



Introduction

The Wings Over Jordan Choir was one of the greatest religious music groups of the 1930s and 1940s. Sadly, only a few have ever heard of the highly popular Negro choir – as it was called then – that achieved national and international fame, not only for its graceful renditions of African American Spirituals that linked Heaven and Earth, but for its role in promoting racial harmony and justice.

The choir's founder, Rev. Glenn T. Settle, pastor of Gethsemane Baptist Church on the east side of Cleveland, Ohio, was a man who believed he had a divine mission to use the choir as a way to educate blacks and whites about the possibilities for better racial relations. When he managed to get the group on WGAR in Cleveland as a local radio show during the summer of 1937 as the Negro Hour, he was well on the way toward accomplishing his life's goal.

In January, 1938, the newly named Wings Over Jordan Choir became part of CBS Radio's nationwide Sunday morning line up, the first all-black religious radio program. The audience response to the show was phenomenal, and national tours that heightened the group's popularity soon followed.

This website marks the beginning of a longer-term project to put Wings Over Jordan into its rightful historic place in the dynamic world of 1930s music and the pre-World War II Civil Rights movement. The project has several components:

- 1) A book, tentatively titled *Go Down Moses: The Wings Over Jordan Choir*, is currently being researched and written. A documentary video has been researched, and much video has been recorded. Final production of the documentary will require funding.
- 2) Restoration of crucial parts of the Wings Over Jordan papers collected by Dr. Sam Barber over more than 40 years is a priority. These archives contain valuable historic materials related to the choir and its encounter with fame as it traveled around the world.
- 3) The leadership of Wings Over Jordan under Rev. Settle contains elements of human achievement, struggles, and downfall. The story has potential to be developed into a feature film.

- 4) Placing the Wings Over Jordan Foundation on more solid financial footing so that it can continue to preserve this great story and share it now and with future generations.

Then and Now Media is delighted to be a part of this project. Proprietor Timothy Collins and Dr. Sam Barber of Greenville, NC, have been friends for more than four decades. Neil Collins, the late father of Dr. Collins, worked with Wings Over Jordan from 1939 to 1941 as its public relations man. He was instrumental in helping Dr. Barber launch his dissertation, *The Choral Style of the Wings Over Jordan Choir*, which is currently being reshaped into a book. Video shot by Christopher Collins in Dr. Barber's archives documents memories of the choir members and others associated with the radio program. This video will become the basis for a documentary.



Simply Rural

Provided for nonprofit and educational use only. In the spirit of the web, quoted materials should be fully cited in a manner that recognizes both the author, Timothy Collins, and the website, www.thenandnowmedia.com.