846.

Last Concert. The Home Branch of the Hutchinson Family... Niblo's Saloon, On Thursday Evn'g, April 16th. New York: n.p., 1846.

Monday Evening, Feb. 26. The Hutchinson Family on Their Return from the South. New York: Tribune Print, 1844.

Monday Evening, March 4th, 1844. The Hutchinson Family... At Niblo's Saloon. Broadway, On Monday Evening. New York: Tribune Print, 1844.

Moscheles, I. "The Swiss Boy." Words by W. Ball. London: I. Willis & Co., 1827?.

Muster Night! Grand Concert of the Æolian Vocalists. The Hutchinson Family...At Lyceum Hall, This Evening, Sept. 15, 1842. Lynn, Mass.: n.p., 1842.

Our Country is the World and Our Countrymen All Mankind.: Concert by the Hutchinson Family. ... at the Tabernacle, on Thursday Evening, Dec. 22nd, 1853. New York: J. H. & F. F. Farwell & Co., 1853.

Russell, Henry. "The Indian Hunter." Words by Eliza Cook. New York: Firth, Hall & Pond, 18?.

Second & Last Concert By the Æolians! The Hutchinson Family Respectfully Announce to the citizens of Nashua and Nashville...This Tuesday (Evening), Nov. 8th. N.p., 1842.

Soiree Musicale. The Celebrated Rainer Family or Tyrolese Minstrels...Eleventh Concert in Boston, At the Melodeon, This Afternoon, Wednesday, Oct. 14th, 1840. Boston: Clapp & Son's Press, 1840.

Songs of the Hutchinson Family. New York: William Hall & Son, n.d.

Stuyvesant Institute, Concert Room. The Hutchinson Family...On Wednesday Evening, Oct. 25th. New York: Tribune Office, 1843.

Town Hall, Worcester. Wednesday Evening, Nov. 11, '46.: The Hutchinson Family...
Boston: White & Potter, 1846.

Woodbury, I. B. "The Sailor Boy's Last Dream." Inscribed to the Hutchinson Family.
Boston: C. Bradlee & Co., 1846.

Web Sites

Economic History Services. <[Http://eh.net](http://eh.net)>.

"Flag of the United States." <[Http://www.usflag.org/toc.html](http://www.usflag.org/toc.html)>

Lewis, Alan. "The Hutchinson Family Singers Home Page."
<[Http://www.geocities.com/unclesamsfarm/hutchinsons.htm](http://www.geocities.com/unclesamsfarm/hutchinsons.htm)>.

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New York State Museum. "Albany Population."
<[Http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/albany/population.html](http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/albany/population.html)>.

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<[Http://physics.bu.edu/~redner/projects/population/cities/boston.html](http://physics.bu.edu/~redner/projects/population/cities/boston.html)>.

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