

little Book of Carols



Explore the origins of some of the most beloved
Christmas carols!

Assembled by History Program Assistant, Jennifer Roesch

'Home' for the Holidays
Virtual Holiday History from the King's Chapel History Program



18TH CENTURY ENGLISH HYMN

While Shepherds watch'd their Flocks by Night

Written by Nahum Tate (c. 1652-1715)

First published in Tate and Nicholas Brady's
1700 supplement to their New Version of the
Psalms of David

This hymnal's first printing in Boston
occurred in 1713 and was adopted at King's
Chapel that same year

*While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,
The angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around.*

*'Fear not!' said he, for mighty dread
Had seized their troubled mind;
'Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To you and all mankind.*

*'To you, in David's town, this day
Is born of David's line
A Saviour, who is Christ the Lord,
And this shall be the sign:*

*The heav'nly Babe you there shall find
To human view displayed,
All meanly wrapped in swathing bands,
And in a manger laid.'*

*Thus spake the seraph and forthwith
Appeared a shining throng
Of angels praising God on high,
Who thus addressed their song:*

*'All glory be to God on high,
And to the Earth be peace;
Good will henceforth from heav'n to men
Begin and never cease!'*



18TH CENTURY ENGLISH HYMN

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Written by Charles Wesley (1707 -1788)

First published under the title "Hymn for Christmas Day" in 1739 in the collection Hymns and Sacred Poems

Charles Wesley was the guest preacher at King's Chapel during a month-long visit to Boston in the fall of 1736

*Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled.
"Joyful, all ye nations rise,
Join the triumph of the skies,
With th'angelic host proclaim:
"Christ is born in Bethlehem.
"Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"*

*Christ by highest heav'n adored,
Christ the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold Him come,
Offspring of a Virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
Hail the incarnate Deity,
Pleased as man with man to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel.
Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"*

*Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Son of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings,
Ris'n with healing in His wings.
Mild He lays His glory by,
Born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.
Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"*



19TH CENTURY AMERICAN SONG

It Came Upon a Midnight Clear

Written by Edmund Sears (1810-1876)

In the US, the most popular tune set to Sears' poem was composed by Richard Storrs Willis in 1850

While Edmund Sears does not have a personal connection to King's Chapel, he was a Unitarian minister of the faith introduced to the United States at King's Chapel about 65 years prior to originally penning his 1849 poem

*It came upon a midnight clear
That glorious song of old
From angels bending near the earth
To touch their harps of gold*

*Peace on the earth, good will to men
From heaven's all gracious King
The world in solemn stillness lay
To hear the angels sing*

*Still through the cloven skies they
come
With peaceful wings unfurled
And still their heavenly music floats
O'er all the weary world*

*Above its sad and lowly plains
They bend on hovering wing
And ever o'er its Babel sounds
The blessed angels sing*

*All ye beneath life's crushing load
Whose forms are bending low
Who toil along the climbing way
With painful steps and slow*

*Look now for glad and golden hours
Come swiftly on the wing
O rest beside the weary road
And hear the angels sing
And hear the angels sing*



19TH CENTURY ENGLISH SONG

Deck the Halls

Written by Thomas Oliphant (1707 - 1788)

While Thomas Oliphant first published the lyrics in 1862, the tune comes from the 16th century Welsh tune "Nos Galan," which literally translates to "New Year's Eve"

As the first Anglican church, King's Chapel was also the first known church in New England to "deck the halls" for Christmas

*Deck the hall with boughs of holly,
Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la!
'Tis the season to be jolly,
Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la!
Don we now, our gay apparel,
Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la!
Troll the ancient Yuletide carol,
Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la!*

*See the blazing yule before us,
Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la!
Strike the harp and join the chorus.
Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la!
Follow me in merry measure,
Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la!
While I tell of Yuletide treasure,
Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la!*

*Fast away the old year passes,
Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la!
Hail the new, ye lads and lasses!
Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la!
Sing, we joyous all together,
Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la!
Heedless of the wind and weather,
Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la!*