

Clara Ward

(Gospel Singers)

Scott #3218

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Designed by Howard Paine



Clara Ward was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1924. During the late 1920s, Clara Ward sang in the Baptist church services with her sister Willa and her mother Gertrude. Clara sang her first solo at age five. Although the Ward family had no formal training, their music was vibrant and passionate and little Clara had the voice of an angel.

The Ward family gained nationwide attention at the National Baptist Convention of 1943 and began performing around the country. In 1947 Marion Williams and Henrietta Waddy joined the group which became known as the Famous Ward Singers. However, it was the amazing power and range of Clara's voice even as a small child that carried the group to fame.

The group was somewhat controversial among gospel fans of the fifties. They were known for wearing glamorous clothing and exotic hairstyles. They also emphasized showmanship over traditional religious performance.

The Famous Ward Singers became the number one female gospel group of the fifties with the release of their hit singles, Surely, Our God is Able and How I Got Over. Clara and her mother opened their own publishing company in 1954, The Clara Ward House of Music. In 1957 they became the first gospel group to perform at the Newport Jazz Festival. They were also the first gospel group to play Carnegie Hall. The original group broke up in 1958 when Marian Williams and Henrietta Waddy left to form their own gospel group, Stars of Faith.

During the sixties Clara and her group made a successful comeback. The Famous Ward Singers performed in Vietnam, toured Europe, and performed at the inaugurations of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson.

Clara Ward died on January 16, 1973.

Sources:

[GospelCity.com](http://GospelCity.com)

[Encyclopedia Africana](http://EncyclopediaAfricana.com)