

Abide with Me, 'Tis Eventide

Hymn of the Month

Just as picturesque scenes can bring peace and calmness to the soul, so does beautiful music

The Hymn



The hours of the day and the seasons of the year are often used as metaphors for times and situations of life. In the evening of the year, with winter

approaching, we observe the Thanksgiving holiday, and have opportunity to reflect on the blessings God gives us.

Our hymn, 'Abide With Me, 'Tis Eventide' furthers our reflection and uses the symbolism of the darkness of night. The text in first person allows us to place ourselves in the shoes of the two disciples of our Savior, Jesus Christ, as they walk on the road to the village of Emmaus following His crucifixion and resurrection.

The Biblical account recorded by Luke is the apparent basis of the hymn text. Summarizing the account, the two disciples are joined by the resurrected Savior on their walk of about five miles, but are prevented from recognizing him. As they converse of recent events concerning him, He expounds the scriptures to them on their way, explaining why the events needed to occur and how they had been foretold. On reaching their destination the disciples invite him to stay there and continue, or 'abide' with them. "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." As the Savior blesses bread and breaks it at their evening meal and gives it to them, they are allowed to recognize Him, and then he vanishes from sight.

The disciples then reflect how their hearts burned within them while the

The Author



Martin Lowrie Hofford was born to John and Hannah Wilson Hofford in January of 1823 at, or near, Doylestown, Pennsylvania.

Doylestown is a village, borough and township located about twenty-seven miles north of Philadelphia.

Little is known of Hofford's early life, but it is evident that he was interested in education and religion and his family had the means to send him to school. It is said that he graduated in 1849 from 'The College of New Jersey.' This college became a university in 1896 and was renamed "Princeton University" after its host community. After graduation, he entered Princeton Seminary where he studied for the ministry for two years. He was reported to have been licensed by the Second Presbytery of Philadelphia in July of 1851, and later ordained an evangelist, presumably in the Presbyterian Church.

Also in 1851, Martin Lowrie Hofford married Mary G. Hinkle. They had a son before Mary passed away in 1853 after less than three years of marriage. In 1856 he remarried to Miss Carrie Jones.

Hofford spent his career in education and Christian ministry. The Delaware River separates Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, from Camden, New Jersey, where he is said to have served as a school principal for a time, as well as in other communities in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. As mentioned

The Composer



Harrison Millard was born in November of 1829 at Boston, Massachusetts. Little is known of his family but it is evident that he showed musical

interest and ability early in life and that his family encouraged and supported him. It is said that he was singing with a choir by the age of eight, and at ten was singing as an alto in the chorus of The Handel and Haydn Society. This group was organized in Boston in 1815 to bring the works of the European masters to America.

At the age of fifteen Millard had progressed to the point that as a tenor he substituted for the principal tenor in an oratorio performance.

It is understood that he received his early education in the local schools.

In 1851, apparently intending to make a career of music, at the age of twenty-two he left for Europe and spent the next three years studying under the best masters of the day in Italy. He became skilled at composing and contributed to American music publications. He traveled and performed as a tenor in Great Britain before returning to Boston in 1854. He taught voice and performed in concerts for about two years and then relocated to New York.

It is said that his first widely successful piece, 'Viva La America' was published in New York in 1859, when he was about thirty years old.

In 1861, just a few years later, the Civil War began and he enlisted in the Union Army. He was appointed a 1st lieutenant

Savior talked with them on their way.

The first two verses of our hymn text convey this account in poetic imagery. The symbolism of eventide, or the time of evening, the time of approaching night and its darkness, and the need for the presence of the Savior, can be applied to many circumstances in life.

The third verse allows us to consider with the disciples what a difference it makes in life to feel a connection to the Savior, to feel that He is real and our prayers are answered. How alone we might feel in times of darkness, or trouble, without His enlightening gospel and the influence of the Spirit, and how easily we might be affected by or adopt the ways and attitudes of the world.

The writing of the hymn is said to have taken place in the years after the American Civil War (1861 -1865.) The author, Martin Lowrie Hafford, was an educator as well as a Pastor and is reported to have taken charge of the Allentown Seminary in 1863, which became the Allentown Collegiate and Military Institute at Allentown, Pennsylvania in 1864. It is believed he served there during the war and until 1868. (It is now known as Muhlenberg College.) The same year, 1863, the composer, Harrison Millard, who had been serving in a New York Army regiment, was severely wounded in the battle of Chickamauga, and sent home. The distress of the war is believed to have influenced the writing of the hymn. The "darkness of the world" referred to in the third verse is particularly poignant in view of the state of the nation at that time.

It is believed that the hymn was first published by the composer in the collection, "Gospel Melodies, A Collection of Sacred Songs," 1884. (See an image of the publication at the top of the next column.) It is evident that the music was written for the text as the composer named the tune in 3/4 time 'WELCOME GUEST.' The style is said

previously, he served as a Principal at Allentown, PA during the Civil War.

He served as Pastor in several communities and his faith is expressed in over seventy hymn texts currently attributed to him.

After thirty-five years of active service, he retired in 1886 at Beverly, New Jersey at the age of 61, and passed away two years later, in January of 1888. He was buried in the cemetery of his hometown, Doylestown, Pennsylvania.

"Abide with Me, 'Tis Eventide"

Text as found in the 1985 LDS Hymnal

Abide with me; 'tis eventide.
The day is past and gone;
The shadows of the evening fall;
The night is coming on.
Within my heart a welcome guest,
Within my home abide.

Abide with me; 'tis eventide.
Thy walk today with me
Has made my heart within me burn,
As I communed with thee.
Thy earnest words have filled my soul
And kept me near thy side.

Abide with me, 'tis eventide,
and lone will be the night
If I cannot commune with thee,
Nor find in thee my light.
The darkness of the world, I fear,
Would in my home abide.

Chorus:

O Savior, stay this night with me;
Behold, 'tis eventide.
O Savior, stay this night with me;
Behold, 'tis eventide.

and served in the 19th Infantry Regiment, Company B, as an aide-de-camp, division inspector and commissary. He was on the staffs of Generals Rousseau, Rosecrans and Palmer. As mentioned previously, he was severely wounded during the battle of Chickamauga in September of 1863 and rendered unfit for duty.

Returning to New York he was appointed to a place in the custom-house the following year. A custom-house was a government building and agency associated with a port where sea-going vessels were cleared and duties or fees were collected. It is reported that Millard remained in this employment for about twenty years, devoting his free time to music.

He was a prolific composer who produced about 300 works in his lifetime, which include a wide variety of popular, patriotic, classical and sacred music. His compositions range from the simple song to the complex grand mass and opera. He was said to have contributed to raising the character and dignity of American song literature.

Little is known of his family life, but he is believed to have returned to Boston in his later years and passed away there at the age of sixty-six, in September of 1895.

to be typical of a sentimental gospel song.

The hymn appeared essentially unchanged in the 1948 edition of "Hymns, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (LDS Hymnal). It continued in the subsequent 1985 LDS Hymnal with only minor changes to rhythm notation.

The hymn continues to facilitate gratitude for the blessings given by the Savior in the current century.



Information in this article came from :

'Hymns of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,' (Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1985, #165)

'Holy Bible, King James Version,' Luke 24:13-32, pp. 1322-1323. (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1979)

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, (G & C Merriam Company, Springfield, Massachusetts, 1975)

Karen Lynn Davidson, 'Our Latter-day Hymns,' pp. 185-186, 412. (Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1988)

J. Spencer Cornwall, 'Stories of our Mormon Hymns,' pp. 5-6. (Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1963)

<https://archive.org/details/gospelmelodiesco00mill>

<http://www.mormontabernaclechoir.org/articles/abide-with-me-tis-eventide.html>

http://www.hymnary.org/text/abide_with_me_tis_eventide

<http://www.hymntime.com/tch/htm/a/b/i/abidewmt.htm>

http://www.hymntime.com/tch/bio/h/o/f/hofford_ml.htm

<http://www.muhlenberg.edu/media/contentassets/pdf/incoming/historybook.pdf>

https://books.google.com/books?id=BqdVAAAAAYAAJ&pg=RA11-PA23&lpg=RA11-PA23&dq=%22Martin+Lowrie+Hofford%22&source=bl&ots=Nf4ps62wt8&sig=TtTbtelElkr-5en_AsWpw0mnPNQ&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0CEAQ6AEwBmoVChMIjabnmeiTQIVCOgmCh1F9wkD#v=onepage&q=%22Martin%20Lowrie%20Hofford%22&f=false

http://www.hymntime.com/tch/bio/m/i/l/millard_h.htm

<http://www.princeton.edu/main/about/history/>

<http://www.civilwar.org/battlefields/chickamauga.html>

<http://www.famousamericans.net/harrisonmillard/>

<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:N41Z-Y3L>

<http://www.npr.org/sections/deceptivecadence/2014/12/11/370156185/a-bicentennial-for-bostons-handel-and-haydn-society>