Stephen Foster’s Songs Revisited

The songs of Stephen Collins Foster have achieved considerable fame (but not fortune) for their creator from the time of their conception in the 1840s-1860s to a century later. The degree to which they captured the public’s attention over the years has been marked by the prevailing cultural and historical mores of the time. Many of the earlier songs received their christening in the popular minstrel shows of the nineteenth century, and were performed by white musicians in blackface singing in the pseudo-black accents then in vogue. They were referred to euphemistically as “Ethiopian” or “plantation” by way of separating them from the more traditional ballads which employed standard English. With such significant events as the passage of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts during the 1960s, the desegregation movement, and, in more recent times, the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia and the movement to remove Confederate statues from places of honor, the cultural lines have been drawn such as to affect changes in what is and what is not acceptable in the arts. Stephen Foster and his songs have been affected in a negative way by events associated with ever-changing attitudes of the audience. Thus, songs which contain the N word and the D word (see the article to follow) have been removed from performances in the public sphere accept as they have been sanitized. Older song books which include the original “Ethiopian” lyrics are no longer in use in school music classes or choral groups. A well-known statue of Foster with a slave strumming the banjo seated at his feet was unceremoniously removed from a place of honor in Pittsburgh’s Schenley Plaza. A new songbook from the current century is devoted to Foster songs. Those wherein the original versions had offensive language have been duly cleansed. As Foster has been honored in many ways over the years, including having his name identified with state parks, schools, and various plaques hither and yon, the article which follows places his songs within the ever-changing framework of American history. His music plays an important part in that history.

Stephen Foster (1826-1864), the 10th child of the 11 offspring of William Barclay Foster (1779-1855) (Plate 1) and Eliza Clayland Tomlinson Foster (1788-1855) (Plate 2), had the historical good fortune to share his birthdate, July 4, with the 50th anniversary of this country’s Declaration of Independence. It also happened to be the date of the passing of the nation’s 2nd and 3rd Presidents, viz. John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. The Fosters were a well-known family in western Pennsylvania; indeed, Stephen was born in Lawrenceville, now part of Pittsburgh, the city which has done much to honor his memory and is, at present, caught up in a discordant note involving the statue of the composer by Giuseppe Moretti (1857-1935), which dates from 1900 and which graced Schenley Plaza until April 26, 2018. More on this and related matters later. Foster’s father was at one time Mayor of Allegheny; his eldest son, William Barclay Jr., was a prominent engineer who, at his death, was a Vice President of the Pennsylvania Railroad. Stephen’s sister, Ann Eliza, was the
sister-in-law of President James Buchanan, having married his brother Edward. His brother Henry was employed in the Land Office in Washington, DC, while brother Morrison became prominent in business and politics and, following Stephen’s untimely death at age 37, assumed the role of executor and literary agent in handling his estate.

Stephen received his early education at various private academies much as his siblings did. Very early during his schooling, one Mrs. Thomas Collins, wife of an attorney from Pittsburgh and a close friend of Mrs. Foster’s, according to a letter from Stephen’s father to his son William, dated July 14, 1834, “made your Ma a present of an excellent colored girl a few days ago, who was upwards of three years of service.” It was the son of Mrs. Collins, who died at age 12 shortly before Stephen was born, whose name became the middle name of the composer to be. As for the servant girl, Olivia Pise, she was a mulatto whose father was a West Indian Frenchman who taught dancing to upper-class members of Pittsburgh society. Olivia was permitted to take young Stephen to her church where he received an early introduction to the Negro melodies he heard sung there and which influenced what he later called the “Ethiopian songs” he composed for minstrel shows. That they have nothing to do with the country in East Central Africa (Fig. 1) save for its large black population is mentioned here for the sake of clarification.

Although Stephen never studied composition, he did teach himself as a youth to play the flute, the violin, and the piano to varying degrees of proficiency. From 1839-1841, while attending the Athens Academy, he composed his first composition, “Tioga Waltz,” for 3 flutes. Tioga Point was the original name for Athens. Stephen and two classmates, James H. Forbes and William F. Warner, performed it a school exhibition held at the Presbyterian Church on April 1, 1841—this according to R. M. Welles, one of the schoolmates. The piece is in the key of C major, has no modulations, employs tonic and dominant 7th chords, with a single appearance of a subdominant chord. It contains 8 phrases, each comprised of 8 measures with repeats and a second ending.

With no skills at a trade, and following failed flirtations with attending a military academy, and a brief unsuccessful period at Jefferson College in Canonsburg, Foster moved into his parents’ two-family home in Allegheny. There, at age 16, he wrote “Open thy Lattice, Love” (D major, 6/8 time, Allegretto) and dedicated it to the 11-year old Susan Pentland, daughter of a retired Army Captain, whose family shared the home. The song, with words by George P. Morris (1802-1864), was printed in The New Mirror (October 14, 1843), and published by George Willig (1764-1851) in Philadelphia (December 7, 1844). That it received two printings suggests that it had a degree of public success. After a 4-measure introduction, a young gentleman, intent on wooing a lassie, asks that she open the lattice enclosing her window. The purpose is benign—so that she may hear him extoll various virtues of nature (Ex. 1). The occasional raised 2nd and 4th scale degrees (e-sharp and g-sharp) and the more insistent !!!7 chord at the final utterance of “listen to me!” (Ex. 2) are the only
instances where Foster moves ever so slightly beyond the calm waters of the home key.

“Lou’sylvania Belle” and “Old Uncle Ned” were also composed during this period, but not published until 1847 and 1848 respectively by the Cincinnati branch of W. C. Peters. And by this time Foster’s parents arranged for him to join his brother Dunning in that city and learn to become a bookkeeper. From 1846-1850, during part of which time Dunning served in the Army in the Mexican War, Stephen toiled under the watchful eye of Dunning’s partner, Archibald Irwin; by all accounts he was successful at this line of work. As for the songs, they found their way to the drawing rooms and concert halls of polite society and to the minstrel shows then captivating crowds in the population centers of the time. “Lou’sylvania Belle” (D major, 2-4 time, Allegrezza) is likely to have been composed in Allegheny and intended for “The Knights of the S. T. [Square Table],” a club comprised of five young men which convened twice weekly at the Foster home. The “Belle” in the song is identified in the first verse as “a lubly cullud gal.” The Chorus informs us of the protagonist’s intention to marry the Belle and of his admonition to his beloved not to reveal this fact to Massa (Ex. 3). Verse 3 reveals that there is a rival for Belle’s hand:

Dere’s Dandy Jim ob Caroline
I knows him by de swell,
Tryin’ to come it mighty fine
Wid de Lou’siana Belle.

And in verse 4, there is no doubt as to who is the center of all attention:

Dere’s first de B and den de E,
And den de double L;
Anudder E to de end ob dat,
Spells Lou’siana Belle.

The use of the apostrophe in references to the state of Louisiana is Foster’s way to ensure that it is pronounced as intended.

“Old Uncle Ned” (F major, 4-4 time, Andantino), also written for “The Knights of the S. T.,” opens with a jaw-dropping line (Ex. 4), but assures us that the subject, at the end of his days, will go where the good folks of his race will go. The complete text follows:

1. There was an old Nigger, his name was Uncle Ned,
   He’s dead long ago, long ago.
   He had no wool on de top ob his head,
   De place whar de wool ought to grow—
   Den lay down de shubble and de hoe [bass voice]
   Hang up de fiddle and de bow;

   Refrain:
   No more hard work for poor Old Ned,
   He is gone whar de good Niggers go.
Chorus:
Den lay down de shubble and de hoe,
Hang up de fiddle and de bow;
No more hard work for poor old Ned,
He is gone whar de good Niggers go.

2. His fingers were long like de cane in de brake,
   He had no eyes for to see,
   He had no teeth for to eat de corn cake
   So he had to let de corn cake be.
Refrain & Chorus

3. When old Uncle Ned di
de, Massa take it mighty bad,
   De tears run down like de rain;
   Old Missus turn pale and she look’d berry sad,
   Kase she nebber see old Ned again.
Refrain & Chorus

That Ned was bald, had poor vision, was toothless, and was no longer able
to do hard work is apparent from the lyrics.

“Oh! Susanna” (G major, 2-2 time, Animato), another song of this period
(1848) published by Peters in December 1848, became a staple of Christy’s
Minstrels, the group which came to specialize in Foster songs. It is a point of
interest that this famed ensemble, which performed for seven consecutive years
(March 1847-July 1854) at Mechanics’ Hall in New York, appeared at a
benefit concert for Foster on August 25, 1847 in Cincinnati. The protagonist in
this song, who came from Alabama with his banjo on his knee to see his “true
lub” in Lou’ siana (Ex. 5) announces the central facts in verse 4:

I soon will be in New Orleans,
   And den I’ll look all’round,
   And when I find Susanna,
   Dis darkey’ll surely die,
   And when I’m dead and buried,
   Susanna don’t you cry.

So popular did this song become that it became the marching song of the
pioneers during the 1849 gold rush. Peters is said to have earned about $10,000
from sales of sheet music of “Oh! Susanna,” but Foster, anxious to make a
name for himself, is likely to have given this and other of his songs to the
publisher as a package for $100.¹ It is of more than passing interest that in
published versions of this song in the twentieth-and twenty-first centuries to
date verse 2, which employs the “N” word, is omitted:

¹All references to financial matters pursuant to Foster’s songs, and all musical examples unless
noted otherwise, come from John Tasker Howard, A Treasury of Stephen Foster (New York:
Random House, 1946). This source contains a Forward by Deems Taylor, Arrangements by
Ray Lev and Dorothy Berliner Commins, and Illustrations by William Sharp.
I jumped aboard de telegraph,
And trabbled down de riber,
De lectric fluid magnified,
And killed five hundred nigger.
De bullgine bust, de horse run off,
I realy thought I’d die;
I shut my eyes to hold my brerath,
Susanna, don’t you cry.?

“My Brudder Gum,” (G major, 2-4 time, *Allegretto*) one of the first songs by Foster to be published by Firth, Pond, and Company (1849), earned him only fifty copies of the music, but no royalties. The song, in G major and in 2-4 time, is performed at an *Allegretto* tempo. The first verse tells us the particular audience for whom it is intended—“white folks” (Ex. 6). The Chorus, however, reveals personal information about Gum (Ex. 7). In verse four we gather a touch of Gum’s daily life:

Went one berry fine day,
To ride in a one-horse sleigh,
Hollow’d to de old hoss comin’ through de
toll gate,
Hay! Brudder Gum.

By 1850, Foster’s growing fame as a songsmith, attracted the attention of two other publishers, Firth, Pond, and Co. of New York and F. D. Benteen of Baltimore, with whom he signed royalty contracts.

Having by this time moved back to the family home in Allegheny, he set up a study on the top floor, and began a serious career as a composer. It was also the year in which, on July 22nd, he married Jane Denny McDowell (1829-1903), daughter of Andrew Nathan McDowell (1808-1849), a prominent Pittsburgh physician, and Jane Denny Porter McDowell (1806-1893). She had been someone who sang as an alto in an ensemble called the Stephen Foster Quartet; the soprano in this group was Susan Pentland, who years earlier was the dedicatee of “Open thy Lattice, Love.” By September of this year, the couple was living in the home of Stephen’s older (step) brother William Barclay Foster, Jr. (1807-1860) along with Stephen’s parents in Allegheny. It was during these early years of the marriage that Stephen created some of his most memorable songs, among them “Camptown Races,” 1850; “Old Folks at Home,” 1851; “My Old Kentucky Home, Goodnight,” and “Old Dog Tray,” 1853; “Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair,” 1854; and “Gentle Annie,” 1856.

The sum of his earnings for the six years 1850-1856 was $9,596.96 from Firth, Pond, and Company and $461.85 from F. D. Benteen. Despite the fact that in the 1850s a “comfortable” living was reckoned to be $2000, Stephen’s account book revealed that he was indebted to landlords and tailors in addition to monies borrowed from his brothers William and Morrison. By 1857, he sold

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3https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Oh!_Susanne_(original_lyrics)
his future rights in the 36 songs then published by Firth, Pond, and Company for $1,500 in cash and notes, and cancelled the sum of $372.28 which he had overdrawn on his earlier royalty account, a total of $1872.28. He sold his future right to 16 songs to Benteen for $200. They had earned him, during the past 6 years, $461.85. A year later, in a new contract with Firth, Pond, he agreed to create songs for them exclusively for two and a half years. His royalty would earn him 10% of the retail price of his songs plus an advance of $100 on each of the songs he composed. By August 9, 1860, he wrote 16 songs, garnering $700.

Of the songs written during the ‘50s, “Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair” (F major, 4-4 time, Moderato) has a special personal significance. The Jeanie in this still famous parlor song (Ex. 8), is thought to be his wife Jane, with whom he fathered a daughter named Marion (1851-1935). The words in verse 3, shed insights into the fluctuating states of their marriage:

I sigh for Jeanie, but her light form strayed
Far from the fond hearts ’round her native glade;
Her smiles have vanished and her sweet songs flown,
Flitting like the dreams that have cheered us and gone.
Now the nodding wild flow’rs may wither on the shore
While her gentle fingers will cull them no more:
Oh! I sigh for Jeanie with the light brown hair,
Floating like a vapor, on the soft summer air.

One of several separations occurred in 1853. “Jeanie…” was published in June 1854. It earned the composer two cents per copy on 10, 890 copies sold, or a grand total of $217.80. It is fair to say that this song is far more popular today than it was during Foster’s lifetime and well beyond. In 1891, e.g., Jane and Marion received from the publishers seventy-five cents, the royalties that accrued at the increased rate of three cents for copy. The year 1854 also marked the publication of the unusual anthology of arrangements Stephen made of various well-known melodies of the day, 73 in number, and titled The Social Orchestra, for Flute or Violin: A Collection of Popular Melodies Arranged as Solos, Duets, Trios, and Quartets. The tunes derive from Foster’s own repertoire as well as from those of such other composers as Gaetano Donizetti in particular, but also Franz Schubert, Johann Strauss, Jr., Vincenzo Bellini, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Joseph Franz Karl Lanner.

Two of the songs of this period achieved fame in their own time, and, in the twentieth century, became the official state songs of Kentucky (1928) and Florida (1935). “My Old Kentucky Home, Goodnight” (G major, 4-4 time, Poco Adagio) has a distinct connection to Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel, Uncle Tom’s Cabin (1851); indeed, the first lines of the song, in their first incarnation, read as follows:

Oh good night, good night, good night
Poor Uncle Tom.
Grieve not for your old Kentucky home.
You’re bound for a better land
Old Uncle Tom.

The final version of the opening lines read thusly (Ex. 9):

The sun shines bright in the old Kentucky Home.
‘Tis summer, the darkies are gay.

But by the third and closing verse, the atmosphere has changed radically:

The head must bow and the back will have to bend,
Wherever the darkey may go:
A few more days, and the trouble all will end
In the field where the sugarcanes grow.
A few more days for to tote the weary load,
No matter ‘twill never be light,
A few more days till we totter on the road,
Then my old Kentucky Home good-night!

Presumably the slaves have been sold to plantations in the deep South, for the corn tops and the meadows referenced in the first verse, are replaced by the sugarcanes. The tempo for the entire song, Poco Adagio, captures the song’s essence. Be it noted, however, that standard English, rather than black dialect, is employed. Despite the first two lines of the third verse, Frederick Douglass (1818-1895), famed abolitionist, writer, and, be it noted, former slave, believed that this song evokes a sympathetic cognition of the slave’s plight, a possible step toward an anti-slavery movement. These views were expressed only three years after the song was published.

“Old Folks at Home” (D major, 4-4 time, Moderato con espressione) is perhaps the best-known of the 200-plus songs of Foster. A poignant home song, it made the Suwannee River famous well beyond its Georgia-Florida boundaries; indeed, it replaced the Pee Dee River in South Carolina and the Yazoo River in Mississippi as Foster’s choice owing to the fact that, in his truncated spelling, Swanee, it was a better fit from a musical and poetic standpoint. As the original title page indicates, it was to be known as an “Ethiopian Melody” and “E(dwin) P(earce) Christy” (1815-1862) was identified as the composer (Plate 3); these declarations came with Foster’s approval. Later editions restored Foster’s name as the composer at his request.

The opening lines of the song convey the situation (Ex.10):

Way down upon de Swanee Ribber,
Far, far away,
Dere’s wha my heart is turning ebber,
Dere’s wha de old folks stay.

All up and down de whole creation

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3See Frederick Douglass, My Bondage and My Freedom (New York: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 18550).
1. Sadly I roam,
2. Still longing for de old plantation,
3. And for de old folks at home.

The line which follows makes clear whom the protagonist is addressing:

4. All de world am sad and dreary,
5. Ebrywhere I roam,
6. Oh! Darkies how my heart grows weary,
7. Far from de old folks at home.

“Camptown Races,” (D major, 2-4 time, *Moderato con spirito*) a nonsense song which, because of its black dialect, qualifies it also as an Ethiopian melody, became known for its chorus of “Doo-dahs.” (Ex. 11)

In verse 4, the “bobtail nag” emerges as a winning horse:

8. See dem flyin’ on a ten-mile heat,
9. Doo-dah! doo-dah!
10. Round de race-track den repeat,
11. Oh! Doo-dah-day!
12. I win my money on de bobtail nag,
13. Doo-dah! doo-dah!
14. I keep my money in an old towbag,
15. Oh! Doo-dah-day!

Foster attended schools in Towanda and Athens, approximately five miles from a racetrack in Camptown, Pennsylvania, the inspiration for the song. Owing to the notoriety of having a racetrack in its midst, along with its association with gambling, residents of Camptown, New Jersey arranged for a change to their village’s name. Thus it was that Irvington became the new name in honor of the writer Washington Irving (1783-1859), author of such short stories as “Rip Van Winkle” and “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.”

An equine of a different hue is “Angelina Baker,” (A major, 2-4 time, *Moderato*), a nonsense song to be sure, but one wherein the venue is a plantation. The narrator of the song, who was born here and toiled here “Hoein’ in de corn,” describes himself as “happy all de day” until he met Angelina. In verse 3, some elements of her appearance and character are made known:

16. Angelina am so tall
17. She nebber sees de ground,
18. She habe to take a wellumscope
19. To look down de town.
20. Angelina likes de boys
21. As far as she can see dem,
22. She used to run old Massa round
23. To ax him for to free dem.
Verse 4 explains the unexpected disruption to daily life:

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Early in de morning
Ob a lubly summer day
I ax for Angelina,
And dey say, "she's gone away."
I don't know wha to find her,
Cayse I don't know wha she's gone,
She left me here to weep a tear
And beat on de old jawbone.
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The chorus emphasizes the sadness that has come to Angelina’s once-happy admirer (Ex. 12): The wellumscope refers to a telescope, perhaps made of vellum, while the jaw-bone, an instrument made from the actual jaw bone of a donkey or a horse, was commonly used in minstrel shows of the time. It’s sound was akin to that of a tambourine or possibly a couple of castanets. While this song, published in 1850, would seem to have earned a certain popularity due to its faux-pathos, it actually earned a mere $16.87 after seven years on the market.

“Laura Lee,” (G major, 2-4 time, Moderato), published in August 1851, tells the tale of a gentleman who lost his true love, the lassie with whom he enjoyed roaming the plains. His pain is so exacerbated that he now views the Earth as naught but a desert isle. After an eight-measure introduction, the song commences with the first in a series of queries and observations (Ex. 13) which enumerate the various aspects of their relationship that he so misses. The “merry face” and the “happy dream” in verse 1, the “sunny smile” in verse 2, and the “winning voice” in verse 3 reveal much about the young man’s fondness for “Sweet Laura Lee.” The text to verse 3 follows:

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When will thy winning voice
Breathe on mine ear?
When will my heart rejoice,
Finding thee near?
When will we roam the plain,
Joyous and free,
Never to part again,
Sweet Laura Lee?
When will we roam the plain,
Joyous and free,
Never to part again,
Sweet Laura Lee?
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“Ellen Bayne” (C major, 2-4 time) is an anomaly among the songs in which young ladies are the primary subject matter. Oddly, there is no tempo indication. A lost or departed object of admiration is not the focus. Ellen, in fact, is a young woman asleep. She is, in essence, wished pleasant dreams (Ex. 14) after an 8-measure introduction. The chorus affirms this sentiment as the observer of the dreamer lingers at her side. Simple harmonies and strophic
structure, a norm for Foster, seem especially well-suited here. The illustration by William Sharp (Plate 3) provides a glimpse of Ms. Bayne when she is awake.

At the time of “Old Dog Tray,” (G major, 4-4 time, Andante con espressione) the Foster home in Allegheny was in close proximity to the East Common. It was here that neighborhood children would play with Tray, a setter given to the family by their friend, Colonel Matthew J. Stewart. Stephen’s fond recollection of the dog is revealed by the chorus (Ex. 15) and, in verse 2, the loss of family and friends is recalled, but the faithful Tray is still there to provide solace:

The forms I call’d my own
Have vanished one by one,
The lov’d o’es, the dear ones have all passed away.
Their happy smiles have flown,
Their gentle voices gone;
I’ve nothing left but old dog Tray.

The sadness that permeates this homage to a beloved canine, was published in 1853 during the period in which the composer and his wife experienced their first separation. It achieved immediate popularity and earned more than $1000 in its first four years.

Two of the group of “Willie” songs come from this same highly productive decade. It should be noted that William was not only the name of Stephen’s father, but also that of a child born to his parents on May 7, 1814, but who died less than a year later—on March 26, 1815. Another William, an adopted son, was, according to Evelyn Foster Morneweck, “a motherless young relative of William B. Foster’s, who was taken into the family soon after they moved to the White Cottage, and given the name of the baby William.”

“Willie My Brave,” (B-flat major, 3-4 time, Moderato) the first of these songs, was published in 1851 by Firth, Pond, & Company. Willie is a sailor who went to sea one day leaving behind a “fair maiden.” Following a year’s absence, the distraught young lady pleads as follows for his return (Ex. 15):

In verse 3, the sad truth is revealed, but the maiden, for the third time, utters her futile wish for Willie’s return:

None who knew the maiden’s grief,
And saw her heart’s devotion
Would tell her of the fragile bark
That sank beneath the ocean;
But when all hope had passed away,
Her life breathed forth its parting lay—
Come o’er the billow
Ride on the wave,
Come while the wind bloweth,

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Willie my brave!

“Willie We Have Missed You” (F major, 4-4 time, *Moderato*), an 1854 publication, sold close to 25,000 copies within three years. This Willie has been away from home for a while. The reference to “little ones” in verse 2 suggests that he is returning to his wife and children. Verse 3 provides a summary leading to the euphoric welcoming greeting:

The days were sad without you,
The nights long and drear;
My dreams have been about you;
Oh! welcome, Willie dear!

Last night I wept and watched
By the moonlight’s cheerless ray,
Till I thought I heard your footstep
Then I wiped my tears away;
But my heart grew sad again
When I found you had not come;
Oh! Willie, we have missed you:
Welcome, welcome home!

The closing two lines also appear in verses 1 and 2 (Ex. 16):

It was Foster’s original intent for this song to convey a serious situation as revealed in verse 1, “They said you would not come.”

Although Willie’s whereabouts and doings are not stated, the exuberant welcome at his long-awaited arrival would supposedly suggest that all was now well. The arbiter of such matters, however, is often not the creator but the public, and, in this case, their verdict was that this was a comedic tale of woe. Over the years that has been the prevailing sentiment regarding this, the most popular of the “Willies.”

“Gentle Annie,” (E-flat major, 4-4 time, *Andante mosso*) sad but not maudlin, is based on an event that occurred in the Fosters’ neighborhood. A young girl, it seems, was run over by a passing dray and killed. She was sent on an errand during a rainstorm; when crossing the street, the accident occurred. Stephen, though dressed for a party that evening when he heard of this event, spent the night with the deceased girl’s parents in an effort to console them. This story is relayed in Morrison Foster’s biography of his brother (See Selected Bibliography). The Chorus asks the question whose answer is already known (Ex. 17). In verse 3, the singer refers to the places where he and the girl used to walk:

Ah! the hours grow sad while I ponder
Near the silent spot where thou art laid,
And my heart bows down when I wander
By the streams and the meadows where we stray’d.
The tale is short and sweet if not saccharine. “The Glendy Burk” (G major, 2-4 time, Allegro moderato) is a nonsense song about a steamship named for Glen D. Burke (1805-1879). Foster dropped the e in the surname. Burke, a Baltimore-born businessman, later moved to New Orleans where he acquired a considerable amount of wealth from various interests, including sugar and cotton plantations. He is also said to have owned many slaves and to have served as a temporary mayor of New Orleans (three weeks during June 1865). The ship, which was gifted with a grand piano by Burke in appreciation for the honor of it bearing his name, made its first run on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers in 1851. Its brief life ended when it sank near Cairo, Illinois in 1855. The song, however, with its jaunty tune, is billed as a plantation melody on the title page (Plate 4). We learn something about the ship, the captain, and the crew in the first two verses (Ex. 18). By verse 3, the singer refers to the nature of what he does when the ship is docked in New Orleans:

I’ll go wha dey work wid de sugar and de cane
And roll on de cotton bale.”

Verse 4 sheds light on the rest of the ship’s schedule:

My lady love is as pretty as a pink,
I’ll meet her on de way;
I’ll take her back to de sunny old south
And dah I’ll make her stay.
So don’t you fret my honey, dear
Oh! don’t you fret Miss Brown;
I’ll take you back ‘fore de middle of de week
When de Glendy Burk comes down.

The Chorus then discloses succinctly what occurs when it is time to leave Louisiana (Ex. 19). “Massa’s in de Cold Ground,” (D-flat major, 4-4 time, Poco Lento) a plantation song published July 7, 1852, was boldly declared to be “sung by Christy’s Minstrels” on its title page before the name “Stephen C. Foster” appears (Plate 5). The sale of 45,000 copies during its first four and a half years earned Foster $906.76. While the first verse refers to “De darkeys’ mournful song,” and doubles down on the word “cold,” (Ex. 20), the Chorus affirms that they are weeping for Massa and that the ground is very cold indeed (Ex. 21). Curiously, after the close of the Civil War (and Foster’s death) it became the norm to add a second “cold” to the title in conformity to its usage in the song itself.

Verse 3 affirms that Massa was loved due to his kindness:

Massa made de darkeys love him,
Cayse he was so kind,
Now dey sadly weep above him,
Mourning cayse he leave dem behind.
I cannot work before tomorrow,
Cayse de tear drop flow.
I try to drive away my sorrow
Pickin’ on de old banjo.

“Massa,” along with “My Old Kentucky Home, Goodnight” and “Old Folks at Home,” was heard in George L. Aiken’s stage production of Uncle Tom’s Cabin in Pittsburgh during November 1853. They were clearly much admired by the general public; their inclusion in a play which, in its original form as a book by Harriet Beecher Stow strongly influenced “My Old Kentucky Home, Goodnight,” expanded their audience further.

Given the subject matter of the Ethiopian melodies, it seems well to mention that Eliza Clayland Tomlinson Foster, Stephen’s mother, was raised by her mother’s wealthy, slaveholding, and socially prominent family, the Claylands. Stephen’s friendship with the writer Charles P. Shiras (1824-1854) seems germane, too. Shiras, who was for a while editor of the antislavery journal, The Albatross, collaborated with the composer on the song “Annie, My Own Love” (G major, 2-4 time, Andante, con Espressione) a year prior to the poet’s passing. After an eight-measure introduction in the piano, the first of the three verses establish the mood (Ex. 22). The second verse reveals the sad truth that, despite her declaration that she and her loved one would never part, the Grim Reaper had other ideas:

Like the moon to the twilight
She came to my heart,
And fondly she told me
We never should part;
By Death, unrelenting,
She’s freed from her vow,
And Annie, my own love,
Is gone from me now.
And Annie, my own love,
Is gone from me now.

The third verse solidifies the protagonist’s feelings of doom and gloom, and closes, as does the first verse, with the twice-repeated lines of verse 2 above—with a one-word exception. Thus “For” replaces “And” (Ex. 23):

“The Great Baby Show” (E-flat major, 6-8 time, “Should be sung rather slowly”), also known as “The Abolition Show,” and “The White House Chair” (A-flat major, 4-4 time, tempo not given) played a role in the 1856 presidential election. James Buchanan of Pennsylvania was the candidate of the Democratic Party (his running-mate was John C. Breckenridge of Kentucky) and, therefore,

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See https://levysheetmusic.msc.jhu.edu/collection/067/004 for Musical Examples 22 and 23.
the choice of the Foster family. Aiding and abetting the cause was the Buchanan Glee Club, an organization of male singers in the greater Pittsburgh area; their musical director was Stephen Foster. As for “The Great Baby Show,” Foster’s words encompassed eight verses; to them two additional verses were contributed by his brother Morrison. Each verse was followed by a chorus which sang the following: “Sing tu ral lau ral lau lau lau lau lau lal lay. The melody chosen for the song was “Villikins and His Dinah,” (Ex.24) a nineteenth-century English ballad about two lovers who, as a result of parental interference, commit suicide and are interred together. Perhaps this is why Foster suggests a slow tempo for his political satire and sarcastic jibes against the Abolitionists. A few of the representative verses follow:

Verse 1: On the Seventeenth day of September, you know,
  Took place in our city the great baby show:
  They shut up the factories and let out the schools,
  For the Seventeenth day was the day of all fools.

Verse 3: They had gemmen ob color to join in their games
  And jokers and clowns of all ages and names,
  They had pop guns and tin pans and all kinds of toys,
  And a very fine party of women and boys.

Verse 6: They had Ohio yankees of Western Reserve
  Who live upon cheese, ginger cakes and preserve,
  Abolition’s their doctrine their rod and their staff,
  And they’ll fight for a sixpence an hour and a half.

Verse 7: Now was it not kind in these good simple clowns
  To amuse all the children in both of our towns
  To shut up their workshops and spend so much money
  To black up their faces, get tight and be funny.

Verse 10: In the year ’45 when the fire laid us waste
  Old Buck gave us five hundred dollars in haste
  They then took his money and lauded his name
  But he’s now “Ten cent Jimmy,” their banners proclaim.

The song’s title is meant to deride the Republican campaign supporting John Fremont for President. The “gemmen ob color “ in Verse 3 is a pointed reflection on Republican support for Negroes and the Abolition movement. The reference to Ohio Yankees in Verse 6 was meant to cast derision on Union Democrats from Ohio who were linked to the anti-slavery movement. The term “Yankee,” indeed, was not one in which Foster Democrats took pride. The practice of blackening faces (Verse 7), as in the minstrel shows of the time, is meant here to blacken the reputation of the Republicans. In Verse 10, Morrison Foster cites “Old Buck” as a term of approbation for candidate Buchanan, who was mocked as “Ten cent Jimmy” by his opponents for his comment that ten cents per day was a sufficient income for a laborer of the time.

The complete text appeared in the Pittsburgh Post on September 26, 1856 just nine days after the parade which is described therein, at least from the perspective of Foster. It can also be read in its entirety in the Evelyn Foster
Buchanan, be it noted, believed that the states ought to be able to determine for themselves whether or not to maintain the practice of slavery, a somewhat “safe” position to which the composer aligned himself.

“The White House Chair” gives far less cause for controversy in that its message is direct and refrains from ridicule. The text follows:

Verse 1: Let all our hearts for Union be,
For the North and South are one;
They’ve worked together manfully
And together they will still work on.

Chorus: Then come ye men from every State,
Our creed is broad and fair;
Buchanan is our candidate,
And we’ll put him in the White House Chair.

Verse 2: We’ll have no designing band,
To rule with secret sway:
We’ll give to all a helping hand,
And be open as the light of day.

Chorus: We’ll not outlaw the land that holds
The bones of Washington,
Where Jackson fought and Marion bled,
And the battles of the brave were won.

That Buchanan is clearly the candidate of choice, as stated in the Chorus, the song’s essential plea is that the Union not be dissolved. The song’s text which, like that of its companion, “The Great Baby Show,” also appeared in the Pittsburgh Post, this one three days later, on September 29, 1856. The melody for “The White House Chair” (Ex. 25) is much better known for its use in Foster’s later song, “The Merry Merry Month of May,” published in Clark’s School Visitor in 1862 (Plate 4).

“Lula is Gone” (D major, 4-4 time, Poco Adagio) is another in the tear-jerker category with Foster’s words set to his music. The Chorus matter-of-factly states the simple, albeit sad, fact that the beloved Lula is no more (Ex. 26):

Verse 2 provides some of the context which this loss has brought to her loved one (Ex. 27):

The complete text of this verse follows:

Not a voice awakens the mountains,
No gladness returns with the dawn,
Not a smile is mirrored in the fountains,

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8 See https://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/hasm.confo259/ for Musical Example 26
9 See https://tile.loc.gov/storge-services/service/music/civilwar/200002512/oo3v.jpg for Musical Example 27
For Lula, sweet Lula is gone.
Day is bereft of its pleasures,
Night of its beautiful dreams,
While the dirge of well-remembered measures
Is murmured by the ripple of the streams.

The very slow tempo assures the listener of the singer’s mental state.

“Old Black Joe,” (D-flat major, 4-4 time, Poco Adagio) published November 8, 1860, although sometimes thought of as an “Ethiopian song” owing to its subject, is written in standard English. The terms “parlor song” or “plantation song,” therefore, seem more apt. Joe, whose early years, according to verse 1, were spent with his friends in “the cotton fields away,” (Ex. 28) was, in his later years in the employ of the McDowell family. He sometimes drove Dr. McDowell to visit his patients, and, during the days in which Stephen courted Jane, worked in the family’s home greeting visitors. Joe’s sadness at his recollections of his past are clearly in evidence in Verse 2:

Why do I weep when my heart should feel no pain?
Why do I sigh that my friends come not again?

The closing Chorus (Ex. 29), with Joe’s familiar words, “I’m coming,” emphasizes the ever-faithful servant’s role in life. The lack of black dialect may be conjectured to be due to the refined environment in which Joe was surrounded in his later years. One might surmise that the urban setting would provide a better lifestyle than that of the early plantation days, but Joe, according to the text, continues to ask this question (in Verse 2):

Why do I weep when my heart should feel no pain,
Why do I sigh that my friends come not again,
Grieving for forms now departed long ago?
I hear their gentle voices calling “Old Black Joe.”

By Verse 3, he amplifies further those whom he misses:

Where are the hearts once so happy and so free.
The children so dear that I held upon my knee?
Gone to the shore where my soul has longed to go.
I hear their gentle voices calling “Old Black Joe.”

Given Foster’s fondness for alcohol in his last years, a song from 1855 seems prescient. Bowing to the active temperance movement of the time, and the resultant vogue for anti-drinking songs, “Comrades, Fill No Glass for Me” (A major, 3-4 time, Andante mosso) suggests that he is willing to be a “party pooper.” Verse 1 states up front the song’s clear intention (Ex. 30). By Verse 2, despite being in the company of his “boon comrades,” the protagonist continues to urge them to pour no alcohol into his glass. In Verse 3 he recalls the evolution from his unsullied youth to his later years when he betrayed the pride in which he was held by his parents:
When I was young I felt the tide
Of aspirations undefiled,
But manhood’s years have wronged the pride
My parents centered in their child.

Then, by a mother’s sacred tear,
By all that memory should revere,
Though boon companions ye may be—
Oh! comrades, fill no glass for me.

By 1860, Stephen, his “Jeanie,” and 9-year old Marion moved to New York City. Apart from its location, with its swirl of publishers, musicians, and writers, and its many performances of concerts of all types as well as operas, it brought Foster into contact with George Cooper (1840-1927). This fortuitous friendship resulted in the creation of twenty-one songs wherein Foster composed the music to Cooper’s lyrics. A wide swath of subject matter is covered in the songs of this final phase of Foster’s life and works. A continuation of “Willie” songs, in which the lyrics are by the composer, includes “Our Willie, Dear, is Dying” (E-flat major, 2-4 time, *Moderato con Espressione*) of 1861. While the title page (Plate 6) omits the commas surrounding “Dear,” the text in Verse 1 includes them (Ex. 31). Further in the same verse the text makes it clear (Ex. 32) that the “Dear” refers to the mother addressing the father, who is not at home (as in other “Willie” songs). In the third and final verse, the mother’s grief is most touchingly expressed by Foster:

No grief that e’er befell me, love,
Could cause this heart such pain;
Though neighbors kindly tell me, love,
He may get well again.

But a mother’s heart is watchful
All the life has left his eyes;
Oh come tonight and weep with me before our darling dies,
Oh come tonight and weep with me before our darling dies.

The Refrain that followed the first two verses, follows here as well:

Come with an eagle’s flight,
Come like a beam of light.
Come, love, come home tonight;
Our Willie dear is dying.

In the final line, be it noted, there is an intentional absence of a comma surrounding “dear.”

“Willie Has Gone to War” (E-flat major, 4-4 time, *Con spirito*), a Cooper-texted opus, dates from 1862, during the early phase of the Civil War. The

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chorus, singing with gusto in the “heroic key,” informs us of Willie’s situation in which her dear one must now cope (Ex. 33). She muses of happy outings she took with Willie, but which she now must take alone (Ex. 34). Although “the foe” is mentioned in Verse 2, it is not identified with specificity. In Verse 3, she notes the passing of the seasons as she waits for the battles to end while she pines away for her mate to return:

The leaves of the forest will fade,
The roses will wither and die;
But spring tour home in the glade
On fairy-like pinions will fly;
And still I will hopefully wait
The day when these battles are o’er,
And pine like a bird for its mate,
Till Willie comes home from the war!

“We Are Coming, Father Abra’am, 300,000 More” (C major, 3-4 time, Con spirito) is set to the words of James Sloan Gibbons (1810-1892), a prominent supporter of abolition and a Quaker. Both Foster and Gibbons received their inspiration for this creation from the call to arms issued by President Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865) on July 1, 1862. He (the President) was seeking a large number of white volunteers to fight for the Union in the burgeoning Civil War. At this point in time, the Army of Northern Virginia, under the command of General Robert E. Lee, had been inflicting heavy losses on the Union forces.

The first of the song’s four verses makes clear what the recruits will leave behind in order to respond to the Commander-in-Chief (Ex. 35):

By the fourth and final verse we learn, from Gibbins’s text, that 600,000 men have already preceded the callup for 300,000 more:

You have called us, and we’re coming by Richmond’s bloody tide,
To lay us down for freedom’s sake, our brothers’ bones beside;
Or from foul treason’s savage grip, to wrench the murderous blade;
And in the face of foreign foes its fragments to parade.
Six hundred thousand loyal men and true have gone before,
We are coming, Father Abraham, three hundred thousand more!

The Chorus, which sings after each verse (Ex. 36), reminds the listener of the purpose of the mission, “our union to restore.” The Con spirito direction for the entire composition is especially appropriate here.

When a draft was established by the Enrollment Act of 1863 as a result of losses and insufficient volunteers, an unexcused draftee was able to pay a commutation fee of $300 for one draft. This led to a parody of the Foster song called “Song of the Conscripts,” the main point of which was stated in one of its lines:

11See www.stephrn.foster.songs.com/foster039.htm for Musical Examples 33 and 34.
Since poverty has been our crime, we bow to thy decree,
We are the poor who have no wealth to purchase liberty.

The ongoing need for troops by the Union forces caused the U. S. War Department to establish, with President Lincoln’s approval, a Bureau of Colored Troops on May 22, 1863. The troops were Negroes who enlisted for service; their commanders were Caucasian. Stephen Foster and George Cooper (Plate 7) produced one of the more unusual songs of the Civil War era, “A Soldier in de Colored Brigade” (C major, 2-4 time, *Moderato*). The cover of the sheet music (Plate 8) lists Cooper’s name first, but Foster’s name contains larger and darker lettering. The first of six verses announce the fact that the colored troops are wanted by “Uncle,” not “Father” Abram (Ex. 37).12

The last two verses and their Choruses follow:

**Verse 5:**
Some say dey lub de darkey and dey want him to be free,  
I s’pec dey only fooling and dey better let him be  
For him dey’d brake dis Union which de’re forefadders hab made,  
Worth more dan twenty millions ob de Colored Brigade.

**Chorus:**
Dan millions! Dan millions ob de darkey Brigade,
Worth more than twenty millions ob de Colored Brigade!

**Verse 6:**
Den cheer up now my honey dear I hear de trumpets play,  
And gib me just a little buss before I go away.  
I’ll marry you when I come back so don’t you be afraid,  
We’ll raise up picaninnies for de Colored Brigade.

**Chorus:**
Ninnies! Ninnies for de darkey Brigade,  
We’ll raise up picaninnies for de Colored Brigade!

“How Willie’s Gone to Heaven,” (E-flat major, 4-4 and 2-4 time, Lively) dismissed as a “potboiler” by Evelyn Foster Morneweck13, may be an attempt to bring closure to the subject in “Our Willie Dear is Dying.” It, too, is in the key of E-flat major. The first of its four verses assert simplistically that little Willie has gone to heaven and that all his sins have been forgiven (Ex. 38).14

How many sins could baby Willie possibly have committed?! Potboiler indeed!

**Verse 3** avers other aspects of the little one’s state of mind:

In departing he was cheerful,  
Praise the Lord!  
He was hopeful, never fearful,  
Praise the Lord!

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12068.115-A Soldier in de Colored Brigade./Levy Music Collection for Musical Example 37.  
14See Attributions-ShareAlike4.0International (CC BY-SA4.0 for Musical Example 38
The chorus, which follows each verse, sings the following:

Joyful let your voices rise,
Do not come with tearful eyes,
Willie’s dwelling in the skies,
Willie’s gone to Heaven!

This foray into hymn writing reveals a side of the composer that was likely intended primarily as a source of income in his difficult penultimate year.

On the upbeat side, however, “Mr. and Mrs. Brown” (C major, 4-4 time, Allegrezza) is something of a sequel to the earlier “take” on married life, “Willie We Have Missed You.” Whereas in the “Willie” song, the husband has been gone for quite awhile, Mr. Brown’s sin is that he arrives home after 2 a.m. to Mrs. Brown’s consternation (Ex. 39) During the course of six verses (the text is by George Cooper) the couple argues both seriously and humorously. In Verse 2, e.g., the following exchange takes place:

Mr. B: So, Mrs. Brown, goodbye.
I shall not stay to see you frown,
So, Mrs. Brown, goodbye.
Mrs. B: I’ll make you stay to see me frown,
You shall not say good-by.
O! Harry Brown, O! Harry Brown,
You see you’ve made me cry.

In Verse 3, Mrs. Brown attempts to make her husband jealous by telling him that she had a caller, “young Jones,” and that he calls every night. To add insult to injury, she further responds to Mr. Brown’s threat to fight Mr. Jones by telling him “O! Harry Brown, O! Harry Brown, He’s far above your height!”

In Verse 4, Mr. Brown offers this wife the excuse that his business keeps him at the store “And if I could have sooner come (hic) I’d have been here (hic) long before.” The “hics” assure Mrs. Brown that too much alcohol is the cause for his late arrival home. In Verse 5, Mr. Brown declares “I’ll promise you when night has come, I’ll always stay at home.”

The couple’s exchange, in verse 6, brings about a successful denouement:

Mr. B: You were but joking, dearest wife?
Now come and kiss me, do,
Jones is a bosom friend to me (seriously),
But needn’t be to you.
My little wife! My joy and life! (lovingly)
My gentle pretty elf.
If anyone sits up with you
Hereafter, it’s myself.

Mrs. B: If anyone sits up with me,
O, let it be yourself.
Mr. B: O! Mary Brown, O! Mary Brown,
Our quarrels they are o’er.
Mrs. B: O! Harry Brown! O! Harry Brown,
We’ll never quarrel more.

That Mrs. Brown is referred to as “little” and as a “pretty elf” in a most affirmative way may be juxtaposed to her protective reference to Mr. Jones being “far above” the height of Mr. Brown. The lover’s quarrel, however, is resolved with gentle humor. A photo (See Plate 7) of Cooper (left) and Foster (right) reveals that both, large figures in their professional lives, were short in stature.

Another so-called “nonsense” song that plays on the foibles of, in this instance, young folks and the silly issues with which they concern themselves is “If You’ve Only Got a Moustache” (D major, 6-8 time, Con Espressione). After an eight-measure piano introduction, the first of four verses (Ex. 40) begins a litany of the various flaws that a young man may possess in his pursuit of a fair maiden, but that regardless of what age he may be they can be overcome “if you’ve only got a moustache.” In Verse 2, the pursuant may be an empty-headed blockhead. In Verse 3 he may be faulted for being lacking in manners, or in style, or in coming not from a distinguished family, or being poor. Verse 4, in its entirety, follows:

I once was in sorrow and tears,
Because I was jilted you know,
So right down to the river I ran
To quickly dispose of my woe,
A good friend he gave me advice
And timely prevented the splash,
Now at home I’ve a wife and ten heirs,
And all through a handsome moustache,
And all through a handsome moustache,
A moustache, a-moustache,
And all through a handsome moustache.

This Foster-Cooper collaboration, as with “Mr. and Mrs. Brown,” dates from 1864, the year of the composer’s passing.

Two years prior to the songs referenced above, Foster wrote both words and lyrics for one of his most memorable ballads, “Beautiful Dreamer” (D major, 9-8 time, Moderato). It is, in terms of its subject matter, something of a sequel to “Come Where My Love Lies Dreaming” (F major, 4-4 time, Moderato) which dates from 1855. Both songs seem inextricably entwined with the marital difficulties which beset Jane and Stephen Foster throughout the 1850s. Their honeymoon, e.g., was essentially an extended trip whose primary purpose was to seek out business opportunities for the composer. Although Baltimore and New York were the principal points of focus, there were stops in such Pennsylvania locales as Paradise, Mercersburg, and, importantly, Chambersburg where the couple visited relatives of Stephen’s mother. This pattern of staying with relatives continued when they returned to
Allegheny City in September 1850 and promptly established residence in the
home of William Barclay Foster, Jr., with whom Stephen’s parents were also
living. Following the birth of Marion in April 18, 1851, the couple stayed for a
short while with Jane’s parents, the McDowells, and then returned to the Foster
home. Given that she was brought up in wealthy surroundings, and used to a
life of personal privacy and such niceties as servants, Jane had difficulties in
adjusting to the new order which her current life dictated. By September of
1860, the family of three moved to a boarding house on Greene Street in New
York.

With respect to the “dreamer” songs referred to earlier, “Come Where My
Love Lies Dreaming” (Plate 9)15 was originally scored for a vocal quartet and
deviated from the usual strophic form associated with Foster’s songs. It was
instead in “through-composed” form, in which each verse is sung to a different
melody (in German lieder of the time, this feature was known as
durchkomponiert). The loved one here is portrayed at the outset as being able
to spend happy nocturnal hours “redeeming” the short-lived joys of day (Ex.
41). The second verse, which commences in the dominant key of C major,
informs us that the dreamer’s thoughts move freely, akin to a “gushing
melody.” The text’s suggestion to “come with a lute-toned lay “recalls lovers
of earlier times. By the closing Coda, back in F major, two C-sharps appear to
render a brief suggestion of D minor, perhaps to inject the notion that the
narrator’s loved one is “dreaming the happy hours away” with some especially
interesting or unusual moments. The closing V7-I cadence, however, assures us
that all is well.

“Beautiful Dreamer,” a parlor ballad from 1862, was not published until
March 10, 1864, some three months after the composer’s passing.

After a four-measure piano introduction, the dreamer, described as
beautiful, is asked to awaken to “starlight and dewdrops” and that, “lull’d by
the moonlight” she will no longer have to endure “sounds of the rude
world’(Ex. 42). By the second verse, the dreamer is asked “to beam on my
heart” after which “all clouds of sorrow” will depart. The ongoing arpeggios in
the accompaniment aid and abet the general atmosphere of tranquility. Not a
single dynamic mark appears throughout the song; however, an exclamation
mark occurs in the final iterations of the words “beautiful dreamer, awake unto
me!,” whereupon a tempo is indicated for the piano’s -- and the song’s--
closing four measures (Ex. 43). This suggests, although it is not in the score, a
possible ritardando or the like for the final five exclamatory words.

“Mine is the Mourning Heart” (B-flat major, 6-8 time, Moderato (Con
espressione for the vocal parts) comes a year prior to “Beautiful Dreamer.” The
lyrics, which are sung by soprano and tenor solo voices, suggest the strained
state of the Foster marriage. Following a four-measure introduction, the
Soprano sings “Thou hast roam’d under summer skies while I have weather’d

15Plate 9 represents William Sharp’s illustration for the song in John Tasker Howard, Ibid.,
p.118.
the storms” (Ex. 44). The Tenor responds “I have pray’d that the angel’s fair
would shield thy pillow from harm”. By Verse 2, the following exchange
escalates matters:

Soprano: Thou hast whisper’d in words of love to other ears than
mine
Tenor: I have yielded to other’s charms but worship’d only
thine.
Soprano: But ah! Dost thou remember love, those sacred vows
We’ve taken?

The Refrain, sung by each of the voices, makes clear that the principals
feel wronged by each other:

Mine is the mourning heart! By thee, by thee forsaken. The song was
published in July 1861 by Clark’s School Visitor Magazine (Plate 10) at about
the time that Jane and Marion went to visit Jane’s sister in Lewistown,
Pennsylvania. By September, however, concerned about Stephen’s welfare,
notably his ongoing flirtation with alcoholism coupled with financial
challenges, Jane and her daughter returned to New York. In June of the
following year, Marion took sick and Jane decided to bring her back to
Lewistown. By 1863, the pair, who had been staying with Jane’s relatives as
well as Stephen’s, and, on occasion, in small hotels (when Stephen could
muster funds to send them) were in a most unstable situation. It was in this year
that Jane had the good fortune to locate a position in Greensburg, Pennsylvania
as a telegraph operator. Given the turmoil of the raging Civil War she was not
bored from a lack of transmitting messages.

Stephen Foster’s final years were increasingly marked by his ongoing
battle with the bottle, by ever-increasing pecuniary problems, and by a careless
attitude toward his appearance. Brother Morrison sent him both money and
clothing, but to little avail. Despite the absence of his wife and daughter, and
the other issues with which he was beset, he continued to turn out a goodly
number of diverse songs. Some were such “nonsense” items as the five-versed
“My Wife is a Most Knowing Woman” (E-flat major, 6-8 time, Vivace) which
was published in 1863 by Horace Waters. A prequel to “Mr. and Mrs. Brown,”
with lyrics also by George Cooper, this song is a virtual catalog of the wife’s
negative traits from the purview of the husband (Ex.45).

Verses 3 and 5 get to the crux of the matter and offer a final denouement:

Verse 3. Not often I go out to dinner
And come home a little “so so,”
I try to creep up through the hall-way,
As still as a mouse, on tip-toe.
She’s sure to be waiting up for me
And then comes a nice little scene,
“What, you tell me you’re sober, you wretch you,

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16See https://digital.library.pitt.edu/islandora/object/pitt.31735061835306 for Musical Dxample 44.
17See https://imslp.org/wiki/File: PMLP384571-My_Wife_is_a_Most_Knowing_Woman.pdf
Now don’t think that I am so green
My life is quite worn out with you, man.”
Oh, my wife is a most knowing woman!

Verse 5. Yes, I must give all of my friends up
If I would live happy and quiet;
One might as well be ‘neath a tombstone
As live in confusion and riot
This life we all know is a short one,
While some tongues are long heaven knows,
And a miserable life is a husband’s
Who numbers his wife with his foes:
I’ll stay at home now like a true man.
For my wife is a most knowing woman. 18

“When Old Friends Were Here” (B-flat major, 4-4 time, Moderato) with text by George Cooper and “She Was All the World to Me” (E-flat major, 4-4 time, Moderato) with text by someone known as Dr. Duffy may be the last songs by Stephen Foster (Plate 11). They were published after his death by Horace Waters of New York. Both are sad songs of loss. In the first instance it is a fond remembrance of friends who are no longer with us as we learn from the opening words (Ex. 46). The Chorus adds finality to the situation by noting that “All are gone! No loved one’s near!” The second verse recalls happy days of the past that have now been taken away;

When old friends were here
We roamed o’er the hills,
We sang merry songs,
As free as the rills,
But Time on its wave
Has rudely bone away
The fair dewy flowers
Of life’s early day.

The Chorus reminds us of the state of the singer as he mourns the grievous loss of all his friends:

I weep for the happy days
When old friends were here!

The exclamation point sums up the state of affairs succinctly.

“She Was All the World to Me,” on the other hand, speaks of a permanent individual loss. In the third verse (Ex. 47), the fair maiden reciprocates the same ardent feelings expressed to her by her suitor:

Then the rare and bright-eyed maiden

18 See http://www.traditionalmusic.co.uk/old-american-songs/mywife-is-a-most-knowing-woman.htm
In the month of song and flowers,
Rose-lipped and beauty laden,
Curtained by the twilight hours,
Gave her hand into my keeping
‘Neath the spreading green-wood tree.
“And,” she said with eyelids drooping,
“You are all the world to me.”

The fourth and final verse lays to rest any notion of a happy ending:

But there hovered near a spirit
Darker than the bird of night
And it touched her drooping eyelids,
Covered up her eyes of light.
Then with careful hands we laid her,
‘Neath the sighing cypress tree.
And my heart with her is buried—
She was all the world to me.

Part of the void in Foster’s life, during the absence of his wife and
daughter, was filled by a fast friendship with John Mahon, a journalist. The
composer spent many hours at the Mahon residence on Henry Street and
enjoyed the supportive company of Mahon, his wife, and their daughters.
Despite ever-increasing financial woes coupled with alcoholism, he was able to
produce a goodly number of quality songs along with others that might make
some observers cringe. The term “pot-boilers” has, in fact, been used by some
who have studied the composer’s output, such as Harold Vincent Milligan and
Evelyn Foster Morneweck. George Cooper, who served in New York’s
Twenty-second Regiment during 1962 and up to its disbandment in July 1863,
and who fought in the casualty-laden Battle of Gettysburg, was also a good
friend to Foster as well as his lyricist during his final years.

Less than two weeks into the New Year of 1864, Foster, living in a room
at the New England Hotel “for gentlemen only” (Plate 12) and ill with ague,
suffered a serious accident. While attempting to get some water, he fell and cut
his face and neck on the washing bowl. This occurred during the morning of
January 10. When he was found on the floor amid considerable blood by the
maid when she came to clean the room, she summoned the hotel’s proprietor,
P. V. Husted. He, in turn, contacted George Cooper who immediately assessed
the nature of the composer’s situation, which included a bruise on his forehead
and a burn on his thigh, the latter caused several days earlier by a spirit lamp
which he used to boil water. That he was found lying naked on the floor was
not unusual in that he was averse to wearing pajamas. Despite the doctor’s
admonition against it, Cooper brought him a large drink of rum before helping
to dress him and to arrange for a carriage to take him to Bellevue Hospital.
When he went back to see him in the hospital, he was told, by Foster, that he
was not treated in any way and that he was unable to eat the meals he was
brought. On a visit a day later, Cooper was told that his dear friend had passed
away. Brothers Morison and Henry, and wife Jane Foster arrived the following
day and were able to view the body, which had been cared for by the Winterbottom mortuary. The hospital bill of $1.25 was paid by Morrison (Plate 13). In Stephen’s well-used leather purse was found thirty-eight cents and a small piece of paper on which were written, in pencil, the words “dear friends and gentle hearts.”

The Adams Express Company and the Pennsylvania Railroad, neither of which asked for remuneration from members of the funeral party, transported the casket on its route from New York to Pittsburgh. Although this train, which also carried Stephen’s nephew, Edward Buchanan, derailed between Lewistown and Greensburg, the casket and Edward were not harmed. Henry, Morrison, and Jane stayed in Philadelphia but proceeded that evening to Pittsburgh. The train carrying Stephen’s remains did not arrive until Wednesday, January 20. On the afternoon of January 21, the funeral service was held at Trinity Church, Pittsburgh, the church in which he had been baptized.

The service, which drew a large attendance, was conducted by the Rev. Swope, Rector of the church. Following the singing of a chant by the choir, Dr. Page of Allegheny’s Christ Church led the Episcopal service. Stephen’s one-time music teacher Henry Kleber (1816-1897) (Plate 14), a tenor, sang hymn 191 from the old Episcopal hymnal, drawn from Handel’s oratorio, Joseph and His Brethren. The text follows:

Vital spark of heavenly flame,
Quit, o quit this mortal frame!
Trembling, hoping, lingering, flying,
Oh, the pain, the bliss of dying!
Cease, fond nature, cease thy strife,
And let me languish into life!

At this point, a hearse carrying Foster’s body, along with the funeral cortège, went to the burial site, Allegheny Cemetery. At its gate, “Old Folks at Home” and “Come Where My Love Lies Dreaming,” two of the composer’s most memorable creations, were performed without words by a brass band. He was then buried next to the tombs of his parents (Plate 15), The American flag close to his father’s grave represents the latter’s service in the War of 1812.

Jane (1829-1903) resumed her work at the telegraph office in Greensburg and her mother moved there in March of that year to help to care for Marion (1851-1935) (Plate 16). Having acquired considerable experience and skill in her position, Jane (Plate 17) moved back to Pittsburgh in 1870 and continued her career in the telegraph depot in Allegheny. It was there that she met Matthew D. Wiley (1840-1919), an employee of the Pennsylvania Railroad System; they married in 1874. They were both interred (Plates 17 and 18) many years later in the same cemetery as Stephen and his parents. Marion, who grew up in Lewistown, married Walter Welch (1846-1924) in 1874. They had three children—Jessie May Welch (1875-1959), Matthew Wiley Welch (1877-
1965), and Maybelle Foster Welsh (1888-1933).\(^\text{19}\) She was often called upon
to be present at various events honoring her father. She also taught piano and
composed her own music, the best-remembered of which were the songs she
wrote with Frank S. Bracken, viz. “The Whole Woods Ring” and “On the Hills
of Hollywood.” When philanthropist James H. Park purchased the home in
which Stephen Foster was born, in 1914, he asked Marion and Jesse to live in it
as caretakers.

Postlude

For more than a century after the passing of Stephen Collins Foster he and
his songs have been honored by those in the world of music as well as by the
general public. Actions taken by the Congress of the United States shortly after
the composer’s death presaged what, in recent times, have seen a notable
downturn in how Foster and his music are now perceived. The congressional
decisions referred to include the abolition of slavery via the ratification of the
13th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States on December 18,
1865 and overriding the veto of President Andrew Johnson (1808-1875) to pass
the Civil Right Bill of 1866 on April 9 of that year. This bill declared that all
persons born in the United States, excluding American Indians, would be
recognized as citizens of the country with the rights and privileges pertaining to
their person and property.

“My Old Kentucky Home, Goodnight” has often been associated with the
Kentucky plantation in Bardstown, Kentucky owned by Judge John Rowan. In
1828, when Stephen Foster was but two years old, his sister Charlotte visited
the Rowan Family, who were distant cousins. Upon her return home, she
stayed in Louisville with her cousins, the Barclays, and there, while tending to
family members who had taken ill with cholera, she, too, became ill and passed
away. Cousin Atkinson Hill Rowan, who was enamored of her but whose
romantic inclinations toward her were not reciprocated, was with her at this
time. There is no definitive evidence that Stephen visited the Rowans, who did,
however, own slaves who lived in cabins on the property. Uncle Tom’s Cabin
is the likely inspiration for the song. We know that the “old Kentucky home”
referred to in the Foster lyrics is not the large manor house of the plantation
owner, but the residence of the song’s protagonist: “The young folks roll on the
little cabin floor, All merry, all happy and bright.” This is the scene before
“Hard Times come knocking at the door, Then my old Kentucky Home, Good
night!”

On Mach 19, 1928 the State of Kentucky adopted “My Old Kentucky
Home, Good Night” as its state song. Sixty years later, on July 15,1988, a
modern version of the song was adopted by the state legislature during the
The word “people” was substituted for “darkies” and “darky.”

\(^{19}\)Marion preferred spelling Welsh with an s, and this spelling was used in Maybelle’s case.
In 1935, “Old Folks at Home” received the honor of becoming the second state song of Florida, succeeding C. V. Waugh’s “Florida, My Florida,” which had been adopted as the state’s first official song on May 12, 1913. Despite the later addition of a state anthem and yet another state song, “Old Folks at Home” remains the most popular by far albeit with a sanitization of the offensive language in the original version. In 1979, e.g., “darkies” was replaced with “brothers” at the inauguration of Bob Graham as Governor, and “still longing for the old plantation” was rendered as “still longing for my old connection” when Jeb Bush was inaugurated for his second term as Governor in 2003.

When Charlie Crist was inaugurated as Governor in 2007, “The Florida Song,” a composition by Charles Atkins, a native Floridian African-American jazz musician. Yet another state song was approved on May 2, 2013. On this occasion, Florida Senate Resolution 1894 declared as follows:

"Be it resolved by the Senate of the State of Florida
That we recognize the ballad “I Am Florida,” written by Walter“Clyde” Orange, as one of the official state songs of this state and as a companion piece to “The Swanee (sic) River” (“Old Folks at Home”).

The text of this song was inspired by the poem of the same name by Allen Autry, Sr., a writer from South Florida. On October 12, 2010, it received the distinction of being named the Florida State Poem by Governor Crist and the State Cabinet of Florida. Josiah K. Lilly (1861-1948) (Plate 19), a president and board chairperson of Eli Lilly and Company, the Indiana-based pharmaceutical giant, made a significant contribution to the knowledge and awareness of Stephen Foster and his music. An ardent collector of the composer’s music, he published what is essentially a “collected works” of his music in December 1933, during the Great Depression no less. Titled Foster Hall Reproductions, it contains 224 copies of the music. The relative paucity of recorded performances of these works induced Lilly to commission a collection of what was considered the entirety of Foster’s oeuvres; known as Foster Hall Recordings, it comprises 96 discs. Lilly’s entire collection of Foster materials was donated to the University of Pittsburgh in 1937 and is part of the Stephen Foster Memorial Museum within the University’s Center for American Music. The Foster Collection “includes manuscripts, copies of over 200 of his musical compositions, examples of recordings, songsters, broadsides, programs, books,

21http://www.iamflorida.org/florida-state-song
22Foster Hall, originally called Melodeon Hall, was a private concert hall, in which is included a pipe organ, that Josiah Lilly had constructed in 1927 in his personal apple orchard. It is located 7 miles from the downtown area of Indianapolis.
23For detailed information about the Foster Hall holdings, see Mariana Whitmer, “Josiah Kirby Lilly and the Foster Hall Collection,” American Music, Vol. 30, No.3, pp.326-343.
various memorabilia, and several musical instruments, including one of Foster’s pianos. The memorial is also home to the university’s Ethelbert Nevin Collection and the Society for American Music.24

By the fourth decade of the twentieth century, during the early days of World War II, a song book was published in New York, which included seven of Foster’s songs: “Old Folks at Home,” “Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair,” “Oh! Susanna.” “My Old Kentucky Home, Good Night,” “Oh! Susanna,” “Hard Times Come Again No More,” “De Camptown Races,” and “Ring de Banjo.”25 The “Ethiopian” dialect at this late date was still used widely. Similarly, songs by contemporaries of Foster appeared as well during this period. A notable example is “Dixie’s Land.” Composed in 1859 by Daniel Decatur Emmett (1815-1904), a native of Mt. Vernon, Ohio, its fifth and final verse and closing chorus follow:

Dar’s buckwheat cakes an’ Injun batter,
    Makes you fat or a little fatter;
Look away! Look away! Look away! Dixie Land.
Den hoe it down and scratch your grabble,
    To Dixie’s land, I’m bound to trabble,
Look away! Look away! Look away! Dixie Land.

Chorus: Den I wish I was in Dixie, Hoo-ray! Hoo-ray!
    In Dixie land, I’ll take my stand to live and die in Dixie;
Away, away, away down south in Dixie,
Away, away, away down south in Dixie.

As this song became the virtual anthem of the Confederacy, there is a certain irony in the fact that Emmett, like Foster, was a Yankee. As for a Union equivalency, a Yankee woman, Julia Ward Howe (1819-1910), born in New York City, wrote the words to “Battle Hymn of the Republic” in November 1861; the music was drawn from the familiar folksong, “John Brown’s Body.” The opening line, “Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord,” portends the distinctly religious overtones of this popular Union battle song. It’s fifth verse and the closing chorus follow:

In the beauty of the lilies, Christ was born across the sea,
    With a glory in his bosom that transfigures you and me.
As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,
    While God is marching on.

Chorus: Glory! glory! Hallelujah!
    Glory! glory! Hallelujah!
Glory! glory! Hallelujah!

Our God is marching on.

Foster songs continued to be ubiquitous as a consequence of their appearance in movies, both full-length features and cartoons.

The 1939 Twentieth Century Fox technicolor film, “Swanee River,” starred Don Ameche as the composer, Andrea Leeds as Jane McDowell Foster, Al Jolson as Edwin P. Christy, Felix Bressart as Henry Kleber, George H. Reed as Old Black Joe, and Diane Fisher as Marion Foster. Additional members of the cast played various other family members, friends, or associates of the Fosters. Ostensibly a biographical film, it took considerable liberties in its portrayal of characters and events. It did, however, include such major songs as “Ring de Banjo,” “Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair,” “Old Black Joe,” “Old Folks at Home,” “Camptown Races,” and “My Old Kentucky Home.” From the world of cartoons, Foghorn Leghorn (Plate 20), a large rooster with a Southern accent, is a prominent example of a character who exudes joy by humming (not singing) the opening lyrics of “Camptown Races” and, at a fortissimo level, in his “cock-a-doodle do” voice renders “Doo-dah! doo-dah!” and closes with “Oh! doo-dah day!” Foghorn was the lead character in 29 cartoons during the period from 1946-1964 via Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies, the Warner Brothers’ Animation unit. He also appeared in other cartoons after that time in which the protagonists included such inimitable characters as the estimable Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck. Mel Blanc provided the voice for Foghorn until 1989, after which the rooster was voiced by such figures as Jeff Bergman, Greg Burson, Joe Alaskey, Bill Farmer, Frank Gorshin, and Jeff Bennett. Recordings and television were other means of dissemination.

In 1938 The Post Office Department of the United States government decided to issue a series of postage stamps to honor eminent Americans in eight fields of endeavor—authors, poets, educators, scientists, composers, artists, and inventors. It was determined that in each category, there would be five stamps in the following denominations: 1 cent, 2 cents, 3 cents, 5 cents and 10 cents. The subjects in each category would be arranged according to the oldest date of birth (1 cent) to the most recent date of birth (10 cents). Each denomination and its individual composer would have its own distinct color scheme as follows:

- 1 cent—bright blue-green, Stephen Foster (1826-1864)
- 2 cent—rose carmine, John Philip Sousa (1854-1932)
- 3 cent—bright red violet, Victor Herbert (1859-1924)
- 5 cent—ultramarine, Edward Alexander MacDowell (1860-1908)
- 10 cents—dark brown, Ethelbert Nevin (1862-1901)

The use for each stamp’s rate is given below:

- 1 cent—for a letter delivered to someone with a box at the same post office at which the sender had a box
- 2 cent—for local delivery
Each category of honoree was assigned a symbol appropriate to its field of endeavor; thus, the stamps with a composer’s visage contain laurel leaves and pipes of Pan. The Stephen Collins Foster stamp (Plate 21) in the Famous American Composers series was issued between May 3rd and June 10th of 1940.

State parks in Georgia and Florida were yet another way in which Foster was honored. They share a proximity to the Suwannee River, but Foster himself never visited either location. The Georgia park leads to the Okefenokee Swamp, known for its trees, laden with Spanish moss, which are reflected in black water. The park’s 402,000 acreage also encompasses a diverse array of wildlife, ranging from wood storks and woodpeckers, to turtles and raccoons, and alligators galore (Plate 22). It is also well-known for its camping, boating, hiking, and, due to its spectacular scenery, photography. More unusual is its recognition as a certified dark sky park by the International Dark Sky Association. This honor was bestowed upon it because, under the proper conditions, an observer can see some of the darkest skies in the southeastern United States. One can only speculate what Foster might have thought about having his name attached to such splendid scenery (Plate 23).

The Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center in White Springs, Florida, known for its mineral springs, hiking and biking facilities, concerts and workshops focusing on the dulcimer, a December Christmas Festival, a springtime azalea festival, and the Florida Folk Festival on Memorial Day weekend. The Stephen Foster Memorial Museum, which opened in 1950, is surrounded by magnificent gardens which can be viewed and photographed as far as the banks of the Suwannee River. The largest tubular bell carillon in the world, built to honor the composer who made the once obscure Suwannee River world famous, is one of the park’s most ubiquitous attractions (Plate 24). Standing 200 feet tall, it has 97 bells which play Foster melodies throughout the day—either manually or automatically. Other attractions include impressive hiking and biking areas, a December Christmas-fest, a spring season azalea festival and the Florida Folk Festival, dulcimer workshops, a variety of concerts, and an arts and crafts area wherein artists display their works and hold classes. Within the museum there are dioramas illustrative of several Foster songs, among them “Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair,” and paintings by Howard Chandler Christy (1872-1952) (Plate 25) inspired by Foster’s “Beautiful Dreamer” (Plate 26, 1948)) and the portion of verse 2 from “Old Folks at Home” with the text “Den many happy days I squandered” (Plate 27, 1950).

One of this park’s most popular activities, begun in 1951, is the annual Jeanie/Stephen Auditions sponsored by the Florida Federation of Music Clubs. It was originally intended as a means by which to incentivize young female

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26For more details see https://gastateparks.org/StephenCFoster
singers from Florida. Evelyn Foster Morneweck (1887-1973) (Plate 28) presented the Jeanie who won the 1954 competition with the first music scholarship of this event. In 2006, young gentlemen were added to the competition, hence the name Stephen was added to the title of the audition. At present, the judges select three winners from each gender, with prizes of $2000 for first place, $1500 for runner-up, and $500 for third place.

In 1952, a Stephen Foster Elementary School for students in kindergarten through grade 5 opened in Gainesville, Florida, home of the University of Florida. Those who study and work there are known as the Steamers. At the time of its opening, it was racially segregated as were the other schools in the state. As a result of the passage of the Civil Right Act of 1964 and the Voting Right Act of 1965 by the Congress of the United States and signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson (1908-1973), monumental changes effecting discriminatory practices occurred throughout the country. The Civil Right Act made it illegal to practice segregation in public places and to bar employment discrimination on the basis of race, gender, religion, or national origin. This Act enlarged upon Amendments 13, which abolished slavery; 14, which declared that former slaves would henceforth be citizens of the country; and 15, which granted the right to vote to all men without regard to race. The Voting Rights Act made it illegal to require poll taxes as a requisite for voting. Amendment 24 to the Constitution abolished poll taxes in national elections. It also directed the Attorney General to challenge their use in state and local elections. By holding Virginia’s employment of such taxes unconstitutional under the 14th amendment, the Supreme Court rendered all poll taxes to be against the laws of the United States.

With these actions, Stephen Foster Elementary School and the University of Florida moved toward becoming integrated institutions. Coming a century after the passing of Stephen Foster, perceptions of song texts gained increasing scrutiny when they were perceived as denigrating the intrinsic worth of human beings based on their race.

In 1979 and again during 1992-93, Japan, much enamored with Foster’s songs, produced television shows titled “Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair.” The first of these ran for 13 episodes while the second encompassed 92 episodes. The storyline is a fictionalized animated account of Foster’s life which includes Steven and Jeanie as childhood friends (Plate 29). Given the title of the series, the blond hair on Jeanie might raise an eyebrow from the very first acquaintance with the show, as would Stephen as a harmonica player. The voice of Jeanie is rendered by Mitsuko Horie (Plate 30) and that of Stephen by the late Toshiko Fugita (Plate 31).

By 1995, a group known as the Civil War Roundtable of the Merrimack was founded in Newburyport, Massachusetts. It had as its prime purpose the dissemination of knowledge about the American Civil War period. In addition to the battles of that calamitous conflict, the subject matter includes such topics as technological issues, significant persons, cultural developments, et alia. In

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order to honor those who have made important contributions to the arts of the era, a Stephen Collins Foster Arts and Culture Award was to be presented biennially. In 2004, e.g., the Second South Carolina String Band was the recipient of this recognition as part of a reenactment of the Battle of Gettysburg. In 2016, for another example of this organization’s activities, the Hardtacks, a group organized in 2014 for the purpose of performing folk music of the Civil War period, received the Foster Award (Plate 32). Their performance, under the auspices of the CWRTM, took place at the Epping Elementary School, thereby exposing young children to the music scene of the mid-nineteenth century (Plate 33).

On July 1, 2006, the first Stephen Foster Music and Heritage Festival, better-known as Doo Dah Days, was organized in Lawrenceville, Pennsylvania by the Lawrenceville Historical Society and the Allegheny Cemetery Historical Association to honor the composer and his music.

On July 10, 2010, the event was held from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Allegheny Cemetery in Lawrenceville. The program for that DOO DAH was described as follows by its sponsors:

There will be four bands playing Foster-era music. There will also be educational trolley tours in the cemetery (including Foster’s burial place,) and costumed re-enactors, including Civil War groups. There will also be horse and wagon tours through part of the cemetery. (A donation of $5.00 per person is requested for the trolley and horse & wagon tours.) There will be food vendors selling refreshments.

The event is free and open to the public. It will be picnic seating in the cemetery (bring your own chairs/blankets). There will be NO parking in the cemetery. NOTE: Please enter through the Butler Street gate, which is near the stage.

Come and join us for a day of great American music.

Over the years there have been innumerable honors, awards, and tributes associated with the name of Stephen Foster ranging from music clubs, works of art, performance groups, parks, and buildings (including schools). The fate of Stephen Foster’s reputation and that of his songs, however, took a decided turn to the negative in the early 21st century. To be sure, there were those even in Foster’s lifetime who grimaced at the pseudo-Negro accent employed in various of the “Ethiopian” songs, but throughout the 19th century and much of the 20th century, there was a good deal of looking away at this aspect of the music. When the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts were enacted during the 1960s, however, considerable attention was given to the treatment and depiction of African Americans in all walks of life, including art, music, literature, politics, and the press. During August-12, 2017 Charlottesville, Virginia was the sight of a “Unite the Right” rally by white supremacists,

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28 Section 21, Lot 30
29 http://www.doodahdays.com
30 See Appendix 4 of Mornrweck, ibid., Vo. 2, pp. 666-739. This exhaustive listing covers the period up to 1944.
including among them neo-Nazis, neo-Confederates, and neo-fascists (Plate 34). They were, in large part, protesting a proposal by the City Council in February 2017 to remove a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee (1807-1870) and his horse Traveller (Plate 35), which was located in Lee Park, now called Market Street Park. The statue was commissioned from sculptor Henry Shrady (1871-1922) in 1917; as it was unfinished at the time of his death, Leo Lentelli (1879-1961) was engaged to complete it. The dedication took place on May 21, 1924.

The protesters were challenged by a group who supported the statue’s removal thereby setting off a clash between the opposing sides. The rally is perhaps best-remembered for the action of James Alex Fields, Jr., a white supremacist, who purposefully drove his car into a crowd of counter-protesters which resulted in the death of Heather Heyer, a 32-year-old woman, and injured many others.

Thus it was that a well-known statue of Stephen Foster with a slave strumming a banjo at his feet became the source of increasing controversy among the citizenry of the Pittsburgh area. The bronze statue (Plate 36), by Giuseppe Moretti (1857-1935) (Plate 37), “was unveiled in Highland Park on September 12, 1900 by little Maybelle Welsh, Stephen’s granddaughter, with Victor Herbert conducting the mighty assemblage of Pittsburgh bands which came to furnish the music.” The barefooted slave is often referred to as Uncle Ned; as in the song that bears his name, he has no wool on the top of his head. Since the lyrics inform us that he has been deceased for a long time, and that he has no further need of a shovel and a hoe nor a fiddle and its bow, these items with which Ned was associated are omitted from the sculpture. After four decades, it was relocated to Oakland.

After the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, there were varying degrees of criticism of the statue and the songs written for the minstrel shows wherein the pseudo-black dialect was found particularly disparaging and offensive. In more recent times, the removal of Confederate monuments in general, and, in particular, the rioting in Charlottesville in 2018, added more fuel to the fire. The Foster statue came in for its share of negative criticism too, largely because of the banjo-playing slave with a grin on his face seated at the feet of his “master,” i.e. Stephen Foster. After various meetings of Pittsburgh’s Art Commission, public commentary, and approval of the administration of Mayor Bill Peduto, the by-now infamous 800-pound statue was moved to a Department of Public Works vacant lot close to an area in Highland Park set aside for unleashed dogs to walk.

At the present time, there is a good deal of uncertainty with regard to the way in which Stephen Foster and his songs, most especially those referred to as “Ethiopian,” or “Plantation,” will be treated. A major undertaking by the Center for American Music at the University of Pittsburgh has introduced one

33Morneweck, ibid., p.593
feasible way in which the songs with offensive dialect or words can still be performed given the sensibilities of the current era. They have assumed as a major project the publication of *Stephen Collins Foster: Sixty Favorite Songs*, edited and revised by Joanna R. Smolko and Steven Saunders (Pacific, MO: Bill’s Music Shelf, Mel Bay Publications, 2009). Some examples of changes between the original version and this new one follow:

a. “Old Black Joe” is now titled “Poor Old Joe” and this is how all textual references to Joe refer to him. He is now old and poor, but not old and black.
b. In “Oh! Susanna,” verse 4, “Dis darkie’ll surely die” now reads “I will surely die.”
c. In “My Old Kentucky Home, Good Night,” verse 1, “Tis summer, the darkies are gay” now reads “Tis summer, the cares drift away”
d. “Massa’s in de Cold Ground” is now titled “Grandpa’s in the Cold Ground.”
e. In “Old Folks at Home,” chorus, “All de world am sad and dreary, Eberywhere I roam, Oh! Darkies how my heart grows weary, Far from de old folks at home” now reads “All the world is sad and dreary, Ev’rywhere I roam. Oh! dear ones how my heart grows weary, Far from the old folks at home.” In verse 1, “Still longing for de old plantation” now reads “Still longing for my childhood’s station.”

The sanitization of the lyrics and the use of standard English may bring a smile, a frown, or the raising of an eyebrow to the faces of listeners familiar with the songs in their original incarnation. There is, however, now a pathway to performance in the present century. Statues and other likenesses of Stephen Foster may continue to be found acceptable as a way to honor one of America’s significant nine-tenth-century song composers. An example is the statue of Foster sans slave in Alms Park in Cincinnati (Plate 38) by Arthur Ivone (1891-1974). Those which may allude to the fact that slavery existed in this country during his time on this earth may be deemed appropriate in locations (e.g. museums, academic institutions, associations that honor Foster, music schools and organizations, et alia) where awareness of all of our country’s history is welcomed—the good, the bad, and the ugly.

Stephen Collins Foster and his songs will always be a part of American cultural history, and history alone will determine their ultimate worth and significance.

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