



Social Harp

John G. McCurry

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Ballads and other kinds of American folksongs have been widely collected and studied, but most Americans are unaware that in the time between the Revolution and the Civil War the singing of folk spirituals was as common among rural whites as among blacks. This was the music of the Methodist camp meeting and the Baptist revival, and white spirituals in fact are known chiefly because homebred composers sometimes wrote them down, gave them harmonic settings, and published them in songbooks.

One of the rarest of these country songbooks, John McCurry's *The Social Harp* (1855) contains 222 pieces, mostly folktune settings, half of which were composed by McCurry and others in Hart County, Georgia. This facsimile reprinting is provided with appendices useful for the study of its sources and with an introduction containing information that throws light on the men who wrote for nineteenth-century American songsters and the reasons for the eventual neglect of their music.

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