

THE ISLAND FIDDLER



Allen Cameron and Chester Martin

Newsletter of the Prince Edward Island Fiddlers' Society
No. 8, July 1983

Fiddlers Notes

The P.E.I. Scottish Country Dancers recently completed their second winter of dancing. The year concluded with an afternoon workshop and an evening dance and ceilidh. The Scottish dance music was provided by the Bows and Strings. Speaking of the Bows and Strings, they may possibly be recording an album soon if things go as planned. It would certainly be a record to look forward to.

The Queens County Chapter of the P.E.I. Fiddlers recently held their annual meeting at Southport. After the meeting the ladies volunteered and served a lovely supper followed by some music. The new executive are: President, John Muise; 1st Vice-President, Kenny Stewart; 2nd Vice-President, Dalton Riley; Treasurer, Catherine Dau-Smidt; Secretary, Marie Muise. The Queens County group also had a successful Christmas Party and just recently another successful concert at the Confederation Center.

The Kings County Group are starting practices and are getting their tunes ready for their Rollo Bay Concert.

The Prince County Chapter has also been very active. They recently hosted an Island wide get together in Summerside that was a great success with lots of good music and fellowship. Also, they just completed their annual spring concert. This year's concert was the most successful to date with talent from all over P.E.I. enjoying a good and appreciative crowd.

One of many projects that Libbe Hubley, the President of the P.E.I. Fiddlers, has undertaken is getting our guidelines registered. With help from Merrill Wiggington and Edison Shea, each Chapter should soon receive copies of the new guidelines.

Jim & Susan Hornby and Kevin & Kenny Chaisson will be among eight Island musicians to take part in the Canadian Heritage Festival in Newfoundland, July 1 - 12. Traditional music, story telling, and dance are the themes.

Congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Gay, who recently celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary.

We are pleased to learn we will be able to enjoy "Sounds of the Island" and "Up Home Tonight" again this fall.

OBITUARY:

We wish to extend our deepest sympathy to the family and friends of Bruce Crane. Bruce was a faithful member of our society. A friend to all who will be missed.

Our sympathies also go out to the family of Hector MacDonald of Bangor. He was a fiddler and entertainer for over 60 years and a Life Member of our Society.

We were sorry to hear that Stan Rogers was a victim in the tragic DC-9 fire that was travelling from Texas to Toronto. He was an outstanding traditionalist folksinger who performed with the Chaisson brothers of Souris on his last visit to P.E.I.

Upcoming Events

- JULY 29 - MABOU DAYS, CAPE BRETON (concerts, dances, games, etc.)
- JULY 8,9, - BEDDECK DAYS, CAPE BRETON (handicrafts, concerts, etc.)
- JULY 8,9,10 - CAPE BRETON FIDDLER'S ASSOC. FIDDLE FESTIVAL, St. Ann's Cape Breton (afternoon and evening concerts followed by dancing). (Formerly held at Glendale).
- JULY & AUGUST - ORWELL CORNER, P.E.I. (watch for events featuring traditional Island music.)
- JULY 9 - BELFAST, P.E.I. Concert Under the Stars, Lord Selkirk Park, (the proceeds to help support the BELFAST PIPE AND DRUM BAND).
- JULY 13-17 - WACC CAPE BRETON DAYS SCOTTISH CONCERT, (on the 17th in the rink).
- JULY 15 - DUKE NEILSEN'S SENIOR CITIZEN'S PARTY, Montague, P.E.I. (to be held at Montague High School Auditorium or the Lion's Club).
- JULY 15-16 - JUDIQUÉ CAPE BRETON (concerts, dances).
- JULY 16 - ANTIGONISH, N.S., Concert Under the Stars (as part of Highland Games Week).
- JULY 16-23 - NEW WATERFORD DAYS, CAPE BRETON (dances, concerts, etc.)
- JULY 17 - BIG POND, CAPE BRETON Scottish Concert 2 p.m.
- JULY 20-24 - INVERNESS GATHERING, CAPE BRETON (games, concerts, dancing).
- JULY 23-24 - ROLLO BAY OPEN AIR SCOTTISH CONCERT, Rollo Bay, P.E.I., (concert with dancing following, cold plate suppers available on grounds).
- JULY 30 - BROAD COVE SCOTTISH CONCERT, CAPE BRETON 6 p.m.
- JULY 30 - FRENCHVALE CAPE BRETON SCOTTISH CONCERT
- AUGUST 6 - HIGHLAND GAMES CONCERT, Eldon, P.E.I.
- AUGUST 13-15 - SCOTTISH CONCERTS, Richmond, P.E.I.
- AUGUST 14 - ST. JOSEPH-DU-MOINE CAPE BRETON SCOTTISH CONCERT 2 p.m.
- AUGUST 15 - SUMMERFEST '83, "Fiddler's Day" Concert (Silver Fox Complex, Summerside P.E.I. 8 p.m.).

The Gaelic Music of Caledonia

Allen Cameron - Chester Martin

Allen Cameron (83) and Chester Martin (81) were both brought up and still reside in Caledonia, Kings County, P.E.I. They have been active in the strong Gaelic music of the area all their lives. In a recent conversation, they talked about their Gaelic singing, the fiddlers, and the traditions of the area.

EARLY DAYS

Allen Cameron: "I guess we learned the Gaelic when we were very young. Both my parents spoke Gaelic; and my grandmother, who died in 1907, never learned to speak English and could only communicate in Gaelic. My parents never really learned us to speak Gaelic, we just listened and learned. When my parents wanted to say something, they didn't want the kids to know, they would speak in Gaelic. Little did they know we were keen enough to learn what they were saying."

Chester Martin: "My grandfather died in 1919. After that, Gaelic was no longer the first language of our home. I guess all the ministers in our church here had the Gaelic when we were young men. However, when Reverend Allister Murray left in 1935, he was the last minister of our community to have the Gaelic. It's the same story in school. Nothing was taught in Gaelic, even when we were young boys. To my recollection, the last teacher here to have the Gaelic was Malcolm D. MacDonald from Kinross. He taught at the Caledonia school here until 1908. So you see, even when we were kids, the Gaelic was disappearing rapidly. Our generation seems to have been the last to learn any Gaelic at home."

GAELIC SINGING

Chester Martin: "We heard Neil "Tiny" Matheson and his wife sing a Gaelic song in church, and that's what really inspired us to start singing. Neil was a former M.L.A. That's back in the 1940's. In those times they had competitions for Gaelic singing at the provincial music festival. So the two of us, along with Mr. and Mrs. William Bruce, formed a quartet. We put a real effort in doing a good job, and we won the competition with a mark of 92. There was also competition for solo and duet Gaelic singing and we participated in that. I guess we went to the provincial music festival three or four years in a row. A number of the adjudicators at that time came from Cape Breton. The first year we went, Major Calum Iain MacLeod was the adjudicator. He taught Gaelic in Cape Breton through the Department of Education. Another adjudicator was George MacLean, the father of former Premier of P.E.I., Angus MacLean."

FAVOURITE SONGS

Allen Cameron: "The first songs we learned were the Gaelic Hymns. We learned quite a large number of the old Psalms. We really enjoy singing them. One of the first Gaelic Hymns we learned was "The Sweet Bye and Bye."

Some of the other songs we enjoy are: "Jamie on the Stormy Sea," "Will You No Come Back Again?", "Fear A Bhata" (Oh, My Boatman), "O'Teanilh Death irs togaibh fonn" (Come Close And Hear The Singing), "Ho Ro Mo Nighean Donn Bhordheach" (Ho Ro, My Nut Brown Maiden).

Chester Martin: "Also we are very fond of "Chi ni na morbheanna" (Mist Covered Mountains of Home). I understand that was also a big favorite of King George. We put our own slurs into the songs. I guess it's just like the fiddlers where each individual fiddler has his own twist in the tunes."

Bessie Cameron: "You know, when the boys here have to sing somewhere, they really practice and try to get everything just right. I play the organ or piano for them wherever we go. We are honorary members of the Clan MacLeod Society. We sing Gaelic songs at their get togethers. We enjoy that very much. Also, this past February, the boys received a very nice honor from the church choir. They presented them with a nice wall plaque each. They're very proud of that."

FIDDLERS

Chester Martin: "You know, Allen here plays both the bagpipes and the fiddle."

Allen Cameron: "Well, I don't have the wind for the bagpipes anymore, and I haven't touched the fiddle for years."

Chester Martin: "Well, there are fiddlers who have that 'extra' that puts them above the rest. My good friend the late Jack Webster (Newsletter No. 5) was like that. He had the Gaelic in his fiddle I'll tell you. A fellow from here, Russel Bowles, is a good fiddler. He's 80 years old now but still plays. He doesn't play much in public; he's very shy. He holds the fiddle on his chest. He has that little extra. The Kearney brothers (Newsletter No. 7)--they have a great style and swing to their music. Another fiddler from this area who has the Gaelic in his music is John Dan MacPherson. I love John Dan's music. He was a wonderful piper also, and that helped him with the violin."

TODAY

Allen Cameron: "Caledonia today is probably the last stronghold of the Gaelic on P.E.I. There are about a dozen of us here who have a real good command of the Gaelic. Although this area was never known to have an abundance of fiddlers and dancers, it is an area that had, and still has, an abundance of excellent singers, both English and Gaelic."

FUTURE

Chester Martin: "Really, I guess there doesn't appear to be much of a future. You see, none of us here who have the Gaelic would have the schooling to be able to teach Gaelic properly. That's a shame because I know a lot of people in this area who would be interested in learning. But you never know what will happen. Some young people may get the notion to revive the Gaelic. Look how the fiddle music came back. You just never know."

Tapadh Leat Bessie Agus Gillean.

Beannachd Leibh

J.W.

Tunes To Try

Smith's Delight

Musical score for 'Smith's Delight' in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. The score consists of four staves. The first staff includes fingerings: '+' above the first note, '13' above the second, '+' above the third, '1+' above the fourth, '2' above the fifth, '1+13' above the sixth, and '+' above the seventh. The piece concludes with a repeat sign.

Smith's Delight is in the repertoire of Jimmy Bearisto of Kensington and Green Castle Hornpipe is a nice moderate going hornpipe that is seldom heard. Thanks to L.H. for transcribing the tunes.

The Green Castle Hornpipe

Musical score for 'The Green Castle Hornpipe' in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. The score consists of four staves. The piece features several triplet markings (indicated by a '3' below the notes) and concludes with a repeat sign.

CHRISTY CAMPBELL AS PLAYED BY CARL MACKENZIE

Handwritten musical score for 'Christy Campbell' by Carl Mackenzie. The score is written on six staves in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff begins with a treble clef and a sharp sign. The music consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some triplets. The final staff includes a first ending marked '1ST.', a second ending marked '2ND.', and a final ending marked 'LAST'. The first ending is a triplet of eighth notes, and the second ending is a triplet of eighth notes. The final ending is a single eighth note followed by a quarter note.

John Morrison's - Reel

Handwritten musical score for 'John Morrison's - Reel'. The score is written on four staves in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The music consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some triplets. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a sharp sign. The final staff ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

John Morrison's Reel is an old style reel that is seldom heard anymore. Some fiddlers played five turns. The two turns here are more common. Thanks to Bill MacDonald for transcription.

Christy Campbell was taken from the playing of Carl MacKenzie. This popular tune is played many different ways by different fiddlers. This is an excellent version. Thanks to Stan Webster for transcribing the tune.

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