

A Guide to the
JUBILEE SINGERS EUROPEAN TOUR COLLECTION, 1873 – 1878
Fisk University Archives

Processed by Andrea Jackson, Archivist
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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Arguably the preservers of slave songs – also known as spirituals – and one of the most world renowned musical troupes of the nineteenth century, the Jubilee Singers of Fisk University made it their mission to save their institution by traveling the world to raise money on its behalf. Fisk University was founded in 1866, and served its students well with a sound education and hope for a successful future. By 1870, however, it appeared that the school created to educate newly-emancipated enslaved men and women would have to close its doors.

The Jubilee Singers originated with students who set out on a concert tour from Nashville to the Northern states of the United States on October 6, 1871 to save their financially ailing school. The idea to form the troupe was conceived by George L. White, Fisk's treasurer and instructor of music. Although the school and the American Missionary Association (under the auspices of which the school was founded) disapproved of the idea, White was able to borrow money for the tour. The original Jubilee Singers were Ella Sheppard, Maggie L. Porter, Jennie Jackson, Minnie Tate, Eliza Walker, Phoebe J. Anderson, Thomas Rutling, Benjamin M. Holmes, Greene Evans, Isaac P. Dickerson, and George Wells.

The troupe was not initially successful when singing classical and popular music; they were able to change their style of singing to gain a more interested audience. They began to sing slave songs to the world. National interest in the Jubilee Singers was attained after they sang in Ohio for the Reverend T. K. Beecher. Beecher was the brother of the distinguished New York minister Henry Ward Beecher. The troupe traveled to New York – the location of the American Missionary Association headquarters – and was welcomed by Henry Ward Beecher. Being a celebrated speaker, Beecher attracted a large crowd, thus providing major publicity for the Jubilee Singers; the *New York Herald* even wrote about the singers and their purpose for traveling the country.

Following the endorsement and encouragement of Henry Ward Beecher and the commencement of international fame, the Jubilee Singers embarked upon a European Tour. Their first concert was performed in England on May 6, 1873. High ranking nobility traveled from various distances to hear the well-regarded Jubilee Singers. Concerts in Scotland, Ireland, and Wales were also successful. By the end of the European campaign, the troupe raised nearly \$50,000 for the construction of Jubilee Hall, which became the first permanent structure on the campus of the Fisk school.

The Jubilee Singers returned to Nashville for a respite in May, 1874. They traveled back to Europe in May, 1875; there they remained until July, 1878. Audiences were extremely receptive to the Jubilee Singers, and often wrote requesting performances in even the smallest of towns. Visits were made to England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Germany, and the Netherlands.

After seven years of traveling throughout Europe, the Jubilee Singers were able to give \$150,000 to Fisk University. Their journey was instrumental in the funding and construction of Jubilee Hall. Both the city of Nashville and Fisk University are indebted to the Jubilee Singers; the singers helped to enrich the history of the city and the university and granted exposure throughout the world. This repertory revived the “slave

songs" or spirituals, which were fading away with emancipation, and ensured that they became part of the world's musical heritage. Because of the troupe's stellar performances, European leaders requested that Fisk University send missionaries and teachers to Africa. Having appeared before the queen of England, emperor of Germany, and other presidents and nobility, the Jubilee Singers were able to show the world what formerly enslaved people were capable of accomplishing.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Jubilee Singers European Tour Collection contains ten manuscript boxes, and consists of three series. This collection documents **Correspondence, Agent Reports, and Financial Records** regarding the Fisk University Jubilee Singers' tour through Europe from 1873 – 1878. The bulk of the records are between 1875 and 1877. The Jubilee Singers European Tour Collection is valuable to researchers who are interested in the locations toured by the famous troupe. Researchers interested in costs and profits of the tour will find this collection to be especially useful, as will those interested in the high volume of correspondents requesting performances of the Jubilee Singers.

Series I: Correspondence

The **Correspondence** series consists of letters written to and from the various managers of the Jubilee Singers from the years of 1873 – 1878. Arranged chronologically, most of the letters are from European citizens inquiring about the availability of the Jubilee Singers to perform in their towns. A very few letters express gratitude for free admission to the performances and free published books of the Jubilee Singers songs; some also praise them for their journey to save their beloved institution. Letters written in Dutch and German languages are separated from the other correspondence because they are not translated into English; however, they are arranged chronologically within their specific languages. Lastly, some correspondence regarding a legal case and imitation Jubilee Singers troupes is included in this series.

The main correspondents from Fisk University were the chaperones and managers of the Jubilee Singers. They include, but are not limited to: L. R. Casey, Erastus Milo Cravath (Fisk's first president), Charles Fairchild, the Reverend John Halley (pastor of a leading Congregational Church in Nashville), the Reverend Gustavus D. Pike (district secretary of the American Missionary Association), and Theodore F. Seward (professor, composer, and first person to write out – for publishing purposes – the music performed by the Jubilee Singers).

Series II: Financial Records

The **Financial Records** series encompasses three subseries: **Agent Reports, Bills, and Miscellaneous Financial Materials**. This series contains documents which indicate the costs of their expeditions to Europe. Profits and expenditures from the Jubilee Singers' concerts are shown in reports, receipts, bills, account books and some financial correspondence.

The **Agent Reports** typically consist of an itemized form filled out by agents who lived in the cities where the concerts were held. These agents had the responsibility of making the arrangements for their concerts, boarding and lodging, advertising, and any other essential accommodations; this was necessary due to the unfamiliarity of the cities to the American managers, chaperones, and singers. Receipts and bills for public halls,

hotels, stationary production, and advertisements in local newspapers are also among the items included in the chronologically-arranged folders which follow their tour cities and dates. The agent reports are beneficial to researchers who wish to trail the Jubilee Singers' itinerary, and document the total amount of money gained in relation to the costs of the European Tour at-large.

Hotel, newspaper advertisement, public halls, and stationary/printing bills are all included in the **Bills** subseries. This subseries is arranged chronologically by type of bill, but has single bills disconnected from agent reports. These bills, which may have once been connected to agent reports, are sometimes the only remnants of time spent in various cities on the European Tour. Also found in this subseries are Dutch and German financial records from tours throughout the Netherlands and Germany.

The **Miscellaneous Financial Materials** do not fall under either of the two previous subseries. Documents include the personal salaries and expenditures of the managers, checks, receipts, and check and agent report registers. Jubilee Hall account information is also found in this subseries.

Series III: Miscellaneous

The **Miscellaneous** series contains documents that do not fall within the scope of the aforementioned series. Business cards and notes without dates, as well as newspaper clippings are among the items in this group. Lists of names of supporters in different locations are in this series, as well as a publication from the Church of the Pilgrims – South entitled *Lost But Found*.

BOX LIST:

Box Folder

Series I: Correspondence

1	1	January – August, 1873
	2	September, 1873
	3	October, 1873
	4	November 1 – 15, 1873
	5	November 16 – 30, 1873
	6	December, 1873
	7	January 1 – 15, 1874
	8	January 16 – February 15, 1874
	9	February 16 – March 15, 1874
	10	March 16 – September, 1874
	11	May, 1875
	12	June 1 – 5, 1875
	13	June 6 – 10, 1875
	14	June 11 – 15, 1875
	15	June 16 – 30, 1875
	16	July 1 – 10, 1875
	17	July 11 – 20, 1875
	18	July 21 – 31, 1875
2	1	August 1 – 15, 1875
	2	August 16 – September 10, 1875
	3	September 11 – 30, 1875
	4	October 1 – 15, 1875
	5	October 16 – 31, 1875
	6	November 1 – 10, 1875
	7	November 11 – 27, 1875
	8	December 2 – 13, 1875
	9	December 14 – 29, 1875
	10	January 1 – 15, 1876
	11	January 16 – 31, 1876
	12	February 1 – 12, 1876
	13	February 14 – 29, 1876
	14	March 1 – 4, 1876
	15	March 6 – 15, 1876
	16	March 16 – 23, 1876
	17	March 24 – 30, 1876
	18	April 1 – 7, 1876
	19	April 8 – 20, 1876
	20	April 21 – 29, 1876

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
3	1	May 1 – 4, 1876
	2	May 5 – 9, 1876
	3	May 10 – 15, 1876
	4	May 17 – 26, 1876
	5	May 27 – 31, 1876
	6	June 1 – 6, 1876
	7	June 7 – 15, 1876
	8	June 16 – 27, 1876
	9	July 15 – August 17, 1876
	10	August 18 – 26, 1876
	11	September 1 – 20, 1876
	12	September 21 – 29, 1876
	13	October 2 – 7, 1876
	14	October 9 – 13, 1876
	15	October 16 – 23, 1876
	16	October 24 – 28, 1876
4	1	November 1 – 20, 1876
	2	November 21 – 28, 1876
	3	November 29 – 30, 1876
	4	December 1 – 2, 1876
	5	December 4 – 16, 1876
	6	December 18 – 20, 1876
	7	December 21 – 23, 1876
	8	December 24 – 31, 1876
	9	January 1 – 9, 1877
	10	January 18 – 24, 1877
	11	January 25 – 31, 1877
	12	February 7 – 22, 1877
	13	March 2 – 19, 1877
	14	March 21 – 31, 1877
	15	April 5 – 24, 1877
5	1	April 26 – 30, 1877
	2	May 1 – 14, 1877
	3	May 17 – 23, 1877
	4	May 25 – 31, 1877
	5	June 4 – 30, 1877
	6	July 4 – 31, 1877
	7	August 1 – 21, 1877
	8	September 12 – 25, 1877
	9	September 26 – 29, 1877
	10	October 3 – 19, 1877
	11	October 22 – 27, 1877

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
5	12	November 1 – 3, 1877
	13	November 5 – 13, 1877
	14	November 14 – 19, 1877
	15	November 20 – 30, 1877
	16	December 1 – 19, 1877
	17	January 1 – February 28, 1878
	18	April 16 – 20, 1878
	19	Dutch Correspondence, February – April 1877
	20	German Correspondence, 1877; illegible dates; no date
	21	Correspondence re: Legal Case between John Halley, Charles Fairchild, and Robert Dunn, May – July 1875
	22	Correspondence re: Imitation Jubilee Singers December, 1876 – January, 1877
	23	Correspondence, no date
	24	Correspondence, no date
	25	Correspondence, no date
	26	Correspondence, no date
	27	Correspondence, no date
	28	Correspondence, no date

Series II: Financial Records

Subseries I: Agent Reports

6	1	Manchester Concerts, January, 1874
	2	Bristol, March 11 – 13, 1874
	3	Tun[bridge] Wells, March 20, 1874
	4	Westbourne Grove Chapel, Reading, Nottingham, April, 1874
	5	American Campaign, 1875
	6	Banbury, May 18, 1876
	7	Hernel Hempstead, June 6, 1876
	8	Bury St. Edmunds, June 12, 1876
	9	Colchester, June 14, 1876
	10	Yarmouth, June 16, 1876
	11	Norwich, June 19, 1876
	12	Wisbech, June 20, 1876
	13	Boston, June 21, 1876
	14	Lincoln, June 22, 1876
	15	Newark, June 23, 1876
	16	Nottingham, June 29, 1876
	17	Folkestone, September 4, 1876
	18	Eastbourne, September 5, 1876
	19	Portsmouth, September 6, 1876
	20	Salisbury, September 7, 1876
	21	Ryde, September 8, 1876

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
6	22	Newport, Isle of Wight, September 11, 1876
	23	South Hampton, September 12, 1876
	24	Northampton, September 14, 1876
	25	Grantham, September 15, 1876
	26	Scarborough, September 18, 1876
	27	Whitby, September 19, 1876
	28	Middlesbrough, September 20, 1876
	29	Stockton, September 21, 1876
	30	Bishop Auckland, September 22, 1876
	31	Carlisle, September 25, 1876
	32	Ribble Palace, Glasgow, September 29, 1876
	33	Falkirk, October 2, 1876
	34	Sterling, October 3, 1876
	35	Blairgowrie, October 4, 1876
	36	Forfar, October 5, 1876
	37	Dundee, October 9, 1876
	38	Aberdeen, October 10, 1876
	39	Peterhead, October 11, 1876
	40	Elgin, October 13, 1876
	41	Perth, October 16, 1876
	42	Crieff, October 17, 1876
	43	Greenock, October 18, 1876
	44	Paisley, October 19, 1876
	45	Glasgow City Hall, October 20, 1876
	46	Rothsay, October 23, 1876
	47	Glasgow-Wellington Palace, October 24, 1876
	48	Hamilton, October 25, 1876
	49	Barrhead, October 26, 1876
	50	Coatbridge, October 27, 1876
	51	Edinburgh, October 30, 1876
	52	Galashiels, October 31, 1876
	53	October and November, 1876
7	1	Hawick, November 1, 1876
	2	Kelso, November 2, 1876
	3	Berwick, November 3, 1876
	4	Haddington, November 6, 1876
	5	Edinburgh, November 7, 1876
	6	Kilmarnock, November 8, 1876
	7	Saltcoats (Androssan), November 9, 1876
	8	Ayr, November 10, 1876
	9	Dumbarton, November 13, 1876
	10	Helensburgh, November 14, 1876

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
7	11	Irvine, November 15, 1876
	12	November 16, 1876 (FRAGILE)
	13	Edinburgh, November 17, 1876
	14	Dublin, November 24, 1876
	15	Dublin, November 28, 1876
	16	Bray, Ireland, November 27, 1876; Dundalk, November 29, 1876
	17	Portadown, November 30, 1876
	18	Glasgow, December, 1876
	19	Armagh, Ireland, December 1, 1876
	20	Lisburn, December 4, 1876
	21	Belfast, December 5, 1876
	22	Ballymena, December 6, 1876
	23	Coleraine, December 7, 1876
	24	Londonderry, December 8, 1876
	25	Newry, December 11, 1876
	26	Belfast, December 12, 1876
	27	Dublin, December 13, 1876
	28	Dublin, December 14, 1876
	29	Dublin, December 19, 1876
	30	Ireland Concerts, October-December, 1876
	31	Manchester, Jackdaw, January 1877
	32	Keighley, January 2, 1877
	33	Mirfield, England, January 3, 1877
	34	Batley, England, January 4, 1877
	35	Dewsbury, England, January 5, 1877
	36	Leeds, England, January 8 - 9, 1877
	37	Goole, England, January 10, 1877
	38	York, England, January 11, 1877
	39	Harrogate, England, January 12, 1877
	40	Manchester, January 15, 17, 20, and February, 1877
	41	Oldham, Hope Chapel, January 18, 1877
	42	Skipton, England, January 18, 1877
	43	Ashton Albion Schools, January 19, 1877
	44	Burnley Mechanics Institution, January 22, 1877
	45	Accrington-Peel Institution, January 23, 1877; Haslingden Public Hall, January 24, 1877
8	1	Wigan, January 26, 1877
	2	Southport Winter Gardens, January 27, 1877
	3	Bacup Cooperative Hall, January 30, 1877; Rawtenstall Cooperative Hall, January 31, 1877
	4	Manchester, January – February, 1877
	5	Rotterdam, February, 1877

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
8	6	Wakefield, February 2, 1877
	7	Sheffield, February 5, 1877
	8	Barnsley, February 7, 1877
	9	Rotherham, February 8, 1877
	10	Selby, February 9, 1877
	11	Manchester, February 10, 1877
	12	Castleford, February 12, 1877
	13	Lincoln, February 13, 1877
	14	Grimsby, February 14, 1877
	15	Louth, February 15, 1877
	16	Worksop, February 16, 1877
	17	Birmingham, February 19, 21, 1877; and Northampton, February 22, 1877
	18	Gravenhagen, March 5, 1877
	19	Schiedammer, March 13, 1877
	20	Leider, March 15, 1877
	21	Kampen, March 23, 1877
	22	Zutphen, March 27, 1877
	23	Amsterdamsche, March 31, 1877
	24	Haarlem, March, 1877
	25	Leidsche, March, 1877
	26	Amsterdam, Hesterkirk, April 10, 1877
	27	Nieuwediep-Amsterdam, April 11, 1877
	28	Woolwich, April 24, 1877
	29	Bishop Stortford, April 26, 1877
	30	Lonbridge, May 17, 1877; Eastbourne and Rotterdam, May 18, 1877
	31	Canterbury, May 21, 1877
	32	Brighton, May 22, 1877
	33	Upbridge and Guildford, May 24, 1877
	34	Newbury, May 24, 1877
	35	Leamington, May 28, 30, 1877
	36	Banbury, May 29, 1877; Wellingborough, May 31, 1877
	37	Wolverton, June 1, 1877
	38	Northampton, June 4, 1877
	39	Hitchin, June 5, 1877
	40	Saffron Walden, June 6, 1877
	41	Hertford, June 7, 1877
	42	Headleigh, June 8, 1877
	43	Ipswich, June 11, 1877
	44	Colchester, June 12, 1877
	45	Sudbury, June 13, 1877
	46	Yarmouth, June 14, 1877
	47	Lowestoft, June 15, 1877

Box Folder

8	48	Wisbech, June 18, 1877
	49	King's Lynn, June 19, 1877
	50	Spalding, June 20, 1877
	51	Cambridge, June 21, 1877
	52	Peterborough, June 22, 1877
	53	Great Grimbsy, June 25-26, 1877
	54	Great Grimbsy, June 27, 1877
	55	Retford, June 27, 1877
	56	Agent Reports – no date

Subseries II: Bills

9	1	Hotel Bills, 1874
	2	Hotel Bills, April – August, 1876
	3	Hotel Bills, September, 1876
	4	Hotel Bills, November, 1876
	5	Hotel Bills, November, 1876 (FRAGILE)
	6	Hotel Bills, December, 1876
	7	Hotel Bills, January – February, 1877
	8	Hotel Bills, March, 1877
	9	Hotel Bills, April – May, 1877
	10	Hotel Bills, June, 1877
	11	Hotel Bills, no date
	12	Newspaper Advertisement Bills, 1874 – 1876
	13	Newspaper Advertisement Bills, 1877
	14	Public Hall Bills, 1876-1877
	15	Stationary/ Printing Bills, January – April 20, 1874
	16	Stationary/ Printing Bills, January 10, 1875 – October 6, 1875
	17	Stationary/ Printing Bills, September – November, 1875 (FRAGILE)
	18	Stationary/ Printing Bills, November 1 – 3, 1875
	19	Stationary/ Printing Bills, November 8 – 24, 1875
	20	Stationary/ Printing Bills, January, 1876
	21	Stationary/ Printing Bills, February, 1876
	22	Stationary/ Printing Bills, April 4 – 24, 1876
	23	Stationary/ Printing Bills, April 27 – May 31, 1876
	24	Stationary/ Printing Bills, June 9 – August 28, 1876
	25	Stationary/ Printing Bills, September, 1876
	26	Stationary/ Printing Bills, October, 1876
10	1	Stationary/ Printing Bills, December, 1876
	2	Stationary/ Printing Bills, January, 1877
	3	Stationary/ Printing Bills, February, 1877
	4	Stationary/ Printing Bills, May 24 – November 14, 1877

Box Folder

10	5	Accounts – Dutch, February – March 3, 1877
	6	Accounts – Dutch, March 9 – 29, 1877
	7	Accounts – Dutch, April, 1877, no date
	8	Accounts – German, April 1877 – April 1878
	9	Miscellaneous Bills, 1873 – 1876
	10	Miscellaneous Bills, 1877, no date

Subseries III: Miscellaneous Financial Materials

11	Managers' Personal Accounts, 1875 – 1878
12	Jubilee Hall Account, July 27, 1877
13	Account Book, 1876-1877
14	Office Accounts, Singers Salaries, no date
15	Miscellaneous Financial Notes
16	Checks, May 6 – June 18, 1876
17	Checks, June 19 – July 8, 1876
18	Check Registers and Agent Report Registers
19	Receipts, 1874 – 1877, no date
20	Receipt Book, 1877-1878
21	Bulgarian Relief Fund-Ticket Sales, no date

Series III: Miscellaneous

22	Notes on Concert Locations
23	List of Names (Supporters)
24	Miscellaneous Notes and Business Cards, no date
25	Newspaper Clippings
26	Publication: The Church of the Pilgrims – South, <i>Lost But Found</i> , 1875