

## James Leach. 1762-1798.

Born: 1762, Wardle, near Rochdale, Lancashire, England. (1) (2)

Died: February 8, 1798, Salford, Lancashire, England. (1)

Buried: Union Street Wesleyan Chapel, Rochdale. (1)

His stone is surmounted by his well-known, short-metre tune, Egypt, in G Minor. (1)

In his massive work, Leach's biographer, Thomas Newbigging, devotes 16 pages to James' life, in the chapter **James Leach, The Lancashire Composer**. Leach came from humble parents, and his education, so far as schooling is concerned, was of the scantiest possible kind. Leach did not have the advantage of attending Sunday school in his younger years, though later on, as such schools began to be established, he took an active interest in them; his hymn tunes and anthems materially assisted in making Sunday schools into the success they became. Leach, a loomweaver by trade, was the maternal uncle of Lancashire poet, Edwin Waugh, who in **Roads Out of Manchester**, reported, 'My mother's relatives, both on the father's and mother's side, were all ardent lovers of music...I have often heard them sing and play James Leach's touching melodies, with tears in their eyes'.

When Leach began to write his tunes he was, as he himself states, ignorant of the rules of composition. He early attained proficiency as an instrumentalist, and was appointed one of the performers in the Kings Band. As a vocalist he rose to distinction both as a teacher and choir leader, and was a counter-tenor singer in the great music festivals held in Westminster Abbey.

Between the ages of twenty-two and twenty-seven, Leach produced the hymn tunes: **Mount Pleasant, Oldham, Bethel, New Trumpet, Melody, Pisgah, Sabbath**, and **Shepherd's Lover**. Leach's first volume of sacred music was published when he was twenty-seven, with the preface written at Rochdale, June 29, 1789. In it he says: 'Having had a turn for music from my infancy, I have employed my leisure hours in cultivating the same. A few years ago I composed a few tunes, and without the least design of their being made public, being at the time ignorant of the rules of composition. These few tune accordingly got handed about, and were introduced in many congregations, insomuch that I was called upon from all quarters for copies, so that I found myself under the disagreeable necessity of denying many requests of that kind'. A friend, James Hamilton, 'wishing the tunes to be more generally known, advised me by all means to compose a few more to some select pieces, and let a number of them be struck off, as the price would be small'. The first edition contained twenty-two hymn tunes, and two long pieces with instrumental accompaniments. Shortly after the issue of his first book, James relinquished his trade of hand-loom weaving and devoted himself to the profession of music. Leach, in the preface to his second edition, says that his general poverty due to the ongoing war conditions in England in 1797 precluded him from devoting time to making copies of his music. As the Wesleys did with words, James Leach included in his 1798, second edition preface a scolding addressed to 'music-menders'. He says: 'I have seen excellent tunes so mangled and disfigured by self-conceited improvers, that they have left them like the man who fell among thieves, stripped and wounded, even half dead. I here particularly remark that the **Old Hundredth Psalm** tune has latterly undergone a metamorphosis of this sort, which has left it neither spirit nor life'. [Emphasis added]

The second volume contained forty-eight tunes and three longer pieces, including: **Redemption, Smyrna, St. John, Aphek, Pastoral, Harmony**, and **Peru**. Leach's work reached America early and a first edition of **Bridgewater Collection of Sacred Music** was printed at Boston in 1802 and included his tunes: **Hampton, Wilderness, Bridgewater, Fountain, Hamilton, Morning Flower**, and **Sepulchre**. Those tunes, and others, making a total of forty-eight were included in **David Companion, or the Methodist Standard**, ordered by the General Conference at Baltimore, May 28, 1808, and registered as copyright, July 28, 1810. Leach composed no less than thirty-three anthems: **Crucifixion**, used for When I Survey the Wondrous Cross; **Nativity**, for Lift Up Your Heads in Joyful Hope; **Canaan** (his first); for Happy Beyond Description He; **Animation**, for Begin the High Celestial Strain; and **Emanuel**, used for Burst Ye Em'rald Gates.

In **The Music of the Church**, Thomas Hirst mentions additional tunes by James Leach: **Complaint, Joannas, Egypt, Shields, Rochdale, Syria, Cyprus**, and **Orpheus**.

The Leeds coach, in which James was a passenger from Rochdale on his way to Manchester, was overturned when about half-way down Entwistle Brow, near to the village of Blackley, and Leach was thrown from it and killed. **The Manchester Mercury** of Tuesday, February 13, 1798 reported: 'On Thursday evening, Mr. James Leach, of Salford, musician, was killed by the overturning of a chaise caused by a wheel coming suddenly off. He left a large family to lament his loss'. One surviving passenger reported that Leach was humming his anthem, **Canaan** when the accident occurred. (Paraphrase of 1)

See below on pages 2, 3, and 4 for additional remarks, his music, Sources and Footnotes, and Errata.

James Leach, a handloom weaver from Wardle, near Rochdale, eventually became a full-time musician and hymn writer, advertising his work in *Arminian Magazine*. (2)

In commentary on *The Methodist Harmonist*, 1822, James Leach is characterized as an 'English Dissenter or West Gallery composer'. (3)

### Music (9) (10) (11)

Advent. Nativity (1798). Meter: 8.6.0.5.5.8.0.8.6.0.5.5.8.0  
Alba. Oldham. Russia (1789). Meter: 8.6.8.6.0  
Alexandria (1794). Meter: 8.6.8.6  
Angel. Israel. Wrestling Jacob (1794). Meter: 8.8.8.8.8.8  
Aphek (1794). Meter: 8.8.8.8  
Ashburn. Townhead (1789). Meter: 7.7.7.7  
Bacup (1798). Meter: 8.8.8.8.8.8.0  
Bethel. Bethel New (1789). Meter: 8.6.8.6  
Bethlehem. Bethlehem (1794). Meter: 7.6.7.6.7.8.7.6  
Blackburn (1798). Meter: 8.8.8.8  
Bradbury. Leach. St. John. St. Johns. St. John's (1794). Meter: 8.8.6.8.8.6.0.  
    O Could I Speak the Matchless Worth (5) (6)  
    O God, My Gracious God, to Thee (8)  
Bridgewater. Sheilds. Shield. Shields. (1794). Meter: 8.6.8.6  
Brooklyn. Christian. Joannes (or Joannas). Joannis Carmen. Rochdale. Warminster (1794). Meter: 8.8.8.8  
Complaint (1789). Meter: 8.8.8.8  
Crucifixion (1820). Meter: 8.8.0.0.8.8.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0  
Cumberland-Street. Resignation. Watchman (1794). Meter: 6.6.8.6  
Cyprus (1794). Meter: 8.6.0.8.6.0  
Doxology (1820). Meter: 8.8.8.8.0. By [James?] Leach. (12)  
Doxology. Melody. Montrose (1789). Meter: 8.6.8.6  
Edmund Street. St. Clement's. Wilderness (1794). Meter: 8.8.8.8  
Egypt (1794). Meter: 6.6.8.6  
Failsworth (1789). Meter: 8.6.8.6  
Fountain (1820). Meter: 8.8.8.8 (12)  
Fountain. Huntingdon. Morning Hymn. Saints-Rest (1789). Meter: 8.8.8.8  
Funeral (1794). Meter: 8.8.8.8.8.8.8.8  
Gaza (1794). Meter: 6.6.8.6  
Giffords. Gifford's. Middleton (1789). Meter: 6.6.8.6.0  
Hallelujah (1794). Meter: 8.6.8.6.0  
Hamilton. Hamiltons. Lambeth. Triumph. Triumphant (1789). Meter: 8.8.8.8  
Hampton. Shepherd of Israel. Shepherds. Shepherd's. Shepherds Love.  
    Shepherds Lover. Shepherd's Lover (1789). Meter: 8.8.8.8.8.8.8.8.0  
Harmony (1794). Meter: 5.5.5.5.6.5.6.0.0.5  
Hermit (1794). Meter: 8.8.6.8.8.6.0  
Hosanna. Hosannah (1798). Meter: 8.8.8.8.8.8.0  
Incarnation (1798). Meter: 8.8.8.8.8.8.8.0.8.0.8.0.0.0.8.8.0  
Infancy (1794). Meter: 8.8.8.8.0  
Invitation. Jacob's Well. Knaresboro. Knaresboro'. Knaresborough. Stillman. Tunbridge (1801). Meter: 8.6.0.8.6.0.0  
    Knaresborough; words by Rev. Samuel Wesley, Sr., 1662-1735. (4)  
    Based on the last section of Advent, by James Leach, (12)  
Jarusalem. Jerusalem (1789). Meter: 8.6.8.6  
Jehudiah. Jehudijah (1794). Meter: 8.8.8.8  
Jordan (1789). Meter: 8.6.8.6. Words by M. Williams. (4)  
Judea (1794). Meter: 8.6.8.6  
Judgement (1798). Meter: 8.8.8.0.8.8.8.8.8.0.0.0.0.0.0.0  
Judgement. Judgment. Last Day (1794). Meter: 8.7.8.7.4.0.0.7  
Judgment (1820). Meter: 8.8.8.8 (12)  
Lebanon (1794). Meter: 7.7.7.7  
Mehatabel. Mehetabel (1794). Meter: 8.6.8.6  
Morning Flower. Tiberia (1794). Meter: 8.8.8.8  
Mount Carmel (1794). Meter: 8.6.8.6  
Mount Hermon (1794). Meter: 7.7.7.7  
Mount Nebo (1794). Meter: 8.6.8.6  
Mount Pleasant. Psalm 66 (1789). Meter: 8.6.8.6.0

**Music (9) (10 (11))**

Mount Sion. Mount Zion (1794). Meter: 8.8.6.8.8.6.0  
 Mount Tabor (1794). Meter: 8.6.8.6.0  
 Mourner (1794). Meter: 8.8.8.8  
 Mystery (1789). Meter: 7.6.7.6.7.7.7.6.0  
 Nativity (1789). Meter: 8.6.8.6.0  
 New Sabaoth (1798). Meter: 10.10.10.10  
 New Trumpet (1789). Meter: 6.6.6.6.8.8.0  
 New Windsor (1794). Meter: 8.6.8.6.0  
 Nile (1794). Meter: 8.6.8.6.0.0  
 Old Hundredth Psalm (1)  
 Orpheus (1794). Meter: 6.6.8.6.0.0  
 Palestine (1794). Meter: 8.6.8.6.0.0  
 Passion (1820). Meter: 8.7.8.7.4.0.7. By [James?] Leach. (12)  
 Pastoral (1794). Meter: 8.8.8.8.8.8  
 Patmos (1794). Meter: 8.6.8.6  
 Pawsons. Pawson's. Roachdale. Rochdale (1789). Meter: 8.8.6.8.8.6.  
 Penitent (1794). Meter: 8.6.8.0.6.0  
 Peru. Psalm 93. Sacramental Hymn. Tabernacle (1794). Meter: 8.8.8.8.0  
 Pilgrim (1794). Meter: 8.6.8.6  
 Pisgah (1789). Meter: 8.6.8.6.0  
 Redemption. Redsham. Roxburgh (1794). Meter: 6.6.6.6.8.8.0.0  
 Refuge (1794). Meter: 7.7.7.7.7.7.0.0  
 Rest (1794). Meter: 7.7.7.7.7.7  
 Reumah (1794). Meter: 8.0.8.0.0.0.8.8.8.0.8.0.0.0  
 Sabaoth. Sabbath (1789). Meter: 8.8.8.8  
 Sacrament. Supplication (1789). Meter: 5.5.6.0.5  
 Salford (1794). Meter: 8.6.8.6. Thus In Thy Sacred Courts Will I (7) (8)  
 Salvation (1820). Meter: 8.6.8.6. From an anthem by Leach. (12)  
 Sepulchre (1794). Meter: 8.8.8.8  
 Sharon (1794). Meter: 6.6.8.0.6.0  
 Smyrna. Smyrnia (1794). Meter: 8.6.8.6  
 Standing (1789). Meter: 5.5.5.0.11  
 Syria (1794). Meter: 8.6.8.6.0  
 Tabernacle (1794). Meter: 8.6.8.6.0  
 Traveling. Travelling (1789). Meter: 8.8.8.8.8.8

## Sources and Footnotes:

- 1) Thomas Newbigging. *Speeches and Addresses, Political, Social, Literary.* (Deangate and Ridgefield, Manchester; and 11, Paternoster Buildings, London: 1887.)
- 2) *Popular Music in England, 1840-1914, A Social History* by Dave Russell.
- 3) John M. Smith, Daniel Ayres, John D. Myers and G. P. Disosway. *The Methodist Harmonist: containing a great variety of tunes collected from the best authors, adapted to all the various metres in the Methodist hymn-book, and designed for the use of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States: to which is added a choice selection of anthems and pieces for particular occasions.* (New York: Published by N. Bangs and T. Mason for the Methodist Episcopal Church: and to be had of the Methodist preachers in the cities and country. 1822.)
- 4) From the Herring manuscript and from *A Collection of Tunes and Anthems* composed and adapted for a Full Choir by the late James Leach, circa 1798.
- 5) In *A Selection of Psalm and Hymn Tunes* from the best authors in three and four parts adapted principally to Dr Watts's Hymns and Psalms and to Dr. Rippon's Selection of Hymns containing in a greater variety than any other volume extant the most approved compositions which are used in London and throughout England; Also many original tunes never before printed, the whole forming a publication of above three hundred tunes, odes etc. 13<sup>th</sup> Edition. (Original and Short Title) *A Selection of Hymns from the Best Authors, Intended to Be an Appendix to Dr. Watts' Psalms and Hymns*, by Rev. Dr. John Rippon, D.D. (1751-1836), 1787.
- 6) In *The Third Presbyterian Church Collection of Sacred Music*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- 7) Francis Roads Company, United Kingdom.
- 8) *A New Version of the Psalms of David*, 1696 or 1698.
- 9) The University of Illinois at Urbana, Hymn Tune Index. The dates shown parenthetically represent the earliest date of the music's publication. Alternate or later used names appear with the tune's principal name, normally shown alphabetically.
- 10) In James Leach of Rochdale, Lancashire. ***A New Sett of Hymns and Psalm Tunes.*** 3 Editions. (London: For the author, sold by Preston & Son, and R. Massey, Manchester, 1789.) Preface dated Rochdale, June 29, 1789.
- 11) In James Leach of Rochdale, Lancashire. ***A Second Sett of Hymns and Psalm Tunes.*** 3 Editions. (London: For the author, sold by Preston & Son, and R. Massey, Manchester, 1798.)
- 12) Parodies of James Leach, posthumous, or attribution unclear.

## Errata:

Many of Leach's hymn tune names and their dates call into question the conventional attributions of who composed what music.

This writer is surprised by the mention of Old Hundredth Psalm, but Newbigging's biography appears to credit Leach with its composition, by a direct quote from Leach himself. If that is true, it must have been a duplication of name. The surviving tune, ***Old 100<sup>th</sup>*** is well documented:

Music: Guillaume Franc, 1520-1570. Eroneously attributed to Louis Bourgeois, 1510-1561.

From ***The Genevan Psalter*** aka ***The French Genevan Psalter***, 1551 and ***Fourscore and Seven Psalms of David***; (Geneva, Switzerland: 1561).

However in the case of the tune, Hamilton it is more than likely that Rev. Martin Madan (1725-1790) did not compose the music. Probably John Wyeth had some anonymous arranger lengthen Leach's music into a L.M. 8.8.8.8. with Repeat tune, then attributed it to Madan. After all Rev. Madan had his own publication: *A Collection of Psalms and Hymns Extracted from Various Authors*, 1760. Certainly if Madan had composed Hamilton, some hymnologist would have recorded that fact. And yet the hymn tunebook where it appears was: ***Repository of Sacred Music, Part Second*** by John Wyeth, 1813 - 23 years after Madan's death and 3 years after Leach's tune was copyrighted in ***David Companion, or the Methodist Standard***, 1810. The biography supplied by Newbigging, gives adequate testimony to the friendship between Leach and Hamilton.