

Hartford, CT (March 6, 2004)

Fisk Jubilee Singers Perform at Mark Twain House & Museum

By Pamela Horner

One-hundred-thirty-seven years after they first started singing at Nashville's Fisk University, the Fisk Jubilee Singers are still going strong (not the original singers, of course). The nine original Fisk Jubilee Singers went on tour in 1871 to save their school, which had been opened to educated former slaves. Fisk University endures to this day thanks in part to the Fisk Jubilee singers and their powerful harmonies.

It was fitting that the Fisk Jubilee Singers performed at the Mark Twain Museum auditorium in Hartford, CT on March 6, 2004. Mark Twain saw the original singers perform on each of their three tours, two of which were world tours. He saw them at Hartford's Asylum Hill Congregational Church in 1872. Twain said of them "I do not know of when anything

has so moved me as did the plaintive melodies of the Jubilee Singers". Mark Twain also purchased their songbook and played spirituals on his piano. Coincidentally, the Mark Twain House is located next to the Harriet Beech Stowe House. Ms. Stowe wrote the novel, "Uncle Tom's Cabin," the book that fanned the flames of the abolitionist movement and eventually led to the Civil War. Stowe's brother, Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, was also a fan of the Fisks and lectured at one of their concerts during the group's first tour in New Haven.

At the Twain Museum, fourteen black clad singers entertained with soulful spirituals that earned them three standing ovations. The group's rendition of "Amen" caused some members of the audience to join in with their own "Amen's." A powerful "My Soul's Been Anchored in the Lord" right before intermission was met with praise from the full-capacity audience and left everyone wanting more.

The Fisk Jubilee Singers were the first African American vocal group to gain the respect of the world. The Mills Brothers' grandfather, William H. Mills sang with a jubilee style group that patterned itself after the Fisks. The singers have received several awards including the Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award and induction into the Gospel Hall of Fame.



The Mark Twain
House & Museum

Proudly Presents

**The Fisk
Jubilee Singers**

Saturday, March 6, 2004
6:00 p.m.

*"Do not fail to hear the Jubilee Singers."
Mark Twain, 1873.*

The Mark Twain House
Museum Center Auditorium



**Original postcard of Fisk Jubilee Singers, 1871.
From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives.**