

Did you know?



Past and Present
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African American superstars sang spirituals at Leeds Town Hall 150 years ago.

On Tuesday the 25th of November 1873, the Fisk Jubilee Singers made their first appearance at Leeds Town Hall. The singing group had come to Britain from Nashville, Tennessee, as representatives of Fisk University. They were on a mission to raise funds for the development of the college, which had been set up in 1866 to provide an education for Tennessee's newly

emancipated African American community – who, at that time, were excluded from existing institutions due to segregation laws.

Such was their success that the group embarked on a second European tour in the spring of 1875 and made their return to Leeds Town Hall in January 1876. Altogether they raised more funds in Yorkshire than anywhere else in Europe over the three years. This led to one of the rooms at Fisk University being named the Wilberforce Room, in honour of Yorkshire's generosity.

To find out more about the Fisk Jubilee Singers and their connections to Yorkshire, scan the QR code >



Frontispiece to "The Story of the Jubilee Singers: With Their Songs", 1875. Photo from National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution (NPG.2002.92)