

Jesus Loves Me



William Batchelder Bradbury, my son's 8th cousin (7 times removed) had an inauspicious start to his musical career. While studying at the Academy of Music in Boston, he was excited to show his parents his newly developed skill of singing and beating time. His gestures were so grand and extravagant, his parents could not contain their laughter.

Bradbury attributed this event, along with the experience of the first singing class he taught, one that had an embarrassingly small turnout, as helping him develop a humility that would serve him well over the years. He became best known as a composer and publisher of children's Christian music.

Starting out as an organist in Boston, (in fact he owned a piano manufacturing company along with his brother Edward), he was offered an opportunity to teach singing to children in Machias, Maine and then later St Johns, New Brunswick. This led to a position in the First Baptist Church in Brooklyn

where Bradbury became instrumental in developing a musical curriculum for the NY Public Schools. His free singing classes evolved into a annual music festival which one year culminated in a children's chorus of over 1,000 boys and girls. It was an indescribable sight, evidenced by this first hand report.

"The sight itself was a thrilling one. A thousand children were seated on a gradually rising platform, which spread the scene, as it were, most gracefully before the eye. About two-thirds of the class were girls, dressed uniformly in white with a white wreath and blue sash. The boys were dressed in jackets with collars turned over, something in the Byron style. When all were ready, a chord was struck on the piano – a thousand children instantly arose, presenting a sight that can be far more easily imagined than described. Of the musical effect produced by such a chorus we will not attempt to speak."

In his lifetime Bradbury edited 59 books of spiritual and secular music, much of which consisted of his own compositions. He is perhaps best known for composing the music to a poem he found in 1862 written by Anna B. Warner. It has been sung in Sunday schools and churches around the world ever since... Jesus Loves Me.

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