

Jolly Old Saint Nicholas  
Up on the House Top  
Darling Nelly Gray  
Who is He in Yonder Stall

Those are among the 80 songs written by Benjamin Hanby, a son of Bishop William Hanby. He became an ordained UB minister and even pastored a church for a while. But his real love was music. And he was good at it. But he died way too young.

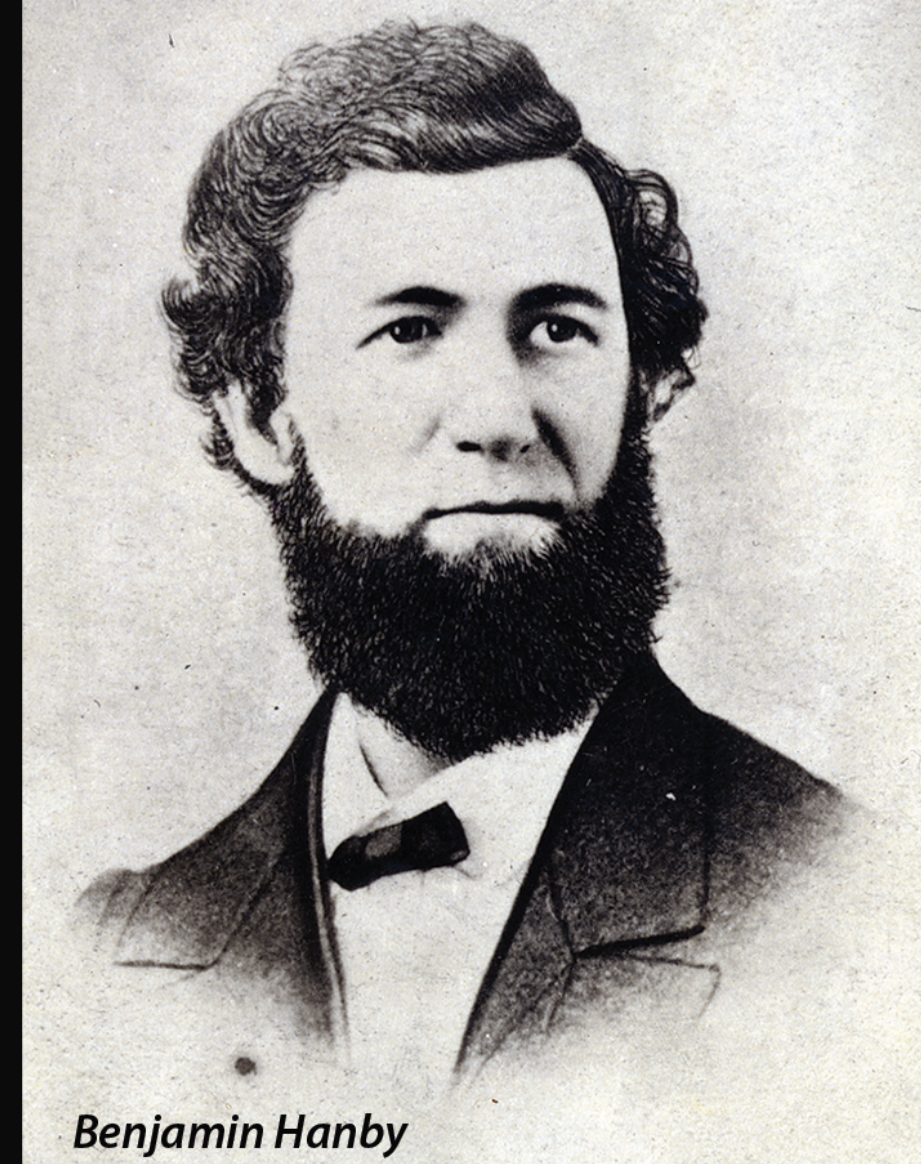
Benjamin Hanby was born on July 22, 1833. At age 16, he enrolled in our first college, Otterbein University. He was also involved, with his father, in helping fugitive slaves escape to Canada along the Underground Railroad.

“Darling Nelly Gray,” written in 1856 when Hanby was 23 years old, became a huge hit across the Northern states, and helped rally sentiment against slavery. It told the story of a Kentucky slave whose sweetheart was sold to slave-owners in Georgia.

The song was based on the true story of Joseph Selby, a runaway slave from Kentucky who stayed in the Hanby home when Benjamin was just nine years old. Selby, on his way to Canada, showed up at the Hanby home with pneumonia, and died there...but not until after telling the story of his “Darling Nelly Gray.”

The two Christmas songs are Hanby’s most enduring creations. His best-known hymn is “Who is He in Yonder Stall.” Because of the title, it is often thought of as a Christmas song. But it could just as easily be an Easter song...or an anytime song.

After a brief time as a pastor, Hanby left the ministry to run a singing school in New Paris, Ohio. In 1865, after his two Christmas songs were published, he moved to Chicago to work with a music publisher. But he died there two years later, at age 34.



Benjamin Hanby

## Darling Nelly Gray

There's a low, green valley, on the old Kentucky shore.  
Where I've whiled many happy hours away,  
A-sitting and a-singing by the little cottage door,  
Where lived my darling Nelly Gray.

### Chorus

Oh! my poor Nelly Gray, they have taken you away,  
And I'll never see my darling any more;  
I'm sitting by the river and I'm weeping all the day.  
For you've gone from the old Kentucky shore.

When the moon had climbed the mountain  
and the stars were shining too.  
Then I'd take my darling Nelly Gray,  
And we'd float down the river in my little red canoe,  
While my banjo sweetly I would play.

One night I went to see her,  
but "She's gone!" the neighbors say.  
The white man bound her with his chain.  
They have taken her to Georgia for to wear her life away,  
As she toils in the cotton and the cane.

My canoe is under water, and my banjo is unstrung;  
I'm tired of living any more;  
My eyes shall look downward, and my song shall be unsung  
While I stay on the old Kentucky shore.

My eyes are getting blinded, and I cannot see my way.  
Hark! there's somebody knocking at the door.  
Oh! I hear the angels calling, and I see my Nelly Gray.  
Farewell to the old Kentucky shore.

### Chorus

Oh, my darling Nelly Gray, up in heaven there they say,  
That they'll never take you from me any more.  
I'm a-coming-coming-coming, as the angels clear the way,  
Farewell to the old Kentucky shore!

## Who is He in Yonder Stall

Who is He in yonder stall,  
At whose feet the shepherds fall?  
Who is He in deep distress,  
Fasting in the wilderness?

### Chorus

"Tis the Lord! O wondrous story!  
"Tis the Lord! the King of glory!  
At His feet we humbly fall,  
Crown Him! crown Him Lord of all!

Who is he the people bless  
For His words of gentleness?  
Who is he to whom they bring  
all the sick and sorrowing?

Who is He that stands and weeps  
At the grave where Laz'rus sleeps?  
Who is He the gath'ring throng  
Greet with loud triumphant song?

Lo! at midnight, who is He  
Prays in dark Gethsemane?  
Who is he on yonder tree,  
Dies in grief and agony?

Who is he that from the grave  
Comes to heal and help and save?  
Who is he that from His throne  
Rules thro' all the world alone?

### Chorus

"Tis the Lord! O wondrous story!  
"Tis the Lord! the King of glory!  
At His feet we humbly fall,  
Crown Him! crown Him Lord of all!

Of the many versions on Youtube, check out  
the more contemporary version by Enfield.