



# The Lubbock Texas Quartet and Odis "Pop" Echols:

Promoting Southern Gospel Music on the High Plains of Texas

Curtis L. Peoples



Diverse forms of religious music have always been important to the cultural fabric of the Lone Star State. In both black and white communities, gospel music has been an influential genre in which many musicians received some of their earliest musical training. Likewise, many Texans have played a significant role in shaping the national and international gospel music scenes.

Despite the importance of gospel music in Texas, little scholarly attention has been devoted to this popular genre. Through the years, gospel has seen stylistic changes and the development of subgenres. This article focuses on the subgenre of Southern gospel music, also commonly known as quartet music. While it is primarily an Anglo style of music, Southern gospel influences are multicultural. Southern gospel is performed over a wide geographic area, especially in the American South and Southwest, although this study looks specifically at developments in Northwest Texas during the early twentieth century.

Organized efforts to promote Southern gospel began in 1910 when James D. Vaughn established a traveling quartet to help sell his songbooks.<sup>1</sup> The songbooks were written with shape-notes, part of a religious singing method based on symbols rather than traditional musical notation. In addition to performing, gospel quartets often taught music in peripatetic singing schools using the shape-note method.

The roots of shape-note singing lie in English country parish singing, which began to take hold in America with the publication of James Lyon's *Urania* in 1764 and William Billings's *The New England Psalm Singer* in 1770. However, the first shape-note book, *The Easy Instructor* by William Smith and William Little, appeared in 1801. In 1844, the Sacred Harp singing tradition began with the publishing of Benjamin Franklin White and Elisha J. King's *The Sacred Harp*.<sup>2</sup> The Sacred Harp tradition, also commonly known as Fasola, is still popular in America, and many events and conventions take place throughout the country each year. The advantage to shape-notes is that they help singers easily find song pitches without using the more complex key signature method. The shape-note system is commonly based on two structures—four notes or seven notes—and Southern gospel quartets utilize the seven-note system.<sup>3</sup>

▲	●	◆	▼	●	▼	■
Do	Re	Mi	Fa	So	La	Ti

Figure 1. Seven Shape-Notes Symbols



The shape-note instruction method helped promote white Southern gospel, increased book sales, and boosted concert attendance in rural areas. As the popularity of shape-note singing grew, such publishers as the Stamps-Baxter Music and Printing Company followed in Vaughn's footsteps to satisfy the demand for songbooks. In its heyday during the 1930s and 1940s, Stamps-Baxter, whose main offices were in Dallas, became one of the largest gospel music publishers in the world and sponsored numerous quartets, including the Lubbock Texas Quartet, a group that achieved substantive regional success in an area stretching from eastern New Mexico to western Arkansas. In addition, the group attained a degree of national recognition with the second-best-selling record for Columbia's Hillbilly Series in 1930: Side A featured "Turn Away"; Side B, "O Mother How We Miss You." Evidence

been obscure at best. This obscurity may be due to the fact that gospel and popular secular music were not as categorical in the early twentieth century as they are today. However, popular secular music often overshadows its counterpart from that era. Many members of Lubbock-area gospel quartets traveled extensively throughout West Texas, teaching both secular and religious music to countless people and helping launch numerous musical careers. For example, Pop Echols was instrumental in developing the performing career of Charlene Condray Hancock, Tommy Hancock's wife and member of several groups, including the Roadside Playboys, The Supernatural Family Band, and the Texana Dames. Until recently, only people closely associated with the Lubbock Texas Quartet knew the identities of the men who performed in the group or that it recorded for Columbia Records. Although

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26 suggests that this was the first recording for a major label by a Lubbock-based group and may have been the first recording of any Lubbock musicians.<sup>4</sup>

The record was made possible by the group's connection with people such as Odis "Pop" Echols. Echols was a member of the original Stamps Quartet. The original Stamps Quartet recorded "Give the World a Smile," most likely the first gospel record to achieve "gold" status (meaning that it sold at least 500,000 copies), which was recorded under the supervision of famous producer Ralph Peer. Many people are familiar with the quartet that became known as J.D. Sumner and the Stamps, which sang with Elvis Presley in the 1970s. Echols was also part of the live music show *The Red River Valley Roundup* in Shreveport, Louisiana, that was a precursor to *The Louisiana Hayride*. He often shared the bill with such stars as Pee Wee King and Eddy Arnold, and he also performed for dignitaries such as Lyndon B. Johnson. Echols later promoted Charlie Phillips and received writing credit for the hit song "Sugartime," which was first recorded at Norman Petty Studios with Buddy Holly playing guitar. The McGuire Sisters' version of "Sugartime" earned a gold record designation in 1958. Echols was very well connected in the music business and very adept at organizing talent.

The story of the Lubbock Texas Quartet, Odis "Pop" Echols, and the early proliferation of gospel music in West Texas has

the Lubbock Texas Quartet and Pop Echols's "afterbeats" or "backfire" rhythmic counterpoint style of gospel music waned in popularity over the years, they remain an important part of the musical fabric of West Texas. The main purpose of this article is to shed light on the Lubbock Texas Quartet, Odis "Pop" Echols, and their important role in the musical history of the Lone Star State.

From the late 1920s until the early 1940s, the quartet included a variety of members and performed under several different names, including the Lubbock Quartet, the Lubbock Stamps Quartet, and the Lubbock County Quartet. Many of the members of the Lubbock and Lubbock Stamps Quartets are known, and it is evident that some of them performed on the aforementioned Columbia record. Despite their initial success with Columbia, the quartet never released additional recordings under any variation of the name.

Nonetheless, the popularity of gospel music on the High Plains had taken root even earlier. During the 1910s and 1920s several vocal groups became popular in Lubbock, and some members of the Lubbock Texas Quartet performed with these groups, or on programs with them. Some of the early quartets had formal names for their groups, while others did not. The most popular groups from 1919 to 1927 seem to have had one thing in common: the music and business acumen of Tony Q. Dyess. Through his associations with

gospel music publishers, Dyess helped lay the foundation for the creation of groups such as the Lubbock Texas Quartet.

Born December 15, 1881, seven miles east of Bryan, Texas, in Brazos County,<sup>5</sup> Tony Dyess lived in Vernon, Texas, for 10 years before traveling to Lubbock in the fall of 1919 to visit for a few weeks.<sup>6</sup> Dyess quickly began to make his musical imprint on the area. On October 25, Dyess was an honored guest with I.F. and R.A. Holland and Luther Meredith at a recital in Shallowater, where they sang and “enjoyed a very enthusiastic encore.”<sup>7</sup> The following day the quartet attended a “singing” in Lorenzo.<sup>8</sup> Not long afterward, Dyess, his wife Mary Matilda Dyess, and their three children Nelle, Rueben (Tony), and Raymond (Doc) moved to Lubbock.<sup>9</sup>

Dyess soon gained respect as an accomplished singer.<sup>10</sup> He performed in Lubbock and the surrounding area, singing

Dyess performed with many vocal groups, but he most often sang with R.I. (Ira) Wilson, R.A. Holland, and L.L. (Lee) Wendell. Because of their popularity, they performed together often, though group names differed. On many occasions, the quartet appeared only by the men’s names: Dyess, Holland, Wendell, and Wilson. They also used the name Home Brew Quartet, but occasionally performed as the Lubbock Peerless Quartet and once as the Lubbock Quartet. The men used the name Lubbock Peerless Quartet when they performed for a managers’ meeting of the West Texas Baseball League, for the Lubbock Chamber of Commerce annual banquet in 1922, and at a promotional concert for the construction of the Lubbock Community Auditorium.<sup>19</sup> The group first used the name the Lubbock Quartet in 1924, when it traveled with a booster group to various towns throughout West Texas to

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both religious and popular music.<sup>11</sup> Often playing his guitar, he entertained crowds with comical songs, such as “Putting on Airs” and “Come after Breakfast Bring a Lunch and Leave before Suppertime.”<sup>12</sup> Dyess became the leader of the old Cumberland Presbyterian Church Choir and assisted the First Baptist Church Choir.<sup>13</sup> In 1921 he was elected president of the Lubbock County Singing Conventions, which were held every fifth Sunday at various venues.<sup>14</sup> Dyess taught impromptu singing schools in churches and county courthouses throughout the area, often paid by the proceeds from box suppers.<sup>15</sup> In 1923, he arranged a well-received singing contest involving local singing schools for the South Plains Fair.<sup>16</sup>

As a musical entrepreneur, Tony Dyess was one of the earliest to sell shape-note gospel singing books in Lubbock. He purchased two classified ads in the local newspaper to promote the songbooks. One ad stated that James D. Vaughn published the books. In the other ad, which does not list a publisher, Dyess promoted his latest songbook, *Evangel Light*, at 30¢ per copy or \$3.40 per dozen prepaid, for both individuals and singing classes.<sup>17</sup> The ad that included a publisher—the one for James D. Vaughn’s 1922 songbook—listed it for sale at 35¢ per copy or \$3.50 per dozen.<sup>18</sup> How Dyess became associated with Vaughn Publishing is unknown, but the relationship was important for the development of gospel quartets in the region.

promote the fair in Lubbock. In 1924, the Lubbock Band also accompanied the delegation and both the Lubbock Quartet and band received praise for their musical abilities. The music helped draw in large crowds to promote the fair.<sup>20</sup>

The first known published reference to the Home Brew Quartet is in a Lubbock newspaper article on May 12, 1922, which describes the quartet as “very popular” after its performance at the Lubbock Chamber of Commerce’s annual banquet on May 9, 1922.<sup>21</sup> The quartet leader appears to be Tony Dyess; he authorized an announcement for the Home Brew Quartet’s performance at Woodrow, Texas, to raise money for the Lubbock Community Auditorium.<sup>22</sup>

The Home Brew Quartet performed often for Lubbock Rotary Club meetings, where the group received high praise for its renditions of songs such as the African-American spiritual “I Couldn’t Hear Nobody Praying way Down Yonder By Myself.”<sup>23</sup> The group headlined the 1922 Fourth of July program in Lubbock’s Community Auditorium, a program that featured some other performers who later joined the Lubbock Texas Quartet. Future members of the Lubbock Texas Quartet performing on the program were Louis M. (L.M.) Brooks, who sang a bass solo, and Clyde R. Burlson, who sang an alto solo. Both men also took part in a trio with Mrs. L.M. Brooks.<sup>24</sup> L.M. Brooks headed a “home brew quartet” for the Lubbock Chamber of Commerce’s Sixth



Lubbock Texas Quartet Columbia Record Label. "O Mother How We Miss You." Courtesy of Crossroads of Music Archive, Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas, Echols Family Collection, AV006.

Annual Peddlers Jubilee on June 27, 1927, but it is unclear if Brooks filled in for Dyess, who may have been ill at that time and would be dead within two months.<sup>25</sup> The Sixth Annual Peddlers Jubilee is the last reference to a Home Brew Quartet consisting of Dyess, Holland, Wendell, Wilson, or Brooks.

L.M. Brooks's tenure and extent of involvement with the Home Brew Quartet is not known, since very little biographical information about him exists. However, his name appears often in listings of performers at various functions in Lubbock. For instance, he performed at the Baptist Church on April 12, 1924. The program lists a quartet comprised of "Windell, Holland Gunn, and Brooks."<sup>26</sup> The Gunn listed is Professor Glenn A. Gunn (G.A.) who participated in many singing groups and later led an incarnation of the Lubbock Quartet along with L. M Brooks.<sup>27</sup>

On January 15, 1924, G.A. Gunn sang with L.M. Brooks, a man with the last name Hilton, and Clyde Burleson at a special evening program for the opening of the new Baptist Church.<sup>28</sup> G.A. Gunn, Clyde Burleson, L.M. Brooks, and L.L. Wendell were guest performers at the First Christian Sacred Concert on October 11, 1925.<sup>29</sup> The four men (and others mentioned) often sang together at various times and for varying functions. On January 22, 1929, the name Lubbock Quartet reappeared in print in a brief announcement stating that "singing by the

'Stamps Male quartet' and the 'Lubbock quartet' featured the regular community singing program at the Southwest ward on Sunday night."<sup>30</sup> According to the concert program, The Lubbock Quartet consisted of G.A. Gunn, leader; Cecil Lee Gunn, tenor; Minnis Monroe Meek, baritone; and L.M. Brooks, bass.<sup>31</sup> The relationship between the Stamps Quartet and the Stamps-Baxter Music Company is important because it provides insight into who may have performed on the Lubbock Texas Quartet Columbia record, the reason the group recorded, and the overall popularity of the group.

The Lubbock Texas Quartet enjoyed national success from 1929 to 1943, especially following the 1930 release of the group's Columbia Records 78-rpm record, which featured the sides "Turn Away" and "O Mother How We Miss You."<sup>32</sup> The record is almost certainly the earliest recording of a Lubbock musical group. Columbia released the record on February 28, 1930, through its 15000-D series, which focused on traditional folk music, more commonly called "Hillbilly" music.<sup>33</sup> In 1924, Columbia Records published a booklet "Familiar Tunes on Fiddle, Guitar, Banjo, Harmonica, and Accordion" that featured Hillbilly artists. It was the first national publication to accumulate music of the budding Hillbilly record industry. By January 1925, Columbia Records had amassed enough traditional folk material to begin its 15000-D series: "Familiar Tunes-Old and New." The series paralleled Columbia's 14000-D (race) series, recordings specifically intended for an African-American audience. The 15000-D series was one of Columbia's most successful series and its design and marketing focused primarily on a white, Southern audience. Columbia released almost all of its country and gospel music recordings on the 15000-D series. Other record companies followed Columbia's lead and soon established their own Hillbilly music series.<sup>34</sup>

At first, a large portion of the country music recordings took place at Columbia's studios in New York, but a substantial number came from field sessions in the South. Most of the field sessions took place in Atlanta, Georgia, but other sessions occurred periodically in Memphis and Johnson City, Tennessee; Dallas, Texas; and New Orleans, Louisiana. The last 15000-D series record, released in 1933, was Bob Ferguson's "Crash of the Akron," 15782-D matrix number (MX W152386).<sup>35</sup>

The Lubbock Texas Quartet's Columbia record comprises two songs arranged as four-part vocal harmonies and a guitar accompaniment. The two songs on the record are Side A: "Turn Away" (MX W149554) and Side B: "O Mother How We Miss You" (MX W149555). Columbia Records assigned the label number 15510-D to the Lubbock Texas Quartet's record. The quartet recorded both songs in Dallas

on December 6, 1929. In all, Columbia released five records from the Dallas sessions. The Lubbock Texas Quartet gospel recordings were the only ones recorded on December 6. The other gospel recordings took place on December 4, 1929: 15502-D Stamps Quartet "I Worship the Lord" (MX W149522) and "I Want to Do My Best" (MX W149524); 15560-D Owens Brothers and Ellis "He's Calling You" (MX W149529) and "You Shall Reap What You Sow" (MX W149528); 15574-D Corley Family "Give the World a Smile" (MX W149521) and "The Way to Gloryland" (MX W149520); 15495-D Corley Family "When Jesus Comes" (MX W149519) and "He Keeps My Soul" (MX W149518); 15655-D Owens Brothers and Ellis "He's Calling All" (MX W149525) and "I am Overshadowed by Love" (MX W149523).<sup>36</sup>

Okeh Records, a subsidiary of Columbia Records, also released several recordings conducted in Dallas from November 27 to 29, 1929. By 1929, most of Columbia and Okeh recording sessions happened simultaneously, but little information is available about the Columbia and Okeh

His younger brother, Walter Elmore, was also an accomplished songwriter, singer, and music instructor. Reverend B.B. Edmiaston was born on July 16, 1881, to David Wilson and Georgia Ann Fluty Edmiaston in Baxter County, Arkansas. He attended public schools in both Arkansas and Texas and took some college and university level correspondence courses. He attended branch sessions at "S.N.M.I." and regular sessions at the Southern Development Normal School of Music.<sup>41</sup> He studied music under Rufus Turner, F.L. Eiland, W.H. Lawson, Berry McGee, Emmett S. Dean, G.W. Fields, Dr. J.B. Herbert, and many others.<sup>42</sup> Reverend Edmiaston started singing and directing music publicly in 1897. In 1905, he married Ella Allen, who also wrote songs, and they had one son named Don Bates Edmiaston. For most of his life, Reverend Edmiaston was a Methodist. In the 1910s and 1920s, he wrote and published songs through the Trio Music Company of Waco, located at 113 South Fourth Street. He served as editor of "The Musical Trio," a publication of the Trio Music Company, and also as director of the Southern Development

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The Stamps-Baxter Music Company established copyright for the song "Turn Away" in 1929.

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November and December 1929 recording sessions. The Okeh releases, both religious and secular are: Stamps-Baxter School of Music "I'll be Singing Forever" (MX 403387) and "I am O'ershadowed by Love" (MX 403386); Oscar and Doc Harper "Beaumont Rag" (MX 403348), "Billy on the Low Ground" (MX 403349), "Terrell Texas Blues" (MX 403346), and "Dallas Blues" (MX 403344); Harmony Four "He's a Wonderful Savior to Me" (MX 403373), "I'm Sailing On" (MX 403372), "My Friend Devine" (MX 403370), and "I'll Know Him" (MX403371).<sup>37</sup> Marion Snider, the last surviving member of the Lubbock Texas Quartet, said that he remembered recording at Seller's Company Recording Studio in Dallas during the 1930s, but he did not know where the 1929 Lubbock Texas Quartet recording sessions took place.<sup>38</sup>

The lyricist and composer of the Lubbock Texas Quartet song "Turn Away," is Reverend Bernard Bates (B.B.) Edmiaston.<sup>39</sup> The Stamps-Baxter Music Company established copyright for the song "Turn Away" in 1929. Reverend Edmiaston, a prolific composer and poet, wrote thousands of songs during his lifetime. Most of these were sacred songs, but he also wrote love, glee, and comical numbers. He wrote or co-wrote at least 829 songs for Stamps-Baxter Publishing.<sup>40</sup>

Normal School of Music in Waco. Reverend Edmiaston moved to West Texas in the late 1920s.<sup>43</sup> From 1929 to 1931, he resided in Coke County and became the minister of the First United Methodist Church in Robert Lee.<sup>44</sup> Around 1937 he lived in Strawn, and from 1954 to 1964, he lived in Bronte, also in Coke County. His wife Ella died there in 1955 after a two-year battle with lymphatic leukemia. Reverend Edmiaston, who died on December 2, 1964, at the age of 84 from massive smoke inhalation suffered during a house fire, is buried in Bronte's Fairview Cemetery.

The song "Turn Away" appears on two compilation gospel albums released in 2005.<sup>45</sup> It is interesting that "Turn Away" is the song that appears on the compilation albums because evidence suggests that "O Mother How We Miss You" was the more popular radio request in the 1930s and 1940s.

The transcription for "O Mother How We Miss You" appears in several songbooks, including *Lonnie and Thelma's Book of Beloved Hymns*. Lonnie and Thelma Robertson were well-known gospel radio singers from the Gainesville, Missouri, area. Lonnie and Thelma published the book "with four-part harmony arrangements...at the request of many radio listeners."<sup>46</sup> The song also appears in the Stamps-Baxter



songbooks *Special Service Songs for Special Occasions* and *Virgil O. Stamp's Favorite Radio Songs*. In Lonnie and Thelma's publication, the song is attributed to E.M. Kitchen as the "owner." It is unclear whether Kitchen helped compose the song, or if he may have only owned the copyright. In the Stamps-Baxter publications, a well-known gospel songwriter W.A. McKinney shares credit with Kitchen.<sup>47</sup> In *Special Service Songs for Special Occasions*, the Stamps-Baxter Music Company is noted as the owner of the song, which is dedicated to Mrs. Roy Post of Tupelo, Mississippi.<sup>48</sup>

William Alfred McKinney, born in Plantersville, Mississippi, in 1894, worked as a rural mail carrier. He studied harmony and composition, but did not teach music. Before 1937, he had written about 100 songs. His last known songbook *The Solid Rock for Radio, Conventions, Singing Schools and Wherever Special Gospel Songs are Needed* was copyrighted in 1944. His last known residence was Shannon, Mississippi.<sup>49</sup> Both

Some information about members of the Lubbock Texas Quartet is available through newspapers and oral history accounts. It is possible that others may have performed with the quartet in its various incarnations, but the following is a list of known members who sang with the quartet from 1929 through 1943: Louis M. Brooks (bass), Clyde Rufus Burleson (tenor), Wilson Loyd Carson (baritone and guitar), Rueben (Tony) Dyess (bass), Raymond (Doc) Dyess, Homer Garrison (lead), Glenn A. Gunn (lead), Cecil Gunn (tenor), Minnis M. Meeks (baritone), and Marion Snider (piano).<sup>52</sup>

Because all of the members of the 1929 Lubbock Texas Quartet are dead, and little information exists about the record, it is not known who all appeared on the Columbia record. Although the Columbia recording lists the Lubbock Texas Quartet as the "performer," the label also mentions "guitar accompaniment," which may suggest participation by a fifth member, although it was not unusual for a gospel quartet

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## The Lubbock Texas Quartet—also known as the Lubbock Quartet or Lubbock Stamps Quartet—enjoyed about 10 years of success with the Stamps-Baxter Publishing and Printing Company.

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Plantersville and Shannon are within a 20- to 30-minute drive of Tupelo, and thus it is possible McKinney knew Mrs. Roy Post, resulting in the dedication of the song.

At the time of the Lubbock Texas Quartet's record release, the United States had slipped into the Great Depression of the 1930s, and record sales began to decline. In 1930, for Columbia Records' Hillbilly series it was fortunate if a record sold three or four thousand copies. However, two records did sell in the five figures. The top-selling album was 15572-D, Tom Darby and Jimmie Tarlton's "My Little Blue Heaven" (MX W150268) and "On the Banks of the Lonely River" (MX W150264), which sold over 17,000 copies. The second-best-selling album of the year was the Lubbock Texas Quartet record, which sold 12,776 copies—quite a significant amount considering its late release in the series.<sup>50</sup>

Only a few extant newspaper advertisements list the Lubbock Texas Quartet's record for sale. Five separate advertisements appear from record stores in Charleston, Spencer, and Walton, West Virginia, with the earliest on July 30, 1930.<sup>51</sup> Two separate advertisements are for Galperin's music house in Charleston and the other two are separate advertisements with record listings by William G. McCulty in Spencer and George W. Looney in Walton.

to employ an instrumentalist to accompany the four main singers, especially during a studio recording.<sup>53</sup> However, the accounts of the group's performances always list four members. Evidence suggests that Burleson, Meek, and Carson were most likely on the record and that either Louis Brooks and/or Cecil Gunn also appeared.

Clyde Burleson was born in Lavaca County, Texas, on June 13, 1885. He was a fixture in various Lubbock quartets through the 1920s and 1930s and held several offices within singing conventions in the West Texas region.<sup>54</sup> Homer Garrison said that Burleson had immense talent as a singer, entertainer, music educator, and overall leader. Burleson, according to Marion Snider and Homer Garrison, sang high-pitched first tenor parts.<sup>55</sup> Burleson lived in Lubbock from sometime in the 1920s until 1943 when he moved to California, although he returned to Lubbock occasionally to perform.<sup>56</sup> He died in Lynwood, California, on January 9, 1967.<sup>57</sup>

Minnis Monroe Meek was born in Whitesburg, Tennessee, on December 31, 1904. In 1920, he lived in Farmersville, Texas, with his parents and siblings.<sup>58</sup> He moved to Lubbock in 1928 and began performing with the Lubbock Texas Quartet about January 22, 1929.<sup>59</sup> According to Homer Garrison, at first Meek was the only one in the group who

could write music. During the 1930s, Meek joined the Harley Sadler shows and toured with the company. In addition to entertainment, Meek also worked as a representative of the Atlas Life Insurance Company. Meek died of a heart attack on December 22, 1949.<sup>60</sup>

Wilson Lloyd (W.L.) Carson was born September 6, 1911 or 1912, in Lubbock.<sup>61</sup> Carson's family originally worked as farmers in the Gomez and Tokio area west of Brownfield, but his mother moved the family to Lubbock after his father died. W.L. Carson attended three years of high school before joining the U.S. Army Air Corps; he served from 1942 until World War II ended in 1945.<sup>62</sup> As an entrepreneur, he owned part of The Carson Brothers Motor Company, along with his brother Ellison Cluff and another partner. The business closed sometime in the 1950s. He also ran a grill in Rotan for a while. Besides playing with the Lubbock Texas Quartet, Carson also performed with the Drugstore Cowboys, although arthritis

up in West Texas and lived in various rural areas. He said that, while growing up, music was not part of the curriculum in most rural schools, but occasional singing schools were offered. He attended his first singing school while in the third or fourth grade. It was not until his family moved to Liberty, Texas, near Idalou, that he began to receive significant singing instruction. He attended the Liberty Singing School under the direction of "Professor of Music" S.V. Summers and his assistant, Uncle Tom Nelson. In 1932, Garrison began taking classes at Lubbock High School to become qualified for college. Upon Garrison's graduation that same year, Professor Summers insisted that he attend the Stamps-Baxter Normal Music School. Therefore, at age 18, Homer Garrison left his home for the first time and attended the school in Dallas. Garrison said Virgil Stamps led the school, and after six weeks of training, the young Lubbockite returned home and continued to learn from Odis "Pop" Echols. Virgil Stamps

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eventually rendered him unable to play guitar and limited him to performing on piano. Carson died on August 12, 1992, in Lubbock.<sup>63</sup>

Little information exists about the last two members who may have performed on the record, Cecil Gunn and Louis Brooks. Although it is difficult to determine with absolute certainty, the version of The Lubbock Texas Quartet that recorded for Columbia Records most likely included Clyde Bursleson, Minnis Meek, Wilson Carson, Cecil Gunn, and/or Louis Brooks.<sup>64</sup>

The Lubbock Texas Quartet—also known as the Lubbock Quartet or Lubbock Stamps Quartet—enjoyed about 10 years of success with the Stamps-Baxter Publishing and Printing Company. During the 1930s, the quartet regularly sang live on KFYO and other radio stations. The group traveled throughout Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arkansas, and Louisiana performing and teaching seven shape-note gospel music. The Great Depression took its toll on many, but members of the Lubbock Texas Quartet appear to have done well for themselves.

Homer Garrison made about \$18 per week working for Clyde Bursleson and singing on the road, which was good money during the depths of the Depression.<sup>65</sup> Garrison sang with the Lubbock Texas Quartet from 1933 to 1936. He grew

invited Garrison to join a Stamps quartet. Garrison sang for a month with Bursleson, Meeks, and Carson, but stopped to attend classes at Texas Technological College. While attending Texas Tech, Garrison married, and when his wife became pregnant, he left school to join the Lubbock Texas Quartet.

The Lubbock Texas Quartet earned a modest living performing live shows and teaching music. The quartet's primary territory stretched from Wichita Falls north into Altus and Ardmore, Oklahoma, and west from there into eastern New Mexico. Homer Garrison said that in 1934 Clyde Bursleson bought a V-8 Ford to transport the group on its tour. The monthly car payment was \$26, which the entire quartet helped pay, along with other expenses.<sup>66</sup> While on tour, the quartet often stopped at local schools and gave free performances to promote nearby concerts. Admission to a concert ranged from 25¢ to 50¢.<sup>67</sup> At a concert, one might hear the quartet singing such vocal selections as "Put on Your Old Grey Bonnet," "The Dying Cowboy," "I Know the Lord Laid His Hands on Me," and "The Woman in the Shoe."<sup>68</sup>

The bulk of the money the quartet made came from teaching singing schools and selling songbooks. The price of a two-week singing school was around \$75. The quartet usually taught two singing schools at once. For example, a couple of the members might teach in one location, such as Tulia, Texas,



while the others taught in nearby Lockney.<sup>69</sup> At a two-week singing school, students learned basic music theory and shape-note singing. The singing schools brought music to rural communities and helped develop local music leaders to lead choirs. After about a year, the group returned to a community and taught advanced courses.<sup>70</sup> The quartet taught year round, but the summer months proved better because children were out of school, and crops were still in the fields.<sup>71</sup>

The Lubbock Texas Quartet represented the Stamps-Baxter Publishing and Printing Company. In return, Stamps-Baxter supplied the quartet with songbooks and money. The group sold the songbooks for 25¢. The quartet paid Stamps-Baxter 12.5¢ per copy and received some free copies from the company. Profits from the songbooks helped to defray travel expenses.<sup>72</sup> When the quartet could not find work, Stamps-Baxter often helped. For instance, the group once was stuck in an Oklahoma hotel room for three weeks with no business because of constant rain. Although Clyde Burleson had \$20 stashed in

was often intense. In order to boost their volume and provide a “fuller” sound, quartets performing at singing conventions often hired piano players for accompaniment, since piano was much easier to hear than unamplified fiddle or guitar.

From its inception, the Lubbock Texas Quartet normally used only a guitar for instrumental accompaniment. Then, about five or six months after Homer Garrison joined, the members were in McKinney, Texas, where they met Marion Snider and recruited him into the group. At the time, the group consisted of Clyde Burleson, Minnis Meek, Wilson Carson, and Homer Garrison. Carson had been playing guitar and singing, but the group needed a piano player to enhance its performances.

Marion Snider had played music for much of his life before joining the quartet. Snider was still a young man when, at the urging of his father, he enrolled at the Stamps-Baxter mid-winter normal school in Dallas for musical training, thereby launching his long and successful career in gospel music. He

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The singing schools brought music to rural communities and helped develop local music leaders to lead choirs.

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his shoe, it was not enough to cover the quartet’s expenses. So, Virgil Stamps wired the group an additional \$50 to help.<sup>73</sup>

In addition to teaching and performing regularly at concerts, the Lubbock Texas Quartet participated in singing conventions. Singing conventions varied in size, location, and duration. Local churches often hosted the small to mid-level “singings,” while larger conventions typically took place in auditoriums. In the Lubbock area, local “singings” happened at places such as Slaton, Idalou, Liberty, and Shallowater. Crowds varied in size from 200 to 400 in Lubbock and 40 to 50 people in outlying rural areas. In some cases, as many as half of those in attendance were singers.<sup>74</sup> Sometimes multiple counties held singing conventions, and some of them even crossed state boundaries. This was the case with the Plateau Singing Convention, which included parts of West Texas and eastern New Mexico. At the larger conventions, crowds ranged anywhere from several hundred to several thousand people, and as many as six to eight quartets might appear to sing, promote themselves, and sell songbooks. At one such gathering in Altus, Oklahoma, Odis Echols’s Melody Boys, the Stamps Quartet of Dallas, Lubbock Stamps Quartet, and A.J. Showalter of Tennessee performed and promoted their respective companies. Competition between rival quartets

performed with the Lubbock quartet and lived in Lubbock for two years. While attending Texas Tech in 1935, Snider received a telegram from Virgil Stamps, who requested that Snider come to Dallas and join the Stamps Quartet.<sup>75</sup> Snider accepted the offer, even though it meant the end of his tenure with the Lubbock Texas Quartet. Throughout the years, Snider remained in contact with many members of the Lubbock Texas Quartet and saw them often at performances and singing conventions. As it turned out, Marion Snider would be the last surviving member of the Lubbock Texas Quartet.

As early as 1921, professional gospel entertainers and entrepreneurs were working throughout the Lubbock area. The first known group was the Vaughn Quartet of Jacksonville, Texas, which performed just east of Lubbock in the small town of Idalou.<sup>76</sup> The quartet returned to the Lubbock area in the spring of 1922, under the leadership of Virgil Stamps, and performed for an enthusiastic audience of about 425 people at a singing convention in nearby Slaton.<sup>77</sup> By the summer of 1922, Lubbock had its very own Vaughn quartet, represented by Clyde Burleson, L.M. Brooks, C.W. Beene, and Mr. and Mrs. Ira Wilson. Together, they traveled to Clovis, New Mexico, to attend the Plateau Singing Convention, which was the largest singing convention of

its kind in the United States, attracting members from 40 counties across Texas and New Mexico.<sup>78</sup>

By the fall of that year, the Lubbock Vaughn Quartet had become a local crowd favorite. In September 1922, the *Lubbock Avalanche* reported that the Lubbock Vaughn Quartet gave a rousing performance at a Kiwanis meeting.<sup>79</sup> The newspaper reported that the Kiwanis were treated to "splendid music" and that "Lubbock has something to be proud of in the quartette, and when you hear that Vaughn is just as much in the singing world as [John Phillips] Sousa is in the band business, don't take it for naught, for that bunch proved that the Vaughn bunch know their business." The article goes on to say that the "Kiwanians were not willing to let those fellows off with one song, but brought them to their feet again with cheer upon cheer...and of course they delivered the goods in their usual manner, to the delight of all present."<sup>80</sup>

From 1910 to the 1950s, the James D. Vaughn Music

Normal School in New Market, Virginia, in order to further his knowledge about gospel harmony. His efforts paid off, as the local success of the Vaughn Boys Quartet confirmed the power of performance harmony to publicize gospel music.<sup>82</sup>

In May 1890, shortly after marrying, James Vaughn moved to Cisco, Texas, and continued his work as a schoolteacher. In 1892, he met Ephraim Hildebrand of the Hildebrand-Burnett Music Company based in Roanoke, Virginia. Hildebrand traveled the country teaching advanced normal schools and convention singing schools. Many potential students had domestic commitments or little time and money to travel long distances to attend music schools, so such traveling teachers as Hildebrand provided opportunities for those living in more remote areas to pursue a musical education. Hildebrand not only further kindled Vaughn's love of music but also inspired Vaughn to begin composing original material. The two men collaborated on several songs that they published. After a

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Plateau Singing Convention was the largest singing convention of its kind in the United States, attracting members from 40 counties across Texas and New Mexico.

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Company had several male quartets that performed under the generic name, the Vaughn Quartet. By the late 1920s, the Vaughn Music Company sponsored as many as 16 groups that performed primarily throughout the South and Midwest, appearing at revivals, singing conventions, church gatherings, in concerts, and on radio and records in order to promote seven shape-note Southern gospel, Vaughn songbooks, and Vaughn normal singing schools.<sup>81</sup>

James David Vaughn was a pioneer of modern Southern gospel music, and some even consider him the "father" of the modern gospel quartet. His development of the professional gospel quartet helped to transform provincial Southern gospel music of the late nineteenth century into a widespread and flourishing industry. Vaughn was born December 14, 1864, in Giles County, Tennessee. He attended private school and excelled academically. He began a career as a schoolteacher, but he also had a keen aptitude for music. As a teenager, he attended shape-note singing schools and was well versed in Southern-style harmony. His love of music and his teaching abilities led him to become a music teacher. At eighteen, he began teaching music in his local church. He soon organized the Vaughn Boys Quartet, which included Vaughn and his three brothers. In 1883, he enrolled in the Ruebush-Kieffer

tornado destroyed most of the town of Cisco and everything they owned, Vaughn and his family left Texas and moved back to Tennessee, where he continued his work as an educator in the public schools. However, with his penchant for music, he soon shifted his focus back to music and music education.<sup>83</sup>

In 1900, James Vaughn printed his first songbook—*Gospel Chimes*—and within two years he started the James D. Vaughn Publishing Company in Lawrenceburg, Tennessee. In 1911 he started the Vaughn Music School. He also began traveling and training instructors to teach in rural singing schools—instructors he hoped would promote his musical publications. A year earlier, Vaughn had begun sponsoring a quartet to travel and promote his gospel songbooks. The use of the quartet as a promotional tool paid off, and by 1917 Vaughn had expanded his company and established three additional branches in Greenville, South Carolina; Midlothian, Texas; and Fitzgerald, Georgia.<sup>84</sup>

Vaughn was quick to recognize the mass marketing potential of new technology, including the radio and phonograph. In 1921, he established the Vaughn Phonograph Company and sent a quartet to Wisconsin to make some custom recordings. While there, the quartet cut several songs, including Virgil Oliver (V.O.) Stamps's "Look for Me." In November 1922,

Vaughn received a license to begin broadcasting on radio in Tennessee under the call letters WOAN. By the mid-1930s, he had sold his radio station and discontinued his record company, but his publishing company remained strong. James Vaughn died on February 9, 1941.

The Vaughn Company established connections with Lubbock quartets through V.O. Stamps, who ran the Vaughn Music Company branch office in Jacksonville, Texas.<sup>85</sup> Building on the experience he gained by working for James Vaughn, V.O. Stamps eventually quit the Vaughn Music Company and started his own music company in Jacksonville, which grew into the hugely successful Stamps-Baxter Printing and Publishing Company. Indeed, before his sudden death in 1940, Stamps helped create one of the largest gospel music empires in history.

Stamps ran the branch office in Jacksonville, while Baxter operated an office in Chattanooga, Tennessee. They published their first songbook, also titled *Harbor Bells*, in 1926. The company followed with subsequent books on a yearly basis: *Golden Harp* (1927), *Sparkling Gems* (1928), *Crystal Rays* (1929), and *Priceless Pearls* (1930). After 1930, the company published and released at least two songbooks per year. Meanwhile, the two men moved the headquarters from Jacksonville to the thriving city of Dallas. The company later opened a third branch in Pangburn, Arkansas, which was managed by the prominent gospel songwriter Luther G. Presley. Because printing machines were so expensive, the burgeoning Stamps-Baxter enterprise had its books published by commercial presses. However, the company eventually bought the old printing presses belonging to

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In 1926, Echols successfully auditioned for Frank Stamps's original Stamps Quartet and moved to Chattanooga, Tennessee.

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Virgil Oliver Stamps was born September 18, 1892, in Upshur County, Texas. He had five brothers, one of whom, Frank, also would play a significant role in the gospel music business. At an early age, both Virgil and Frank demonstrated a passion for music. Virgil attended his first singing school in 1907.<sup>86</sup> Between 1911 and 1914, he continued studying music and voice and taught singing part-time. At the age of 22, he wrote and self-published his first song: "Man Behind the Plow." As noted earlier, Virgil worked for several music publishers, including James D. Vaughn's music company in Lawrenceburg, Tennessee. From 1915 into the 1920s, Virgil Stamps ran the Vaughan Publishing Company office in Jacksonville, Texas.<sup>87</sup> While Virgil pursued a career in music, his brother Frank Stamps acquired a formal education and served in the United States Navy during World War I, all the while continuing to study music. After the war, James Vaughn offered Frank a position with his company in Tennessee. The two Stamps brothers worked well with Vaughn but decided to leave and pursue their own music ventures.

In 1924, Virgil Stamps opened the V.O. Stamps Music Company in Jacksonville, Texas. That year he also published his first songbook, *Harbor Bells*, which became an instant success. However, the company struggled as it competed against well-established shape-note publishers. In the spring of 1926, Virgil collaborated with Jesse Randall (J.R.) "Pap" Baxter, Jr. to form the Stamps-Baxter Publishing Company.<sup>88</sup>

the Armstrong Printing Company of Cincinnati, which had printed for Stamps-Baxter as well as most of the major songbook companies. After investing in printing machinery, the company finally began publishing and printing its own songbooks from a Dallas office on Beckley Avenue and changed its name to Stamps-Baxter Music and Printing Company. In addition to songbooks, Stamps-Baxter also produced a monthly newsletter titled *The Southern Gospel Music News*, which in 1940 became the *Gospel Singing News*. Throughout its existence, Stamps-Baxter attracted some of the best-known songwriters, sponsored many of the finest quartets, and employed skilled music instructors to teach at music schools. In 1936, The Stamps Quartet performed at the Texas Centennial and soon began regularly broadcasting a gospel program on radio station KRLD in Dallas. The classes and radio program became so popular that the company broadcast an "All Night Singing" event on KRLD at the end of classes in June. The first such event was held in the Cotton Bowl.<sup>89</sup>

By 1936, it was clear that the growing business required larger facilities, so the company moved to the Dallas subdivision of Oak Cliff. After the death of Virgil Stamps in 1940, his brother Frank stepped in to help run the company; however, Frank soon split with J.R. Baxter to form his own company. Baxter continued to run the company until his death in 1960. At that point, Baxter's wife Clarice "Ma" Baxter ran the company for 12 more years until she died. She willed



the company to Lonnie B. Combs, Clyde Roach, Videt Polk, and Dwight Brock, who turned over operations to the Zondervan Corporation of Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1974. HarperCollins Publishers acquired Zondervan in 1988 and subsequently ended its music publishing in 1992.<sup>90</sup>

As noted earlier, throughout the 1920s and 1930s gospel quartet music attained great popularity in the South. Many quartets came and went, but the quartets associated with music publishers endured the longest. For the Lubbock Texas Quartet, its association with Stamps-Baxter bolstered the group's success. Virgil Stamps traveled often to the West Texas region to perform, promote his gospel singing books, and offer teaching schools. After 1922, Stamps continued to work in the area and build a strong gospel music presence with the help of local people such as Tony Dyess and Odis "Pop" Echols.

Odis Echols, nicknamed "Pop," was born on May 7, 1903, in Enloe, Texas, one of 10 children of Mr. and Mrs. W.L. Echols. At the age of 17, Odis Echols became intrigued with radios after a friend showed him one built out of an apple box. A couple of years later, on January 23, 1922, he moved to Blacktower, New Mexico, west of Clovis, with his new wife Grace Traweek, whom he had married in Lubbock. Soon after settling down, Echols joined The Plateau Quartet. Members of the quartet included John F. Taylor, Earl Roberson, Odis Echols, and Lloyd Roberson. Their first radio broadcast was in Amarillo, Texas, in 1924, earning the quartet a total of \$50. While living in Curry County, New Mexico, Echols studied music and began teaching traditional music theory and shape-note singing in schools. He said, "I'd go and teach one hour a day in public schools, and then the whole community would come back to the schoolhouse at night, and I'd teach them how to direct songs and lead music."<sup>91</sup>

In 1926, Echols successfully auditioned for Frank Stamps's original Stamps Quartet and moved to Chattanooga, Tennessee. A year later, Frank Stamps reorganized the group and changed the name to the All-Star Quartet, although it is generally referred to as the Original Stamp's Quartet. The group consisted of Frank Stamps (bass), Palmer Wheeler (first tenor), Roy Wheeler (second tenor), and Odis Echols (baritone). In the spring of 1927, the group added a fifth member, jazz pianist Dwight Brock. Echols discovered Brock playing piano in a drugstore in Haleyville, Alabama. Brock became famous for his rhythmic piano playing and the instrumental turnaround between verses in gospel music. The quartet was the first to incorporate a fifth member, something that soon caught on with other gospel groups.

The All Star Quartet performed primarily in the South. A standard performance included both gospel music and secular hits of the day. Typically, members would perform solo

numbers at some point in order to showcase their individual styles. In particular, Echols regularly earned standing ovations for his rendition of Kern and Hammerstein's classic tune, "Ol Man River." The quartet made most of its money at concerts and church gatherings by selling Stamps-Baxter songbooks during intermission and after the shows.<sup>92</sup>

On October 14, 1927, after a show in Knoxville, Tennessee, a representative of the Okeh Record Company approached the group about making a record. The group had never recorded before, so the members were excited about the prospect. However, when the quartet returned to its home office in Chattanooga, they discovered that Frank Stamps had received a letter from the Victor Recording Company, also offering to record the group. The Victor Company mistakenly believed that the Quartet was a "colored" group.<sup>93</sup> Despite this initial misunderstanding, Ralph Peer of Victor instructed the quartet to go to Atlanta, Georgia, for an audition. After arriving in Atlanta, Stamps and Echols met Peer at the Biltmore Hotel. They all agreed to forgo the audition and begin recording. Peer asked the group to record "Bringing in the Sheaves" and "Rescue the Perishing," which they did on October 20, 1927. The Stamps Quartet recorded the songs that Peer had requested but then persuaded him to record some additional songs that were popular at their shows. Two of these songs, later released together, were "Give the World a Smile" and "Love Leads the Way." "Give the World a Smile" was the first gospel record to sell 500,000 copies. The song featured "afterbeats" or "backfire," which is a style of counterpoint singing that many classic gospel quartets utilized.<sup>94</sup> The song became the group's theme song, and many other quartets have covered the tune over the years.

By 1929, Pop Echols left the Stamps Quartet and moved back to Clovis, New Mexico. He took a job at the Fox Drugstore in its newly created music department and organized his first Melody Boys Quartet, which would be his primary quartet for the next few years.<sup>95</sup> In 1930, Echols formed the Fox Trio in Clovis with Palmer Wheeler. In addition, Echols sometimes sang with his brothers Horace and Coy as the Echols Brothers Trio. However, as the Great Depression of the 1930s worsened, Echols decided to leave New Mexico and return to Texas.

In early 1934 Echols moved to Lubbock and opened a songbook store and a music lessons studio for the Stamps-Baxter Music Company at 1015 A Avenue H. He taught 10-night singing schools at various churches throughout West Texas, including Reverend George Dean's church in Plainview. The Reverend's son, Jimmy Dean, who would go on to become a country music recording star, attended the music school.<sup>96</sup> In late 1934, or possibly early 1935, Echols



Echols School of Music South Side Baptist Church, Abilene, Texas, 1936. Courtesy of Crossroads of Music Archive, Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas, Echols Family Collection, AV006.

formed the Odis Echols's All-Star Texans Quartet with Denver Crumpler (later famous with the Statesmen Quartet), Marlin LeMaster, and Don Smith.

In January 1936, the All-Star Texans joined Harley Sadler's 18th Annual Tour, which began in Abilene, Texas. Odis Echols settled in Abilene and taught music at the Hall Music Store. He also held singing schools in the area and performed on local radio programs, including a 30-minute program on KRBC that featured Echols and several other well-known entertainers. The first quarter hour offered sacred songs such as "He Lifted Me," "His Eye's On the Sparrow," "List to the Voice," "Pearly White City," and "Have Thine Own Way, Lord," while the closing segment showcased quartets, duos, and soloists performing popular music. For example, the Neighborhood Boys Cut-ups sang "Old McDonald Had a Farm." Dolly Bryant did "Basin St. Blues," while June Moore performed "Blue Hours" and Lucille Ragsdale rendered "The One Rose." The show closed with the song "Dinah."<sup>97</sup>

Echols had organized and coached the N.B.C. (Neighborhood Boys Cut-ups) youth quartet, made up of Wood Butler, Jr., Kenneth Day, Milton Reese (all age 12), and Barron Butler (age seven). In 1936, Billy Rose built the soon-to-be-famous Casa Mañana Theater and produced programs in Fort Worth with prominent New York talent in order to compete with the 1936 Texas Centennial events in Dallas. Casa Mañana featured such acts as Paul Whiteman and his Orchestra, fan dancer Sally Rand, and the Canova Trio. Festivities included a weekly children's amateur program, with scouts from Universal, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, and Paramount studios looking for unique talent. On July 28, the N.B.C. Quartet auditioned for Whiteman at the Ringside Club in Fort Worth and won first place among 22 contestants. The quartet then rehearsed with Whiteman and performed twice on broadcasts from the Ringside Club on August 2. On these broadcasts, the N.B.C. Quartet sang, "Old McDonald Had a Farm," and received high praise from industry

representatives and critics. A few weeks later, the Echols-trained youth quartet made a screen test at Casa Mañana for Universal Pictures and Hal Roach Studios.<sup>98</sup>

The following year, Echols and members of the Original Stamps Quartet reunited to tour and to perform on WDAG radio in Greensboro, North Carolina. Unfortunately, the Depression and tough economic times made the reunion short-lived. Echols returned to Abilene once again to perform and convene singing schools. Frank Stamps traveled to Abilene in July of that year and began work with Echols on various programs, including singing schools.

In 1938, Echols reorganized the Stamps Melody Boys in Hot Springs, Arkansas, to perform on radio station KTHS. Later that year Echols moved to WLAC in Nashville, Tennessee, to host a Saturday Night All Gospel Show. One of Echols's biggest fans was a young Ernie Ford from Bristol, Tennessee, who would later have a very successful country music career using the stage name "Tennessee" Ernie Ford.

In 1939, Echols moved the Stamps Melody Boys to Louisville, Kentucky, to radio station WHAS, a CBS affiliate. Included in the quartet was Doy Ott, who later gained fame with the Statesmen Quartet. The Stamps Melody Boys became popular so quickly that, during its first week of broadcasting on WHAS, the group received 1,746 thank-you cards and letters in one day, setting a record for a CBS station. With the Melody Boys success, Echols convinced radio executives to let his group broadcast a gospel music show coast to coast on the Mutual Radio Network. The group broadcast over 150 stations, a first for a gospel group. The Melody Boys continued their daily broadcast on WHAS under the sponsorship of Sieberling Tires. During the summer months, the group played tent shows throughout Kentucky and Indiana, sharing the bill with such prominent secular artists as Pee Wee King and the Golden West Cowboys and Eddie Arnold, and drawing large crowds wherever they performed. However, with the onset of World War II, the group disbanded.

Odis Echols returned to West Texas and bought a farm 16 miles south of Lubbock. Because local farmers were beginning to use improved irrigation techniques, farming in the normally arid region seemed a promising venture for Echols. He and his family worked the farm from 1942 to 1943, most likely growing "fertalia," a type of sorghum native to Sudan in Africa. However, in 1943, Odis Echols decided that farming was not for him and moved back to Hot Springs, Arkansas.

Echols reorganized the Melody Boys Quartet to perform on KTHS and formed the Harmony Boys to sing on either KLRA or KARK in Little Rock. He also bought the Hartford Publishing Company, and his quartets traveled a four-state area performing and selling Hartford songbooks. Hartford

Publishing Company became the second-largest gospel music publisher at the time, surpassed only by Stamps-Baxter in Dallas and Chattanooga. In 1946, Echols sold his interest in Hartford Publishing and moved to Shreveport, Louisiana.

In Shreveport, Echols and his Melody Boys began performing on KWKH radio on March 19, 1946.<sup>99</sup> Their show ran Monday through Saturday at 8:30 a.m. By April 10, the group was broadcasting twice daily at both 6:00 a.m. and 8:30 a.m.<sup>100</sup> Echols leased the Shreveport Municipal Auditorium for Saturday night events, and KWKH's management approached him about starting a new show that could compete with Nashville-based WSM's increasingly popular live music program, *The Grand Ole Opry*. Echols rose to the challenge, and soon regular KWKH entertainers, including Echols, Harmie Smith, and the Shelton Brothers launched *The Red River Valley Round Up*. Echols served as emcee and brought in talented but relatively unknown entertainers, such as Faron Young, Hank Locklin, Johnny Horton, Jim Reeves, Webb Pierce, and Tommy Sands. After some time, Echols and others changed the name of the show to *The Louisiana Hayride*, which would help launch the careers of Elvis Presley and countless other entertainers. In late 1947, KWKH bought Pop Echols's interest in the show, so he briefly moved his family back to Lubbock.<sup>101</sup>

Ever restless, Echols moved on from Lubbock to Los Angeles, appearing with his Melody Boys on Bob Crosby's *Club 15* on CBS radio. Echols also made other personal appearances at churches and gospel concerts, and he taught gospel schools in Fresno and Los Angeles, occasionally reuniting with friends for casual singings. These informal sessions included such notable musicians as Ernie Ford, Merle Travis, Jimmy Wakely, and others.

In 1949, Echols was back in Lubbock, where he formed a new version of the Melody Boys Quartet. KSEL radio featured the quartet with Bob Nash as the announcer. The group performed often, including at events for visiting dignitaries such as U.S. Senator Lyndon B. Johnson and various state governors. Echols continued working at KSEL into the early 1950s as an announcer and often hosted events throughout the area. At KSEL, he auditioned numerous up-and-coming musicians. One such talent was Bobby Keys, a young saxophone player from Slaton, Texas. Echols told Keys that if he kept practicing, he could make it in show business. Keys eventually became a highly sought-after studio session musician and also played saxophone for many years with the legendary rock-and-roll band, the Rolling Stones. Many years later, Odis Echols, Jr. contacted the Rolling Stones to ask for tickets to a concert at the Rose Bowl. Keys met Odis Jr., at the Four Seasons Hotel in Los Angeles with four tickets and





Grand opening of the Nu Vue Theater in Abernathy, Texas. Talent for the event was Pop Echols and his Melody Boys Quartet, Charlene Condray, and Bill Myrick and the Mayfield Brothers, June 15 and 16, 1950. Courtesy of Crossroads of Music Archive, Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas, Echols Family Collection, AV006.

backstage passes to the show, saying, “These tickets are a thank you for Pop Echols.”<sup>102</sup>

Another entertainer who credits Pop Echols for influencing her career is Charlene Condray Hancock, born in Morton, Texas, into a musical family that encouraged her to sing both religious and popular country music.<sup>103</sup> Hancock first studied with Pop Echols at the Four Square Gospel church in Lubbock. Although not a member of the church, she attended shape-note singing schools there and took a few private lessons from Echols. Hancock said that Echols taught her voice projection and to avoid yodeling, so she would not ruin her voice. He also taught her how to be comfortable on stage by telling her, “When you look at the audience and see them intently looking at you, smile and they will smile back. It will make you more comfortable, they want you to do well.”<sup>104</sup> Echols invited Hancock to perform several times at high school auditoriums and churches. One major event was the grand opening of the Nu-Vue Theater in Abernathy, Texas, on June 15 and 16,

1950. Talent for the grand opening included Echols and his Melody Boys Quartet, Charlene Condray (Hancock), and Bill Myrick and the Mayfield Brothers, who had been hosting the KSEL Jamboree on Saturday Nights at Sled Allen’s theater. The Mayfield Brothers performed “Orange Blossom Special” and Condray sang “A Perfect Day.”<sup>105</sup>

By the time she was 16, Charlene Condray performed regularly on KDUB’s *Circle 13 Dude Ranch Show*. Because KDUB was Lubbock’s only television station at the time, she was a local celebrity and was nicknamed “Lubbock’s Sweetheart.” Local bandleader Tommy Hancock saw her perform and asked her to join his popular Western swing band, the Roadside Playboys. Within a few years, the two married, had children, and started a successful family band that performed all over the state and had a major influence on Lubbock’s music scene. The case of Charlene Condray Hancock is yet another example of how, if not for Pop Echols, the history of music in West Texas might be quite different today.



"Sugartime" gold record. Courtesy of Crossroads of Music Archive, Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas, Echols Family Collection, AV006.

In 1953, Echols moved back to Clovis, New Mexico, and purchased KCLV radio. At KCLV, he started a Saturday Breakfast Club that featured many regional and national celebrities, including such politicians as Senator Clinton Anderson and Governor Jimmy Davis.

In 1957, Pop Echols appeared on national television's *This is Your Life* at the request of Tommy Sands, who credited Echols with starting him in show business.<sup>106</sup> That same year, Echols met a young Farwell, Texas, farmer named Charlie Phillips, and began managing his career and building a successful songwriting partnership. The duo collaborated on two songs, "Sugartime" and "One Faded Rose." They cut demo records of the songs at Norman Petty Studios, with local Lubbock artists Buddy Holly on guitar, Jerry Allison on drums, Joe B Mauldin on bass, Jimmy Blakely on steel guitar, and Charlie Phillips on vocals. In 1958, Bob Thiel produced the song "Sugartime" with McGuire Sisters vocals; the song went gold and reached Number One on the pop charts.

Pop Echols continued to work in the music business while living in Clovis. In addition to his far-reaching musical impact,

he also influenced the appearance of an entire generation of gospel quartet singers. Well-known for his carefully groomed pencil-thin mustache, Echols once stated, "The Beatles started long hair. I started the mustache." In fact, many gospel quartet singers began sporting mustaches similar to Echols'. He was a well-loved, highly respected, and very influential figure in gospel music during the first half of the twentieth century. He had a very good attitude, was very outgoing, and everyone liked him. Although Odis "Pop" Echols died on March 23, 1974, in Clovis, New Mexico, his influence is still evident in religious and secular circles, especially throughout the American Southwest.

For 80 years, little attention has been paid to the Lubbock Texas Quartet and the profound impact of gospel music on Southern rural populations. Providing inexpensive entertainment and bolstering social cohesion in perilous times, groups such as the Lubbock Texas Quartet traveled extensively, teaching seven shape-note gospel music to communities that otherwise might not have had access to music education. ★

## Notes

- 1 James R. Goff Jr., *Close Harmony: A History of Southern Gospel* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 65.
- 2 James Lyon, *Urania: A Choice Collection of Psalm-Tunes, Anthems, and Hymns* (New York: De Capo Press, 1974, 1761); William Billings, *The New England Psalm Singer* (Boston: Edes and Gill, 1770); William Smith and William Little, *The Easy Instructor*, (Albany: Websters & Skinners and Daniel Steele, 1798); Benjamin Franklin White and Elisha J. King, eds., *The Sacred Harp: A Collection of Psalms and Hymn Tunes, Odes and Anthems, Selected from the Most Eminent Authors, Together with Nearly One Hundred Pieces Never Before Published. Suited to Most Metres, and Well Adapted to Churches of Every Denomination, Singing Schools and Private Societies. With Plain Rules for Learners*, (1844).
- 3 For further discussion on shape-note singing and the *Sacred Harp* see Francis E. Abernethy, "Sacred Harp Music," *Handbook of Texas Online* (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/xbsdd>), accessed September 08, 2014. Uploaded on June 15, 2010. Modified on May 19, 2014. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.
- 4 For more on the history of the Stamps-Baxter music and publishing empire, see Greg Self, "Stamps-Baxter Music and Printing Company," Shaun Stalzer "Stamps Quartet," and N.D. Giesenschlag, Virgil Oliver Stamps," in *The Handbook of Texas Music*, 2nd edition, ed. Laurie E. Jasinski (Denton, TX: Texas State Historical Association, 2012), 571-573.
- 5 Tony Q. Dyess World War I Draft Registration Card, 12 December 1918, <http://search.ancestry.com/iexec?htx=View&r=an&dbid=6482&iid=TX-1983778-2692&cat=Tony+Q&ln=Dyess&st=r&csrc=&pid=16448601> (Accessed November 7, 2009); Registration Location: *Wilbarger County, Texas*; Roll 1983778; Draft Board: 0; Ancestry.com. *World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2005. Original data: United States, Selective Service System. *World War I Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918*. Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration. M1509, 4,582 rolls. Imaged from Family History Library microfilm.
- 6 Untitled classified news item number 2, *Lubbock Avalanche*, October 30, 1919, p. 9. Dyess could not make the final move until he gathered all of his farm crops.
- 7 "Shallowater Class Gives Recital Last Saturday," *Lubbock Avalanche*, October 30, 1919, p. 11.
- 8 Untitled classified news item number 1, *Lubbock Avalanche*, October 30, 1919, p. 9.
- 9 They settled on a farm two miles south of the old Lubbock County Courthouse and two miles from a small schoolhouse on Route A; "Early Lubbock Settlers Turned Family Name Into Trademark," *Lubbock Avalanche Evening Journal*, July 4, 1975, sec. B, p. 9; "A Snap," *Lubbock Avalanche*, January 1, 1920, p. 12. The *Lubbock Avalanche* article from 1975 states the family farm was two miles south of the courthouse. The second reference to the location of the family farm from the schoolhouse is from Tony Dyess's 1920 classified ad in which he put his 640 acres of land up for quick sale through Holland's Abstract office. *Lubbock Avalanche*, January 1, 1920, p. 12; *Lubbock Avalanche*, June 3, 1920, p. 14; Two years later Dyess bought a house and four lots at 1624 Fourth Street. "Dyess, TQ gro 1624 4th pho 374." *Directory of Lubbock*, vol. 1 (Lubbock: The Plains Journal, Inc., 1925), 118; "Tony Q. Dyess & Sons," *Directory of Lubbock*, vol. 1, 332; At the Fourth Street location, Dyess established a grocery store called "Tony Q. Dyess and Sons." Because Dyess's name sounded like the word "dice," the proprietor's sign had two dice on it showing a two and a five. The store carried staple and fancy groceries. It also served as a precinct-voting place. "Early Lubbock Settlers Turned Family Name Into Trademark," *Lubbock Avalanche Evening Journal*, July 4, 1975, sec. B, p. 9.
- 10 Besides music, Dyess was also active in the community. Dyess became a Mason and a member of the South Plains Odd Fellows Association. He reportedly participated in the laying of the cornerstone at Texas Technological College. He ran in 1922 for Lubbock County Tax Collector, but during the first Democratic primary in July, he did not receive enough votes to continue and dropped out of the race soon afterward. "The I.O.O.F. Association Met Here This Week," *Lubbock Avalanche*, August 11, 1921, p. 1; Mr. and Mrs. Dyess provided music for the meeting from "Early Lubbock Settlers Turned Family Name Into Trademark," July 4, 1975, sec. B, p. 9; "Announcement," *Lubbock Avalanche*, January 20, 1922, p. 16; "Political Announcement," *Lubbock Avalanche*, January 27, 1922, p. 13; "Political Announcement," *Lubbock Avalanche*, January 31, 1922, p. 12; "To the Voters of Lubbock County," *Lubbock Avalanche*, July 28, 1922, p. 7; "Tony Q. Dyess Candidate for Tax Collector," *Lubbock Avalanche*, July 18, 1922, p. 4; In his political advertisement on July 18, 1922, Dyess appealed to voters and stated that he would "[n]ot only be on the job in the office when you call, but will have 'set' dates in Slaton, Idalou and Shallowater to collect taxes and thereby save time and expense at the busy time of the year for you."
- 11 "Lubbock County Singing Convention Has Record Breaking Attendance at Carlisle Fifth Sunday Convention," *Lubbock Avalanche*, February 10, 1922, p. 11; "Slide Locals of the Past Week," *Lubbock Avalanche*, February 10, 1922, p. 7.
- 12 "Singing at Carlisle," *Lubbock Avalanche*, June 10, 1920, p. 15; "Cumberland Revival Closed Last Sunday; Reported Good Results," *Lubbock Avalanche*, July 28, 1921, p. 1; "Monroe News Items of the Past Week," *Lubbock Avalanche*, March 3, 1922, p. 6; In the preceding newspaper article it is reported that Dyess entertained a Farmers Union with singing and guitar playing.
- 13 "Early Lubbock Settlers Turned Family Name Into Trademark," p. 9.
- 14 "Hoi Ye That Musical Thirst," *Lubbock Avalanche*, October 27, 1921, p. 15; "Lubbock County Singing Convention at Slaton," *Lubbock Avalanche*, April 28, 1922, p. 11.
- 15 "Acuff News Items of the Past Week," *Lubbock Avalanche*, September 1, 1921, p. 11; "News of the Week from Woodrow Com.," *Lubbock Avalanche*, March 17, 1922, p. 10; Dyess taught a ten-night singing school in Woodrow and received his payment from the proceeds of the box supper; a common practice for paying singing teachers.
- 16 "Community Singing Contest was an Interesting Feature of South Plains Fair Which Closed Sat.," *Lubbock Avalanche*, October 13, 1923, p. 3. The Monroe singing class won first place, Center took second, and the Johnston community class of Terry County followed in third.
- 17 Classified Advertisement, *Lubbock Avalanche*, June 3, 1920, p. 14. The songbook is most likely: B.B. Bateman and G. M. Bateman, *Evangel Light: A Choice Collection of Songs, New and Old, for Church, Sunday School, Convention and Evangelistic Service*, Knoxville, Tennessee, 1920.
- 18 "Notice," *Lubbock Avalanche*, November 29, 1921, p. 12.
- 19 "Baseball Mangers Met in Lubbock Wednesday," *Lubbock Avalanche*, April 7, 1922, p. 5; "Annual Banquet of Lubbock C. of C. Tuesday Evening," *Lubbock Avalanche*, May 12, 1922, p. 4. At the Chamber of Commerce banquet, the Home Brew quartet and Peerless quartet both performed. It is not the famed Peerless quartet of the era that performed because R.I. Wilson is named as one of the members. "Peerless quartet Made a Trip to Slaton Friday," *Lubbock Avalanche*, April 18, 1922, p. 6.
- 20 "Fair Boosters Left Thursday morning for an All Day Trip (Accompanied by 'Darky' quartette)," *Lubbock Avalanche*, September 22, 1922, p. 1; "Junior C. of C. Excursions were Successful in Every Way," *Lubbock Avalanche*, September 26, 1922, p. 1. According to the article the quartet "dressed as negro comedians" and played a significant part in the success of the excursion. The author goes on to say, "[T]hey are entertainers of real merit [newspaper author's emphasis]...and proved their knowledge of the entertainment art." "Fair Boosters Well Received on First of Three Jaunts," *Lubbock Avalanche*, September 12, 1924, p. 2.
- 21 "Annual Banquet of the C. of C. Held Tuesday Evening," *Lubbock Avalanche*, May 12, 1922, p. 1.
- 22 "Home Brew quartette will put on Program," *Lubbock Avalanche*, May 30, 1922, p. 9; "Home Brew quartette will put on Program," *Lubbock Avalanche*, June 2, 1922, p. 1. In the announcement, Dyess is referred to as Professor Tony Q. Dyess.
- 23 The Home Brew quartet is referenced and highly praised several times as the entertainment at Lubbock Rotary Club functions. "Rotary Notes," *Lubbock Avalanche*, January 17, 1922, p. 4; The author of the previous Rotary Notes commented that, "Talk about music! That was some



- quartette Robert induced to sing for us at the luncheon Wednesday. To pass the following boys on the street you would not think they had it in them, now would you. But believe me when T.Q. Dyess, L.L. Wendell, R.I. Wilson, and R.A. Holland get together with their well-blended voices on some of their catchy songs, everybody sits up and takes notice. Come again boys. It was fine and worlds cannot express how the club appreciate[s] your singing for them." Other quartets with the name Home Brew were also in Wichita Falls and Amarillo and consisted of members from the local Rotary Club. More research is needed to see if members of the Lubbock Home Brew quartet joined the Lubbock Rotary Club, because the quartet often appeared as guests at Lubbock meetings. "Local quartette Will Entertain Rotarians," *Lubbock Avalanche*, January 3, 1922, p. 11; "Rotary Notes," *Lubbock Avalanche*, March 3, 1922, p. 8; "Rotary Notes," *Lubbock Avalanche*, April 28, 1922, p. 10. "Rotary Notes," *Lubbock Avalanche*, March 7, 1922, p. 8; "Rotarians Hear Fine program at Wednesday's Luncheon-South Plains Fair Topic of Discussion," *Lubbock Morning*, October 19, 1923, p. 2; "Rotary Minstrel Wins," *Lubbock Avalanche*, December 15, 1923, p. 1; "Rotary Program," *Lubbock Morning Avalanche*, April 20, 1928, p. 10; "Rotarians Finish Work Here, Leave on Carlsbad Trip," *Lubbock Morning Avalanche* April 21, 1928, p. 6.
- 24 "Home Brew quartet Will Render Program July 4," *Lubbock Avalanche Journal*, June 20, 1922, p. 12; "Program Community Auditorium," *Lubbock Avalanche*, July 4, 1922, p. 6; The name L.M. Brooks appears in many Lubbock, Texas, phone books with one volume using the name Louis M Brooks. Therefore one can assume his name is Louis.
- 25 Tony Dyess died on August 18, 1927 after battling a lengthy illness; he was 45 years old. "Keys of City Tendered Visiting Peddlers for Today's Picnic Jubilee," *Lubbock Morning Avalanche-Journal*, June 25, 1927, p. 6.
- 26 "At the Churches," *Lubbock Avalanche*, 12 April 1924, p. 2. The name Windell is most likely L.L. Wendell and is misspelled.
- 27 "Visiting Teachers Entertained at Wolfarth House," *Lubbock Avalanche*, September 6, 1923, p. 3; "A Splendid Musical Program was Rendered at Rotary Lunch at the Armory Building Today," *Lubbock Daily Avalanche*, July 17, 1924, p. 8; Lubbock telephone books list a G.A. Gunn with the first name Glenn.
- 28 "Beautiful New Baptist Church Building Dedicated by Pastor and Congregation Sunday A.M.," *Lubbock Morning Avalanche*, January 15, 1924, Vol. 2, No. 66, p. 7.
- 29 Mrs. Percy Spencer, ed., "Society, Church and Club News," *Lubbock Morning Avalanche*, October 11, 1925, p. 2.
- 30 "Quartets Give Program," *Lubbock Morning Avalanche*, January 22, 1929, p. 10.
- 31 "Quartets Give Program," p. 10; C.L. Gunn was G.A. Gunn's brother.
- 32 As noted earlier, 1929 is the first mention of the Lubbock quartet, and 1943 seems to be the last reference to the group until a short-lived version of the Lubbock Stamps quartet during the late 1940s or early 1950s. J. Howard Rogers led the short-lived group while living in Lubbock. Howard helped start the Southern Gospel Music Association chapter in Texas in 1972 and was inducted into the Texas Music Hall of Fame in 1995. "J. Howard Rogers," <http://www.tgmhf.org/hall/hall.php?page=rogers> (accessed December 15, 2009); "A Testament to the Late J. Howard Rogers," <http://theparisnews.com/story.lasso?ewcd=d3b8d47b154f2067> (accessed December 15, 2009); "J. Howard Rogers in Gospel Music 60 Years," *The Paris News*, May 5, 1985, p. 3.
- 33 The date is found in the appendix of William Randle's dissertation listing Columbia Records coupling notices and is almost certainly the release date of the record. William Randle, "History of Radio and Broadcasting and Its Social and Economic Effect on the Entertainment Industry: 1920-1930," (PhD diss., Western Reserve University, September 1966), 1089. Charles Wolfe references Randle's coupling notices statistics in his article "Columbia Records and Old-Time Music." Coupling notices are company file references that give basic information about the origin of a record. Wolfe states that the coupling notices contained the date the record was released and not recorded; thus, February 28, 1930 should be the release date for the Lubbock Texas Quartet record. Charles Wolfe, "Columbia Records and Old-Time Music," in *Exploring Roots Music: Twenty Years of the JEMF Quarterly, American Folk Music and Musicians Series, No. 8*, ed. Nolan Porterfield (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2004), 202. The D in the label series stands for Domestic.
- 34 Archie Green, "Hillbilly Issue," *The Journal of American Folklore* 78, no. 309 (July-September, 1965), 215.
- 35 Tony Russell, *Country Music Records: A Discography, 1921-1942* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 14-15; Tony Russell, *Country Music Originals: The Legends and the Lost* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 64; "Columbia (USA) 15000D Series Numerical Listing," <http://www.78discography.com/COL15000D.htm> (accessed June 9, 201).
- 36 Brian Rust, *The Columbia Master Book Discography, Volume III: Principal U.S. Matrix Series, 1924-1934* (West Port Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1999), 529; Ross Laird and Brian Rust, *Discography of Okeh Records, 1918-1934* (West Port, Connecticut: Praeger, 2004), 593-595.
- 37 The Okeh releases, both religious and secular, are as follows: 45396 Stamps-Baxter School of Music "I'll be Singing Forever" (MX 403387) and "I am O'ershadowed By Love" (MX 403386); Oscar and Doc Harper "Beaumont Rag" (MX 403348), "Billy on the Low Ground" (MX 403349), "Terrell Texas Blues" (MX 403346), and "Dallas Blues" (MX 403344); Harmony Four "He's a Wonderful Savior to Me" (MX 403373), "I'm Sailing On" (MX 403372), "My Friend Devine" (MX 403370), and "I'll Know Him" (MX403371). Laird and Rust, *Discography of Okeh Records*, 593-595.
- 38 Marion Snider, interview by author, September 18, 2009.
- 39 Virgil O. Stamps, *Virgil O. Stamps Favorite Radio Songs: A Collection of Sacred Songs, New and Old, Compiled Especially for Radio Programs* (Dallas: Stamps-Baxter Music Co., 1937), No. 101.
- 40 "Glory Special," *Copyright Encyclopedia*, <http://www.faqs.org/copyright/glory-special-and-19618-other-titles-part-005-of-041/> (accessed November 2, 2009); "Glory Special & 19618 other titles/1," *Wikipedia*, [http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Glory\\_Special\\_%26\\_19618\\_other\\_titles/1](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Glory_Special_%26_19618_other_titles/1) (accessed 2 November 2009). The two preceding web sites page lists gospel songs and the writers from a copyright registration by "Brentwood-Benson Music Publishing, Inc. d. b. a. Stamps-Baxter Music" and "Bridge Building Music, Inc.," consisting of 41 parts. Document numbers V3432D859-V3432D899. Complete document is "V3432 D859-899 P1-1013."
- 41 It is not certain what the acronym S. N. M. I. represents, but it is most likely Southern Normal Music Institute.
- 42 Otis J. Knippers, *Who's Who Among Southern Singers and Composers* (Lawrenceburg, TN: James D. Vaughn Music Publisher, 1937), 49.
- 43 Library of Congress Copyright Office, *Catalogue of Copyright Entries; Published by Authority of the Acts of Congress of March 3, 1891, of June 30, 1906, and of March 4, 1909, Part 3 Musical Compositions, Including: List of Copyright Renewals and List of Notices of Users*, Vol. 19, Nos. 5 and 6 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1925), 436. The list of copyright shows B.B. Edmiaston publishing from Whitesboro and Waco, Texas, in 1924.
- 44 Church Record of Ministers at first united Methodist Church in Robert Lee. The information came from the minister at First United Methodist Church in Robert Lee, Pastor Steve Peyton.
- 45 "Mountain Gospel: The Sacred Roots of Country Music," JSP Records, #JSP-CD7755, 2005; "The Half Ain't Never Been Told: Early American Rural Religious Music: Classic Recordings Of The 1920's and 30's Vol. 1," Shanachie Entertainment Corp, 2005.
- 46 Lonnie and Thelma Robertson, *Lonnie and Thelma's Book of Beloved Hymns* (Dallas 8, Texas: Stamps-Baxter Music and Printing Company), No. 54.
- 47 During the interview with Marion Snider he said he thought that E. M Kitchen was a teacher in a community south of Lubbock, but a search for him has been unsuccessful. Snider, Dallas, 2009.
- 48 Robertson, *Lonnie and Thelma's Book of Beloved Hymns*, No. 54; J.R. Baxter ed. and compiled by Homer Morris, *Special Service Songs for Special Occasions* (Dallas 8, Texas: Stamps-Baxter Music and Printing Company, 1944), No. 94; Albert E. Brumley, *Albert E. Brumley's Log Cabin Songs and Ballads* (Powell, MO: Albert E. Brumley and Sons,

1974), 51. Much of the confusion over the owner of the copyright may stem from the fact that many old folk, gospel, and blues songs were traditional and had been around for years. Typically, whoever made the arrangement of the specific song received credit as “arranger” or copyright owner.

- 49 “William Alfred McKinney,” in *Virgil O. Stamps Radio Song Album*, ed. Virgil O. Stamps, (Dallas: The Stamps-Baxter Stamps Music Company, 1937), 190. William A. McKinney, *The Solid Rock for Radio, Conventions, Singing Schools and Wherever Special Gospel Songs are Needed* (Shannon, MS: McKinney Music Company), 1944.
- 50 The sales figures come from Danny Freeman of Rebel Records who has copies of sales figures from the Columbia Music Archives. Dave Freeman, interview by author, June 24, 2009; These same figures are supported by Tony Russell who used Dave Freeman as a source for his book Tony Russell, *Country Music Originals: The Legends and the Lost*, 64; World renowned country music scholar Charles K. Wolfe has also relied on Dave Freeman’s Columbia sales figures and files for his research. See Charles K. Wolfe, “Columbia Records and Old Time Music.” Matrix numbers are from Steve Abrams and Tyrone Settlemier, “COLUMBIA 78rpm Numerical Listing Discography: 15000D series,” *The Online Discographical Project*, <http://www.78discography.com/COL15000D.htm> (accessed August 4, 2007).
- 51 “Columbia Records Advertisement,” *Roane County Reporter*, July 30, 1930, p. 6; “Columbia Records Advertisement” *Roane County Reporter*, October 16, 1930, p. 16; *Charleston Daily Mail*, October 19, 1930, p. 13; *Charleston Gazette*, October 19, 1930, p. 7; *Charleston Gazette*, October 24, 1930, Section F, p. 5.
- 52 The parts listed are those, which have been published. However, many men often sang different parts as needed. For example, Homer Garrison stated that M. M. Meek sang bass although he could sing any part.
- 53 Wilson Carson did play and sing at the same time with the group when it consisted of only four members. It is possible he could have sung and played at the same time on the record, but it is unlikely. It is likely that other members of the Lubbock Texas quartet played instruments, but no mention of anyone playing guitar exists, except for Wilson Carson. A photo shows the Lubbock Stamps quartet comprised of Minnis Meek, Clyde Burleson, Wilson Carson, and Raymond Dyess. In the photo Wilson Carson is holding a guitar and the caption states the photo is from 1931. *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*, “Early Lubbock Settlers Turned Family Name Into Trademark,” sec. B, p. 9. Although it is speculative, it is conceivable Wilson Carson played guitar on the record.
- 54 “Many Gather in B’ Spring for Songfest: Convention to be Concluded with Sessions Today,” *The Big Spring Daily Herald*, June 19, 1938, pp. 1, 10; “News Briefs,” *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*, March 30 1935, p. 2; “News Briefs,” *Lubbock Morning Avalanche-Journal*, September 28, 1935, p. 2.
- 55 Garrison, interview, 1989; Snider, interview, 2009; Marion Snider, interview by Richard Mason, November 15, 1989, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas; Garrison, interview, 1989.
- 56 Garrison, interview, 1989; “250 Attend Reunion of Van Zandt County,” *Lubbock Avalanche Evening Journal*, June 19, 1950, p. 8.
- 57 Burleson’s obituary in the *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal* indicates he sang on the record. The obituary states that “Burleson was a member of the first quartet to record for Columbia Records in 1927.” Yet, some uncertainty remains. The anomaly is that the recording date of 1927 is wrong; it should be 1929. In the obituary, it states Burleson sang with the Odie Echols quartet from 1929-1931, before forming his own group the Lubbock quartet in 1932. The 1932 date is wrong because he definitely performed with the group as early as January 1930. “Noted Gospel Singer Dies,” *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*, January 11, 1967, sec. A, p. 7. Another clue Burleson sang on the record is that when one listens to the Lubbock Texas quartet songs, someone is definitely singing a very high tenor part on both songs. In fact, at first it sounds like a woman singing. No other clues are present that point to another man from Lubbock who could have sung the high tenor parts. That fact that Burleson sang with Echols beginning in 1929 yields yet another clue that Burleson likely sang on the record because of the Stamps-Baxter connection. In all, it appears Clyde Burleson did sing on the record.
- 58 [www.Ancestry.com](http://www.Ancestry.com), “Database: 1920 United States Federal Census Detail: Year: 1920, Census Place: Farmersville, Collin, Texas; Roll: T625\_1788; Page: 13B; Enumeration District: 12, Image: 935,” <http://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?h=93155683&db=1920usfedcen&indiv=try> (accessed December 17, 2009).
- 59 “Heart Attack Fatal to Lubbock Resident,” *Lubbock Morning Avalanche-Journal*, December 23, 1949, sec. I, p. 10; “Quartets Give Program,” p. 10.
- 60 “Heart Attack Fatal to Lubbock Resident,” sec. I, p. 10. Very little evidence exists that that Meek sang on the record. Through newspaper accounts, Homer Garrison, and Marion Snider it is clear Meek was a talented musician and had been a mainstay in the quartet. The best piece of evidence that Meek may have sang on the record is a posting on a genealogy website that states “Minnis sang with the Stamps-Baxter quartet of Lubbock, Texas, but only had one record made.” See Sherrylee Meeks, “McKeever Turner Lines,” <http://worldconnect.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=sherrylee&id=I116> (accessed November 7, 2009). The author attempted to contact Sherrylee Meeks, but her husband stated she had passed away. The husband was unable to verify where the information about Minnis Meek singing on an album was obtained. The only ambiguity about the preceding evidence is that Meek later sang baritone with The West Texas Entertainers along with Rueben Dyess (bass), Cecil Gunn (tenor), and Howard Kidwell (tenor). In a July 6, 1930 newspaper article an announcement states the West Texas Entertainers signed a recording contract to sing gospel songs for Columbia and Brunswick and planned to travel east to make the records. See “Local Singers to Sing for Records,” *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*, July 6, 1930, sec. 2, p. 2. Searches through Columbia and Brunswick discographies did not reveal any songs recorded by The West Texas Entertainers. Thus, it seems likely Minnis sang on the Lubbock Texas quartet record.
- 61 Varying accounts of his birth year exist. Carson’s son and grandson said he was born in 1911. A social security record has 1912, and a census record approximates 1913. Most likely it was not 1913.
- 62 “U.S. World War II Army Enlistment Records, 1938-1946,” [http://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?rank=1&new=1&MSAV=0&msT=1&gss=angsg&gsfn=wilson+l.&gsln=carson&\\_81004010=1911&msbnpn=77806&msbnpn\\_\\_ftp=Lubbock%2c+Lubbock%2c+Texas%2c+USA&\\_81004030=12+august+1992&msdpn=77806&msdpn\\_\\_ftp=Lubbock%2c+Lubbock%2c+Texas%2c+USA&pcat=ROOT\\_CATEGORY&ch=3869474&recoff=1+2+3&db=WWIIenlist&indiv=1](http://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?rank=1&new=1&MSAV=0&msT=1&gss=angsg&gsfn=wilson+l.&gsln=carson&_81004010=1911&msbnpn=77806&msbnpn__ftp=Lubbock%2c+Lubbock%2c+Texas%2c+USA&_81004030=12+august+1992&msdpn=77806&msdpn__ftp=Lubbock%2c+Lubbock%2c+Texas%2c+USA&pcat=ROOT_CATEGORY&ch=3869474&recoff=1+2+3&db=WWIIenlist&indiv=1) (accessed 18 December 2009).
- 63 Carson was 17 or 18 years old at the time of the recording. At the most, he only attended three years of high school, so he would have been out of school at the time of the recording, making it possible for him to travel to Dallas for the recording session. No other facts are evident linking anyone else to playing the guitar on the record. Oral histories and a photograph make it apparent that Carson was the guitar player for the Lubbock quartet for many years.
- 64 No evidence links Gunn or Brooks directly or indirectly to performing on the record. However, it is possible to deduce that they performed on the record by establishing who was unavailable at the time of the recording. Rueben and Raymond Dyess, Tony Q Dyess’s two sons, were both attending High School. Rueben was the first of the two brothers to join with members of the Lubbock quartet and begin singing professionally. Rueben toured with The West Texas Entertainers in 1930. He also toured with the Harley Sadler Show and then became a Methodist preacher. Raymond joined the Lubbock quartet in 1931. He later joined the Drugstore Cowboys and played with other bands before becoming a Methodist preacher in 1939. Raymond was too young to have performed on the record. Rueben was a senior in high school and from a newspaper account we know that he sang on a program for the 4-H Club’s Annual Achievement Day on December 7, 1929. Thus, it is doubtful Rueben recorded in Dallas on December 6, and then returned to Lubbock to perform at the 4-H event. Homer Garrison and Marion Snider did not join the group until 1933. Of the three remaining men left who may have been on the record, the two most likely candidates are C. L. Gunn and L.M. Brooks. C. L. Gunn and L.M. Brooks are mentioned several times after the recording as performing with various

- Lubbock Stamps groups. The last mention of G.A. Gunn performing with the group is June 30, 1929. A January 30, 1930 announcement in the *Lubbock Avalanche* lists a Stamps Trio performance for the Levelland, Chamber of Commerce—the trio consisted of C. L. Gunn, L.M. Brooks, and Clyde Burleson, which makes Cecil Gunn the likely choice to have been on the record. Throughout the quartet's existence Burleson, Brooks, and Meek were regular members.
- 65 Garrison, interview, 1989.
- 66 Garrison, interview, 1989; Burleson also bought Ford Fordor touring sedans in March of 1935 and in March of 1936. "Along Auto Row in Lubbock," *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*, March 24, 1935, sec. 2, p. 3; "Along Auto Row in Lubbock," *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*, March 15, 1936, sec. 2, p. 7.
- 67 Garrison, interview, 1989; Snider, interview, 1989.
- 68 "Miss Cordill Guest of Club: Musical Numbers Presented at Luncheon Session of Rotarians," *Big Spring Daily Herald*, June 2, 1936, p. 6.
- 69 Snider, interview, 1989.
- 70 Garrison, interview, 1989; Snider, interview, 1989.
- 71 Garrison, interview, 1989.
- 72 Ibid.
- 73 Ibid.
- 74 Ibid.
- 75 Snider, interview, 2009.
- 76 The Vaughn quartet from Jacksonville, Texas, performed at the High School auditorium with part of the proceeds going to the school. "Idalou Items of Interest in the Past Week," *Lubbock Avalanche*, October 6, 1921, p. 4.
- 77 "Big Crowd Attended the Singing Convention at Slaton on the Fifth Sunday Regardless of Rain," *Lubbock Avalanche*, May 5, 1922, p. 5; Tony Dyess was president of the Singing Convention, but was unable to attend the event. Because he sold Vaughn Publications and was the President of the Convention it seems likely Dyess was the man responsible for bringing the Vaughn quartet to the area. Another member of the Vaughn quartet was Marlin "Buster" Keeton, who later retired from music and moved to Lubbock to sell insurance, but still attended singing conventions. Keeton recounts in an interview traveling to West Texas to perform with the Vaughn quartet. Keeton also states V.O. Stamps was the first to call him "Buster." Marlin McKinney "Buster" Keeton, interview by Richard Mason, June 13 1987, Oral History Collection, Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas.
- 78 "Plateau Singing Convention Elects Local Man as V.P.," *Lubbock Avalanche*, June 30, 1922, p. 8.
- 79 The Lubbock Vaughn quartet is referenced in an article on September 15, 1922 in which local Judge C.W. Beene, a member of the quartet, said the quartet was unable to perform that evening. "Directors Elected at Meeting Junior C. of C. Wednesday Night," *Lubbock Avalanche*, September 15, 1922, p. 1.
- 80 "Words of Kiwanis," *Lubbock Avalanche*, September 5, 1922, p. 9.
- 81 Goff, *Close Harmony*, 69; Charles Wolfe, "Vaughan Quartet," in *Encyclopedia of Gospel Music*, ed. W.K. McNeil (New York: Routledge, 2005), 409.
- 82 Goff, *Close Harmony*, 63-64; W.K. McNeil, "Vaughn, James David," in *Encyclopedia of Gospel Music*, ed. W.K. McNeil (New York: Routledge, 2005), 410.
- 83 Goff, *Close Harmony*, 64-66; McNeil, "Vaughn, James David," 410-411.
- 84 Goff, *Close Harmony*, 66-69; McNeil, "Vaughn, James David," 410.
- 85 Goff, *Close Harmony*, 75-76.
- 86 Charles Wolfe, "Stamps-Baxter," in *Encyclopedia of Gospel Music*, ed. W.K. McNeil (New York: Routledge, 2005), 370-371.
- 87 N.D. Giesenschlag, "Stamps, Virgil Oliver," *Handbook of Texas Online*, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/SS/fstac.html> (accessed October 12, 2009).
- 88 Baxter had been working as a branch office manager for A. J. Showalter and had known Virgil for about eight years; Giesenschlag, "Stamps, Virgil Oliver;" Mrs. Frank Stamps, "In Loving Memory: Frank Stamps (1896-1965)," in *Give the World a Smile* (Wesson, MS: M. Lynwood Smith, 1969); Goff, *Close Harmony*, 87-88.
- 89 Greg Self, "STAMPS-BAXTER MUSIC AND PRINTING COMPANY," *Handbook of Texas Online* (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/ehs03>), accessed July 10, 2014. Uploaded on June 15, 2010. Modified on November 23, 2011. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.
- 90 Ibid.
- 91 "Music Fete will Honor 'Pop' Echols," *The Baytown Sun*, July 7, 1972, p. 12.
- 92 Rebecca Folsom, "Give the World a Smile: A Professional Gospel Quartet of All-Stars, 1927-1932," *Society for American Music Bulletin*, Volume XXV, no. 3, (fall 1999), <http://www.american-music.org/publications/bullarchive/Folsom.html> (accessed February 19, 2011).
- 93 "Stamps Quartet Reunion," sound recording, April, 11, 1973.
- 94 Charles Wolfe, "Stamps Quartet," in *Encyclopedia of Gospel Music*, ed. W.K. McNeil (New York: Routledge, 2005), 370.
- 95 A photograph caption in the Program for the Odis "Pop" Echols Gospel Music Spectacular, July 8, 1972 lists Clyde Burleson and Henry Shipp as members of the Melody Boys, they also sang with the Lubbock Quartet. Echols and Burleson both led and sang with the Lubbock Quartet. The Melody Boys also worked for Stamps-Baxter. See the advertisement for "The Stamps Melody Boys Male Quartet," May 6, 1934, p. 7.
- 96 Unknown author, "History Outline of the Stamps Quartet and Odis 'Pop' Echols," undated, Odis Echols Collection (unprocessed collection), Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas. Although the author is not on the history, it is most likely Odis Echols, Jr; For more on the life and career of Jimmy Dean, see Jennifer Cobb, "Jimmy Ray Dean," in *The Handbook of Texas Music*, 2nd edition, 161-162.
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