

JINGLE BELLS

James Pierpont, 1857

"Jingle Bells" was written by organist and choir director, James Lord Pierpont (1822-1893) for a Thanksgiving church service in Savannah, GA. It was so well received that the children were asked to repeat the performance at Christmas service and it has remained a Christmas standard ever since. The sheet music was first published in the autumn of 1857 by Oliver Ditson with its original title, *"The One Horse Open Sleigh"*. A close friend of Pierpont's remarked that the song had 'a nice jingle to it', and two years later, it was reissued under the title *"Jingle Bells"*.

James Pierpont spent his early years in Massachusetts before moving to Savannah, Georgia, in 1850 to join his brother John, minister to the Savannah's Unitarian congregation. James took a post as the organist and music director of the church the fall of 1857. After years of living in the south, Pierpont, longing for the snow and traditional winter customs, began writing of his New England Christmases. Thus both Medford, Massachusetts, and Savannah, Georgia, have laid claim to be



the 'Home of Jingle Bells', both making public plaques to the claim.

In addition to being the best-known and commonly sung American Christmas songs in the world, its popularity extends to outer space. It was the first song broadcast from space, in a Christmas-themed prank by Gemini 6 astronauts Tom Stafford and Wally Schirra.



~ Tull