

# The Island Fiddler

Remembering:



Stephen "Jimmy" MacDonald  
1883-1970



Edwin "Bruce" Myers (wife Sarah)  
1897-1966

## FIDDLERS NOTES

The Robbie Burns Scottish concert that was for years presented by the Alpha Y's Men and then in recent years was dropped, was successfully revived this past January at the Bascillica Rec. Centre. All the proceeds from the successful concert were turned over to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

The return engagement of the P.E.I. Fiddlers to the Confederation Centre Feb. 18th was a great success. A capacity crowd enjoyed the show that featured fiddlers and other talent from all over the Island.

Congratulations to Mr. & Mrs. Bill MacDonald who recently celebrated their 35th anniversary.

The Bows and Strings from Summerside have a busy summer ahead of them with a trip to France in the works. We hope to have a report for our next issue.

Watch for the Rollo Bay outdoor Scottish concert coming up this year on July 21st and 22nd.

John Shaw from Glendale, Cape Breton will be teaching Gaelic at U.P.E.I. this summer. For more information contact U.P.E.I. at 892-4121.

Wilfred Gillis, a member of the renowned Cape Breton Symphony will conduct a Master Fiddle class in Eastern Kings this summer. For more information contact Eddie Deveau, Rollo Bay.

Congratulations to C.B.C. Sounds of the Island which is renewed for another season and has sold the program to ten C.B.C. stations across the country.

The highly rated ATV program of traditional music "Up Home Tonight" will also be renewed.

Radio Station CFDR 680 Dartmouth has a new program of Celtic music each Sunday 12:05 - 1:00 p.m.

An outdoor Irish music festival will be held in West Prince County this year. Tentative dates are the fourth week-end in July.

Also in Prince County, the outdoor Scottish concerts put on by the MacKinnon family of Richmond will again be held this year in August. Watch for details on both these events in the local media.

J.W.

## REMEMBERING...

### STEPHEN JIMMY MACDONALD (1883 - 1970)

Stephen "Jimmy" was born in North Lake, P.E.I. He was married to Vera Campbell also of North Lake. (d. 1941) They were blessed with 14 children; Annie, Amelia, Rita, Gertie, Margaret, John, William, Walter, Leo, Kenneth, Ronnie, Theresa, George and Bernard. Stephen lived and farmed all his life in North Lake.

He was well known in the "Northside Area" for his fine fiddle music and his singing.

Stephen began playing violin at an early age and although he never learned to read music he learned many tunes from fiddlers who could read.

He learned many of his tunes from Joe "Angus" "John" MacDonald. Joe "Angus" "John" was "away" to the Klondike during the Gold Rush for a number of years and he came back home with a wealth of new tunes to pass along. (Note enclosed hornpipe). Other fiddlers in the area that Stephen learned from were Frank Beaton, Neil Cheverie and John Joe MacPhee. (Father of well known fiddler Hughie MacPhee).

Stephen "Jimmy" developed a good bow hand and was adept at putting all the cuts in difficult Scottish tunes. He also had good timing which made him popular at dances and with stepdancers.

Hornpipes were his favorite and he played many. A particular favorite was "Fisher's Hornpipe". He also learned a great many marches and jigs from playing for the Lancer and quadrille sets. One of his favorite jigs was Kenmure's on an Awa and he was well known for his lively version of this Scotch jig. Also "Johnny Cope" was always a favorite but unlike today it was played then as a reel with just two turns.

He often like to play the "Wedding Reels" for the stepdancers. He used the "high bass tuning" for these tunes.

Some more of Stephen's favorite tunes were: Maid on the Green (played with a different ending than is used today), Lovely Flora, Beau of Oak Hills, Soldiers Joy and Mist on the Lock.

Travel in those days (1900) was mostly by horse and wagon over roads that at certain times of the year made a trip of even a few miles an adventure. This made travelling outside the district to play difficult at the best of times. However two places he frequently played were Elmira Hall and St. Columba Hall. He played for these dances for no pay, with no accompaniment and in the early years with no sound system.

In later years his daughter (Sister Rita MacDonald) played piano for him. Other people who sometimes accompanied him were Ken Fraser on guitar or Ken Seaver on banjo.

The dances in those early years were eight hand reels, quadrilles, lancers and waltzes.

Stephen "Jimmy" never played much the last 15 years of his life because of a stroke but there are still many people today who have fond memories of the music of Stephen "Jimmy" MacDonald.

The image shows two musical pieces transcribed on six staves each. The first piece is a hornpipe, and the second is a jig. Both are in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 2/4 time signature. The first tune includes first and second endings. The second tune includes a repeat sign and a final cadence.

Both of these tunes were particular favorites of Stephen "Jimmy" and they are transcribed here by his son Bill as he remembers them being played.

The hornpipe was learned by Stephen from the playing of Joe "Angus" "John" MacDonald.

The title of the jig and where Stephen learned the tune is unknown.

Thanks to Bill MacDonald for notes, photo and transcribing the tunes of Stephen "Jimmy".

REMEMBERING...

EDWIN BRUCE MYERS  
(1897 - 1966)



Edwin B. Myers was born at Peakes Rd., Kings County, P.E.I. He was married to Sarah MacPhee and they had eleven children; Emma, Walter, Arthur, Clarence, May, Stanley, Percy, Vernon, Elmer, Clayton and one child Mary died in infancy.

Of the eleven children, Stan, Percy, Clarence and Clayton learned to play the fiddle. Arthur was a stepdancer and Vernon played guitar.

Edwin started to play the fiddle when he was a teen-ager. A Mrs. McCollough from St. Patrick's Rd. could jig a great many old Irish tunes and this is how Edwin first learned to play.

He played fiddle with such well known musicians of that era as Ward Crane, Jack Webster, Lem Jay and Johnny Burns of Morell.

He bought his first fiddle in Maine, when, as a teen-ager he was working in the woods there. He paid \$5 for the fiddle and it didn't have a case but was wrapped in a pillow case. Edwin and his pillow case wrapped fiddle were well known at dances throughout Kings County and in the Boston area.

He played by holding the fiddle on his belly, therefore he almost always had to sit down in order to be able to play. He played with a long bow stroke that was more common amongst his generation than it is today.

He knew quite a number of little known clogs and Scottish airs along with the well known tunes of the day like: Flowers of Edinburgh, Paddy on the Turnpike, Mr. Murray, Ten Pound Fiddle, etc..

Ed's wife Sarah was a Gaelic speaker and also sang Gaelic songs and Ed often accompanied her on violin.

While living in Boston he played with many former Maritimers including Donald MacLeod, Elcid Acoin, Colin Boyd, Angus Chisholm and Alex Gillis. He played over the local radio with Alex Gillis and the Inverness Serenaders. He greatly admired the music of Alex Gillis and Angus Chisholm.

Edwin played regulary for dances in the Boston area. He played in West Roxebury and Quincy.

Edwin retired in 1945 and moved back home to P.E.I. During his retirement years his music could regulary be heard at dances in his home area.

Edwin was known never to speak ill of other fiddlers music. Each fiddler had his own unique way of expressing his music and Edwin liked them all for their individual styles.

From the time he was a teen-ager to his death in 1966 Edwin pursued the music he loved and his music brought joy to many along the way.

Hornpipe — AS Played by: Ed Myers — 1950

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a Hornpipe. It consists of four staves of music written in treble clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. The melody is primarily composed of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some triplet-like patterns. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Reel

As Played by Ed Myers — 1950

The image shows four staves of handwritten musical notation for a reel. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The music is written in a single melodic line. The second staff continues the melody. The third staff features a more complex rhythmic pattern with many eighth notes. The fourth staff concludes the piece with a final cadence.

Ed Myers (Jackie Webster on piano) recorded these tunes on a home-made record around 1950. The name of the hornpipe is unknown, the second tune Jerome's Farewell is played differently than it is today but goes very nicely. Both tunes go well together.

Thanks to the Webster family for a copy of the old recording and to Bill MacDonald for transcribing the tunes.

Many thanks to the Myers family for their notes and photos of Edwin B.

J.W.

## OBITUARY

We were much saddened as the result of a tragic highway accident of the death of Ernest Poole of Poole's Corner.

Ernest was a charter member of the P.E.I. Fiddlers and one of the early Presidents of the organization.

He was a tireless worker on behalf of the music he loved. We extend sincere sympathy to his family and friends. He is gravely missed.

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We were saddened by the recent death of Willaim A. Kearney of Sturgeon. (Newsletter #7) William and his brother Joe delighted many people over the years with their wonderful old time fiddle music. His fellowship and talent was generously given and he will be missed by all. We extend our sincere sympathy to his brother Joe and to his relatives and many friends.

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