

**Kate E. Purvis:
Little Known and Often Cited**
by Milton Loyer, 2010

For years, the majority of American musical reference publications have been naming Katharine E. Purvis of Williamsport PA as the author of the words to *When the Saints Go Marching In*. But just who is this person, and does she really deserve any credit for this timeless classic gospel song?

The many twists and turns of this tale will be presented in three parts, each named for a key person in the story: Catharine E. Nash, Isaac F. Purvis and James M. Black.

Catharine E. Nash

Catharine Elinda Nash is the given name of the lady who became Katharine E. Purvis. She was born May 19, 1842, in Towanda PA to Rev. Charles Nash, a preacher in what was then the Oneida Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Charles Nash (10/28/1802 – 3/4/1868) was born in Granby MA. He prepared for a career in education and began teaching at the academy in Wellsboro PA in 1825. After 3 years he felt a call to the ministry and was admitted on trial to the Genesee Conference in 1828 and assigned to Wyalusing NY. In 1829 the Oneida Conference was formed from the eastern portion of the Genesee Conference, and Rev. Nash became a charter member of the new conference. His official ministerial record lists service at Wyalusing NY (1828-30), Wilkes-Barre PA (1830-32), Kingston PA (1832-33) and Honesdale PA (1833-35). These charges are now part of the Wyoming Conference, which was formed from the southern portion of the Oneida Conference in 1852.

In feeble health and suffering voice problems that would not permit public speaking to large audiences, Charles Nash stopped receiving ministerial appointments in 1835 and taught for several years in Cayuga and Seneca counties NY. In 1841 he formally located from the Oneida Conference and accepted a position at the academy in Towanda PA. By 1845 his voice had recovered, but his general health ruled out continuing as a full-time educator. For three years, he preached part-time and accepted private students until he felt able to return to the ministry full time.

Rev. Nash was the preacher of record in Wellsboro 1848-51, but he finally removed the family to Williamsport PA to enter business and afford his children

the benefits of a more stable life and the educational advantages of Williamsport Dickinson Seminary.

Charles Nash married July 17, 1828, at Oxford NY to Laurissa Harriet Thomas (1/3/1805 – 11/12/1884). They had 9 known children as follows:

child	born		died	
Cornelia S.	04/10/1830	St. Nichols NY	11/18/1866	Williamsport
Charles	06/03/1832	Wilkes-Barre PA	12/07/1899	Williamsport
Mary Loisa	06/03/1834	Bethany PA	05/19/1865	Williamsport
Harriet Maria	09/27/1836	Danby NY	01/24/1889	Williamsport
William Henry	03/06/1839	Fleming NY	08/27/1842	Towanda
Catharine Elinda	05/19/1842	Towanda PA	10/23/1907	Williamsport
Francis	03/05/1845	Towanda PA	06/07/1845	Towanda
Sarah Frances*	07/11/1846	Campbell NY	01/21/1889	Williamsport
William Cranston	10/14/1849	Campbell NY	?	?

*Sarah Frances appears to prefer the name Fannie. Sometimes she is referred to as Fannie S. Nash, but mostly as Fannie E. Nash. She is also referred to variously as Miss Frank Nash and S. Frank Nash.

William Cranston Nash (the middle name being the maiden name of Charles' mother) was born and named after the death of his brother William Henry Nash. By the time Charles settled in Williamsport, the older children were past the age to attend Williamsport Dickinson Seminary, but Catharine and Fannie graduated from there in 1860 and 1865 respectively. Cornelia and Fannie remained single. The others appear to have married and settled in Williamsport. Most are buried with their spouses in the Nash family plot in Williamsport's Wildwood Cemetery.

The Nash family was active in the Mulberry Street Methodist Episcopal Church. Marriage records from the church indicate that Catharine E. Nash of Williamsport and Isaac F. Purvis of New York were married on January 8, 1867. It was about this time that spelling for Catharine seems to have changed to Katharine. Mr. and Mrs. Purvis moved to New York and became the parents of three children as follows:

child	born		died	
Charles Nash	1868	New York		
James F.	1870	New York		
Katherine E.	11/15/1872	New York	03/15/1895	Williamsport PA

Mrs. Katharine Purvis returned to Williamsport about 1875 as a widow with three small children. The fate of Isaac will be revealed in the section that bears his name. Kate and the children became part of the extended Nash family and re-established connection with Mulberry Street Church and Williamsport Dickinson Seminary, where Kate served on the music faculty 1883-88.

Kate and her sister Fannie developed a special bond. Both were graduates of Williamsport Dickinson Seminary, and both were talented musically and poetically. The WDS newspaper, the *Dickinson Liberal*, contains frequent references to each of the sisters.

The December 1880 *Dickinson Liberal* includes the following poem by Fannie, reproduced here because it reveals much about the character and perspective of the sisters.

ECHOES FROM AN OLD HARP

by Fannie S. Nash, class 1865

There's a wild, weird song in my heart tonight
As I wander through the wild-wood;
'Tis a song and a sigh for the old moonlight
Which danced on the floor of the cottage bright,
Where I spend my happy childhood.

The echoes come back from that joy-lit hearth
And thrill one with wonder unspoken;
They speak of those hours of pleasure and mirth –
Sweet seasons which mingle a heaven with earth,
And idols now shattered and broken

How the years have gone like the ocean's tide!
Bearing onward with its surges
The dreams of my youth and my fond heart's pride
While memories sweet, for those who have died,
Are chanting their solemn dirges!

Old age, with its winters, has silvered my hair
And stolen from life its sweetness;
My forehead is furrowed by sorrow and care –
Life's burdens are many and harder to bear –
And my foot has lost its fleetness.

I have to think, as the days go by,
Each bearing me nearer death's pillow –
Of the beautiful home in yonder sky,
Where my heart will be anchored by and by,
When I've passed over Jordan's billows.

How often I seem to stand so near
That I catch a glimpse of its portals;
While I listen, with almost hallowed fear,
To the song of praise that's borne to my ear,
From its throng of high immortals.

I see in the distance the myst'ry unfold
Which around that city lingers
While voices are chanting the "Story of Old,"
And I almost hear the harps of gold
As they're touched by angel fingers.

The harp of my life, with its time-worn strings,
Has lost all its notes of gladness;
No beautiful chord of pleasure it sings –
No sweet songs of rest to my heart it brings –
And its chords have a touch of sadness.

But its sweetness will all come back some day –
With melody soft it will quiver;
It will soothe my soul in life's twilight gray;
Its murmur will mix with the drops of spray,
As I enter the silver river.

And when I shall stand on the other shore
And bathe in the noon-tide vernal,
As the song of the ransomed comes floating o'er,
My harp shall re-echo with music once more,
And join in the chorus eternal.

The March 1885 *Dickinson Liberal* reports the following:

Miss Fannie Nash, widely and favorably known throughout our city, has for many years been a teacher in the High School. It is said that she intends to resign her position; for what we know not, but we do know that for some time she has been wearing a slender diamond ring on her first finger. She is active in the church and Sunday school, and was a member of the choir. She sings, plays the guitar and piano, paints and writes poetry. So many blessings seldom fall to the lot of one man.

While no further details of this incident are available, we do know that Fannie never married.

The February 1889 *Dickinson Liberal* reports Fannie's death as follows:

When a life like that of Miss Fannie Nash closes, no human words seem a fitting memorial. Her place in the church was that of a faithful Daughter of the King; in the home, patient, lovely and beloved, whose very presence "seemed the sweet incense and womanly atmosphere of home," who, wheresoever she put her hand, turned her surroundings into beauty by the magic of her presence. Her chosen life-work, that of teaching the young, was no mean or servile task to her mind, but was rendered high, noble and dignified by the graces of her mind and heart. A woman, beloved and esteemed by all, has spread her wings to enter a larger, better life, yet the impress of her character remains deeply stamped upon the many people, young and old, whose lives touched hers.

Cultivated and gifted she lived for others, "and deeds of week-day holiness fall from her, noiseless as snow."

She has drawn herself from us for a little while, but the inspiration her life has given to the young is a more lasting monument than the massive granite.

Dickinson Seminary has a great reason to be proud that such a woman was among her Alumni.

The members of the Tripartite Society express their grief as follows:

WHEREAS, It has pleased God, in the dispensation of His Providence, to call from among us our sister, Miss Frank E. Nash:

RESOLVED, That in her death the Tripartite Society has lost a true friend.

RESOLVED, That we tender our heartfelt sympathy to the friends of the deceased, and commend them to the care of Him who doeth all things well,

RESOLVED, That these resolutions be recorded in the minutes of the Society, inserted in the DICKINSON LIBERAL, and a copy sent to the bereaved family.

While the circumstances of her death are not known, it may be more than coincidence that Fannie passed away on 1/21/1889 and her sister Harriet Maria Nash Edwards passed away on 1/24/1889. In addition, the Edwards family had previously lost four children in less than 14 months: Henry (1875-12/25/1880), Frederick (1878-8/13/1881), Laura (1869-9/27/1881) and Charles (1872-2/8/1882).

Nor was this Kate's only experience with the premature loss of a loved one. The April 1895 *Dickinson Liberal* carries this account of the death of her daughter Katherine, who attended Williamsport Dickinson Seminary 1886-1889:

Miss Katherine E. Purvis, daughter of Mrs. Katharine E. Purvis, died in our city on the morning of March 15. During the last five years Miss Purvis had been a helpless invalid, and those who knew and loved her best can but rejoice that she is freed from all suffering. The students of years ago remember her as a brilliant, charming young woman, whose life seemed filled with much of promise. Mrs. Purvis is a very valued member of our alumni and served long and faithfully in our musical faculty. Her many friends will regret most deeply this sorrow which has come to her.

The exact fates of Kate's other children are not known. The last entry for Charles Nash Purvis in the Mulberry Street church membership book reads "in Danville Asylum," and the final notation for James F. Purvis is simply "removed by letter." Her work in gospel music with Williamsport's James M. Black was likely what helped to sustain her spirits during the last dozen or so years of her life – and that will be covered in the final section of this paper, under the heading James M. Black. Although many sources give her death date as 1909, the Mulberry Street church records indicate that Katharine E. Purvis died October 23, 1907. This agrees with the following obituary from the Sunday, October 27, 1907, edition of *The Grit* newspaper.

PURVIS

Mrs. Katharine E. Purvis died at her home on Market Street, Wednesday morning. She was widely known as a hymn writer, and won more than passing reputation by the words of the hymn "Abide With Me," arranged to music by Professor James M. Black.¹

Mrs. Purvis was an earnest worker in the Mulberry Street Methodist Church. She had been an invalid for some time, but her condition was not regarded as serious until about three weeks ago. She was 66 years of age, and was the daughter of a Methodist minister in the Wyoming Conference. She was educated in Williamsport Dickinson Seminary, and taught music at the institution for a number of years.

She was a sister of the late Charles Nash, a prominent accountant in this city, and of Miss Frances Nash, formerly of the Williamsport High School faculty, and one of the most accomplished and popular teachers ever in service in Williamsport.

Funeral Services were conducted at the house, Friday afternoon, by the Rev. Oliver S. Metzler. Interment was made in Wildwood cemetery.

Isaac F. Purvis

Isaac F. Purvis was born in Maryland in 1842 to James Franklin Purvis. He was one of nine children of James F. and Maria L. Purvis² as follows:

child	born		died	
James Franklin	08/16/1834	Baltimore	05/01/1904	Holton KS
John Armstrong	1836	Baltimore	after 1904	
Elizabeth H.	12/15/1837	Baltimore	02/16/1904	Everett PA
Isaac Franklin	1842	Baltimore	c1875	NY
Mary Lou	1844	Baltimore	after 1904	
Ella M.	1846			
Thomas S.	1848			
Martha A.	1851			
William H.	1856		01/09/1917	Baltimore MD

¹ The work cited here is unknown, but it is not to the well-known "Abide With Me," whose words and music were penned by Henry F. Lyte by W.H. Monk respectively.

² James Franklin Purvis (born in either TN or MO) and Maria Louisa Parker (born in MD) were married in Baltimore MD on July 3, 1833. With the money he made from trading in slaves, James Franklin Purvis became involved in the banking and brokerage exchange business he ran until his retirement in 1868. He and his family then moved to a farm in Carroll County MD, where he died in 1880 at the age of 72. Nowhere in his obituary does it mention how he made the money he used to get into the banking business. He is buried in Greenmount Cemetery in Carroll County.

While many details about the family are unknown, there are a few significant facts that can be stated. James Franklin Purvis was a slave trader and the firm of James F. Purvis & Company prospered for some 30 years, from the 1830's to the 1850's. He acted as the Baltimore agent for his uncle, the noted Isaac Franklin – the namesake of his son Isaac Franklin Purvis. Isaac Franklin was the arguably the biggest slave trader in the western hemisphere, and when he died he was one of the wealthiest men in the entire country.³

Despite their early involvement with the slave trade, the family was socially and financially well-connected in Baltimore – Mr. Purvis being the president of the Howard Bank. They were also very Methodist⁴ – Mr. Purvis being a trustee of the Baltimore Female College, which operated under the patronage of the Baltimore Annual Conference. The family appears to have been active in the founding of Baltimore's Harford Avenue⁵ Methodist Episcopal Church in 1843, and James F. Purvis was a member of the 1850 building committee for that congregation's new building⁶ and served as a class leader. In

³ Isaac Franklin was born in 1789 in Sumner County TN. He entered into business with his brothers and was responsible for transporting raw goods and finished products by flatboat between New Orleans and Tennessee. This introduced him to the opportunities of the slave trade. He formed a partnership with his nephew John Armfield and the firm of Franklin & Armfield established a network of agents across the South. From 1812 to 1841, Isaac Franklin acquired an estate valued at more than one million dollars. In addition to his estate in Sumner County TN, he purchased six plantations in Louisiana, thousands of acres in Texas, and significant holdings in a turnpike, a bank, and a race course. When he died in 1846, he owned 10,000 acres in Louisiana and over 600 slaves. After his death, his widow sold his Louisiana plantations to a man who leased prisoners from the state to run them. The land was eventually acquired by the state and is now the Angola Prison.

Isaac Franklin's sister Margaret Franklin (b 1784) married Allen Purvis on 12/27/1806, and they are the parents of the Baltimore slave-trader James Franklin Purvis, the father of our Isaac F. Purvis. Margaret Franklin and Allen Purvis were also the parents of an Isaac Franklin Purvis, an uncle of our Isaac F. Purvis and a dealer in salves.

⁴ While the Purvis family has the strong Methodist connections listed, the LDS website states that son Isaac Franklin Purvis, born 10/12/1841 to James F. Purvis and Maria L. Purvis, was christened 1/2/1842 at Christ Episcopal Church at Chase & St. Paul Streets. Since Christ Church closed in 1987, and their building at 1100 St. Paul Street now houses the New Refuge Deliverance Cathedral, the congregation's records are kept at the denomination's Maryland archives. Those records indicate the person christened 1/2/1842 was Isaac Franklin Bercold, born 1/4/1841 to George and Mary A. Bercold. There are no entries for the Purvis surname in the Christ Episcopal Church record book, demonstrating again the importance of verifying all information.

⁵ The Purvis family lived on Harford Avenue and that street is associated with both their best [Methodism] and worst [slave-trading] sides. The following is typical of the many Purvis references available from various sources: *Two-month-old John Driver was shipped on the vessel Ewarkee by James Franklin Purvis on March 4, 1841. The journey was twenty-seven days long. Purvis was the nephew of the well known Alexandria slave trader Isaac Franklin (of the slave firm Franklin and Armfield). The Purvis slave pen was on Harford Avenue in Baltimore.*

⁶ The Harford Avenue Methodist Church closed in 1939 [see page 464 of the 1939 journal]. That site at 1201 Harford Avenue (Harford Avenue and Biddle Street) is now home to the predominantly African-American Nazarene Baptist Church.

addition, daughter Elizabeth H. married Rev. Richard Hinkle of the Central Pennsylvania Conference, and their son Herbert Crawford Hinkle also became a Central Pennsylvania Conference pastor.⁷ Son James F. graduated from Methodism's Dickinson College in 1856 and settled for many years in Harrisburg PA as a successful banker and dealer in real estate.⁸

Harford Avenue church records indicate that Isaac F. Purvis was received as a probationary member in 1859 and as a full member in 1861, and that he transferred out (destination unspecified) in 1866. He apparently left Baltimore, for when he married Catharine E. Nash in 1867 he was said to be from New York. Isaac and Kate lived in New York City at the time of the 1870 census, where Isaac was apparently in the banking business. All that is known about Isaac's adult life is found in the following from the July 21, 1901, edition of *The Saturday Globe* of Utica NY:

THE NOBLEST WORK OF GOD

"An honest man's the noblest work of God," says Pope, in his famous Essay on Man. While most of us claim to possess the quality of honesty, it is refreshing to discover a man occasionally in whom the virtue is so developed as to make him conspicuous. Such a man has been found in Williamsport, Pa.

Some years ago Isaac F. Purvis, a banker, failed and those who had trusted to his business acumen and financial responsibility found themselves losers in the grand total of some \$100,000. His son, Charles Nash Purvis, determined that the stain should remain on the family name not a moment longer than necessary. He went to work. He saved his money, invested it shrewdly, and prospered. Now he announces that he is prepared to pay every one of his father's debts.

Claims are coming in from all directions and as fast as their genuineness is demonstrated they will be paid, though the holders of the accounts have absolutely no legal claim on the younger Purvis. Not the least gratifying thing about the story of this honest man is the fact that one man whose claim amounts to \$30,000 refuses to accept a cent, on the ground that he got his money's worth in the knowledge that young Purvis is sufficiently honest as to wipe out these "debts of honor."

⁷ It could be that Elizabeth H. Purvis Hinkle was not proud of her family's slave-trading, for her 1904 conference "obituary" simply gives her birth and death dates and states, "It was her desire that no memoirs be read to the Conference."

Elizabeth Purvis and Rev. Richard Hinkle were married in 1859, after he had served as the pastor at North Baltimore Station 1857-59. He later served Mulberry Street in Williamsport 1861-63, and Isaac Purvis likely met Kate while visiting his sister Elizabeth during those years.

⁸ In addition, the wife of James F. Purvis is the former Annie M. Roberts, mentioned in the 2006 volume of *The Chronicle* as an 1855 graduate of the Pennsylvania Female College of Harrisburg operated by Beverly Roberts Waugh, son of the prominent Methodist bishop Beverly Waugh.

It is assumed that the bank failure and the demise of Isaac Purvis occurred shortly before Kate Purvis returned to Williamsport as a widow with three small children in 1875. Note that the Charles Nash Purvis mentioned in the article is the son whose last known address (c1907) in the Mulberry Street church records was the state asylum at Danville.

James M. Black

Having met Katharine E. Purvis and her extended family, we now consider the circumstance that has made her name such an enduring one in present musical circles: her supposed authorship of and/or association with the words to *When the Saints Go Marching In*.

This story is sketched in a 2004 biographical booklet⁹ on James M. Black, best known as the author of the words and music to *When the Roll Is Called up Yonder*. Mr. Black was a talented layman active in Williamsport's Mulberry Street and Pine Street Methodist churches. He possessed a special ability for encouraging the poetic and musical gifts in others, one example of which is his relationship with Mrs. Purvis.

Between 1894 and 1917, James Black edited 11 gospel song books. Those books include eleven song texts by Katharine E. Purvis – ten with music by Black and one with music by another Williamsport musician, Charles F. Green. Mrs. Purvis is also the author of at least one additional text found in other songbooks – with music by Lanta Wilson Smith, best known as the author of the text *This, Too, Shall Pass Away*. The titles of these songs and the books in which appear are given in the 2004 James M. Black booklet.

It was in James M. Black's 1896 *Songs of the Soul No.2*, published by Curts & Jennings, that *When the Saints Are Marching In* first appeared. While the title is obviously just one word away from *When the Saints Go Marching In*, the words and tunes of the two songs have little in common beyond the lively tempo popular in most gospel songs of the era. And for over 50 years, while *When the Saints Go Marching In* was becoming a Dixieland favorite, there was never a single suggestion to connect the two songs in any way.

Until the latter part of the twentieth century, the words and music to *When the Saints Go Marching In* were simply credited to "anonymous" or described as a "Negro Spiritual." The commonly accepted story was that it had been sung for generations by slaves as they marched to graveyards to bury their loved ones, and

⁹ Loyer, Milton W., James M. Black and Friends: Contributions of Williamsport PA to American Gospel Music, 2004, pages 14-15.

that the tradition was continued by southern Blacks after the Civil War until the song was picked up by Dixieland musicians in New Orleans in the early 1900's. Apparently it didn't begin appearing in sheet music or any other formal form until about World War I. It never appeared in early "white" gospel songbooks.

In 1957 long-time Lycoming College music professor Mary Landon Russell (1913-2008) completed her thesis at Penn State University on the History of Music in Williamsport and made what is believed to be the first connection between the two songs. Having discovered the Purvis and Black song *When the Saints Are Marching In*, she confused the titles and credits them as the author and composer of *When the Saints Go Marching In*. In particular, on page 149 of the thesis, Mrs. Russell concludes a list of songs with "and *When the Saints Are Marching In*, the latter having taken on a tremendous burst of popularity in recent months as it has become a favorite hit with the Dixieland bands."

But the established belief that the now popular tune was an anonymous Negro spiritual was slow to die, and it would take more than an off-hand comment in a relatively obscure Master's thesis to change music history. The fatal blow to the Negro spiritual tradition appears to have been delivered by noted musical researcher James J. Fuld (1916-2008).¹⁰ He did most of his research by searching copyright information, and he also seems to be too quick to associate songs with similar titles.

The first (1966) edition of Fuld's classic reference work *The Book of World-Famous Music* gives a hint of things to come. On page 525, the commentary on *When the Saints Go Marching In* states: "The title, melody and words of this Negro Spiritual were suggested in the composition *When the Saints March in for Crowning*, by Harriet E. Jones and James D. Vaughn and included as #49 in *The Silver Trumpet* and copyrighted January 3, 1908. As this song is one that has a separate copyright notice on its own page, some claim of originality was being made thereto." According to this line of reasoning, all that is needed to re-attribute the source of *When the Saints Go Marching In* is another similarly titled song with an earlier separate copyright date.¹¹

¹⁰ The February 7, 2008, New York Times obituary for Mr. Fuld includes the following: "James J. Fuld, a New York lawyer whose love of music inspired him to assemble one of the world's finest collections of first editions of musical scores, died at his home in Manhattan on January 29. Mr. Fuld's collection, which is being acquired by the Morgan Library and Museum, spans four centuries and includes first printings of popular and folk music, show tunes, and classical works.

Mr. Fuld based his collecting on careful, wide-ranging research, which he conducted while on vacations in Europe and the United States and during spare time from his job as a managing partner at the law firm Proskauer Rose. He passed along this knowledge in *The Book of World-Famous Music*, which he published in 1966 and updated four times. It is a standard reference work."

¹¹ In fairness to Mr. Fuld, he is clearly not assigning definitive authorship but rather stating that the more famous song was "suggested by" the Jones-Vaughn composition. He also admits that

By second (1971) edition of *The Book of World-Famous Music*, Fuld had discovered the Purvis-Black composition. On page 641, the commentary on *When the Saints Go Marching In* states: “The written history of this Negro spiritual commences with the deposit, on June 17, 1896, of the title *When the Saints Are Marching In* by J.M. Black. A few days later, on July 6, 1896, *Songs of the Soul No. 2* was copyrighted, [and] on page 59 appears *When the Saints Are Marching In*. The music and words are quite similar to those in the present form and, in particular, include the famous ‘echo.’ J.M. Black is credited with the music, and Katharine E. Purvis is credited with the words; the extent of their contributions is not known.”

While Fuld does not directly credit Purvis and Black as the author and composer of *When the Saints Go Marching In*, his statement that “the words and music are quite similar” carried a great deal of weight. In truth, except for the seven-syllable titles that differ by a single word, the words and imagery in the verses and choruses of the two songs are quite different. The metric composition is also different: 7-7-8-7 verses followed by a 7-7-9-7 chorus in *When the Saints Go Marching In*, compared to 10-7-10-7 verses followed by a 7-7-12-7 chorus in *When the Saints Are Marching In*. It is this author’s opinion that Kate E. Purvis and James M. Black have absolutely no connection with *When the Saints Go Marching In* – and that were it not for the coincidental similarity in the titles and their echo in the chorus, there would be absolutely no identification of either song with the other.

But the reputation and opinion of James J. Fuld, even though he himself never actually stated that Purvis and Black wrote the popular song, appear to be what “convinced” the musical world. One of the earliest authoritative reference books to make an unqualified attribution to Purvis and Black is *The Great Song Thesaurus* by Roger Lax and Frederick Smith, published by Oxford University Press. On page 380 of the 1984 first edition, the authors credit *When the Saints Go Marching In* to Katharine E. Purvis and James M. Black in 1896. From that point on, virtually every musical reference book, every record and tape label, every songbook, and every piece of sheet music began attributing the song to Purvis and Black.

The aforementioned 2004 biography of James M. Black attempted to correct the error. The popular Cyberhymnal website, for example, cites the Black biography and makes it clear that Purvis and Black should not be given credit for *When the Saints Go Marching In* – even giving the words and music to *When the Saints Are Marching In* and referring to the 1957 Mary Landon Russell thesis.

“there is an unsubstantiated rumor that the spiritual was played in New Orleans about 1900 at funerals,” but that “this author disagrees” with that and other claims involving *When the Saints Go Marching In*.

Other sources began to quote the material from the Cyberhymnal website, and it appeared that the confusion might end.

But one should never underestimate the public's reluctance to admit that something is unknown or the public's insistence that names and explanations be provided – no matter how undocumented those names and explanations might be. Within the last year, the latest information that has begun to appear is that *When the Saints Go Marching In* is derived from the similar 1896 song *When the Saints Are Marching In* by Katharine E. Purvis and James M. Black.

In 2006 the Songwriters Hall of Fame added yet another level to the story. Each year that organization presents the *Towering Song Award* to honor “outstanding songs by writers who may not have an extensive catalog of hits and who have not been inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame.” At the June 15, 2006, ceremony at the Marriott Marquis in New York City, that award was presented to “*When the Saints Go Marching In* written Catherine E. Purvis and James M. Black.”

It is hoped that this additional treatment of the matter will help to complete what the 2004 biography of James M. Black has begun to do and end some of the confusion regarding Kate E. Purvis. In summary, it should be noted that (1) her given name was Catharine but she later preferred the form Katharine [not Catherine or Katherine], (2) her death date is October 23, 1907 [not 1909 as often reported], and (3) she is not the author of the words to *When the Saints Go Marching In* [nor does she have any documented connection with that song].



James M. Black



Katherine E. Purvis