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# Music in Nova Scotia: The Oral Tradition

by Matthew D McGuire

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# Music in Nova Scotia: The Oral Tradition

Researched and Written by Matthew D McGuire  
Edited by Jennifer Lambert

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Museum Services Division  
Nova Scotia Museum  
Nova Scotia Department of Education and Culture

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## **INTRODUCTION**

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European settlement of Nova Scotia began in 1604, with the founding of an Acadian settlement on the Island of St. Croix. In time, the French settlers were joined by Germans, Gaelic-Scots, Irish, Lowland Scots, and the English. More immigrants, from countries like Holland and the Ukraine, followed, resulting in a multicultural society with many different languages, accents, and traditions. Among these traditions, music holds a position a great importance. Each cultural group brought with them their own unique storage of songs and instrumental music, much of which survived and has been collected during the past century. A great deal of this music still carries on today in living tradition.

The following is a guide to the traditional music of the five largest European ethnic groups in Nova Scotia. This is the music that has been passed down 'from knee to knee,' orally and aurally, and plays an important role in contemporary Nova Scotian society. It is also a guide to the collections, collectors, repositories, and people who carry these musical traditions, so that a greater understanding of Nova Scotian music may be had and further research be facilitated.

## THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE SONG TRADITION

The tradition of orally transmitted English-language song is among the most widespread in the world. English songs have long been taken across the globe by sailors, merchants and colonists, to be disseminated in such far-flung places as New Zealand, Australia, the United States, and Canada. Owing their origins to England, Lowland Scotland, and Ireland, they have been grouped into several branches according to common themes, age, and style. Categories were established by scholars who deemed certain songs to be more 'noble' than others. The accepted authoritative categories of song in North America are the Child Ballads, the Broadside Ballads and the Native North American Ballads. Early scholars valued Child Ballads above all others because they prized certain characteristics that hinted at their early composition. Songs of lesser nobility were not valued as highly and were often even maligned. Luckily, other scholars came to question the practice of measuring art and evaluating all music by the same set of criterion.

### **Child Ballads**

'Child Ballads' receive their name from Francis James Child. The first Professor of English at Harvard University, Child published a collection of ballads in ten volumes between 1882 and 1898, which rapidly became an authoritative work in the field of folk-music.<sup>1</sup> This collection, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, contains 305 ballads that Child deemed of a certain antiquity, based on their lyrics. Many of these songs are still well known. "Barbara Allen" (Child 84) is probably the most familiar of the Child Ballads in the English-speaking world. However, most Nova Scotians would easily recognize "Mary Hamilton" (Child 173), which was popularized by John Allan Cameron as "The Four Maries." Other well-known Child Ballads include "The Gypsy Laddie" (Child 200), which was recently recorded by the Irish Descendants as "The Raggie Taggle Gypsy," "The Cruel

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<sup>1</sup> Francis James Child, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (Boston, 1882 - 1898).

Mother" (Child 20), otherwise known as "The Greenwoodside," which appears on Rita and Mary Rankin's album *Lantern Burn*.

The Child Ballads tell romantic tales of feudal knights and their lady-loves in the age of chivalry and great kings. Robin Hood, himself, is featured in several of these songs. Many ballads recount tragic stories of infanticide, unfaithful women, and unrequited love. Despite the tragic overtones, the subject of death is frequently treated with some pragmatism. These songs are very romantic and collectors like Dr. Edward Ives found that men often considered them to be 'women's songs.' These men recalled their mothers singing the songs, but never learned them themselves, preferring more modern and realistic lyrics.

Although Child's collection was published without music, it was supplemented by B.H. Bronson's *The Traditional Tunes of the Child Ballads* (1959 - 72).<sup>2</sup> Bronson used melodies from many Child Ballads collected in Nova Scotia.

The Child Ballads serve as a point of reference for further research. Child's collection is well documented and thorough, so it still stands as a benchmark for folk-song study.

Child's collection stirred up interest throughout the English speaking world in finding these 'true ballads' in living tradition. It had been recognized that colonials often preserved traditions more strictly and enthusiastically than did their counterparts in the mother country. So, it came as no surprise to find many Child Ballads alive in Canada. Of all the provinces, Nova Scotia proved the most valuable source of these songs. Through the efforts of collectors like William Roy MacKenzie and Helen Creighton, fifty-three Child ballads were collected in Nova Scotia, as well as many variations. There have been at least seventy-seven Child Ballads collected in Canada throughout the years.

See **W.R. MacKenzie** (page 8) and **Helen Creighton** (page 10) for more information.

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<sup>2</sup> B.H. Bronson, *The Traditional Tunes of the Child Ballads*. (1959 - 1972).

## Broadside

Broadsides receive their name from the broad sheets of paper on which they were printed and sold on the streets. These broadsides were purchased, learned and circulated, with many working their way into the oral tradition. Although not as old as the Child Ballads, Broadsides are more common as they had already superseded the older songs by the time that most English-speaking settlers came to North America. Note that settlers came first to the Maritimes, so that Child Ballads are more common in this region; Broadsides, however, are still more popular.

Broadside themes are generally more realistic than those of the Child Ballads, telling the tales of ordinary folk, pirates "The Flying Cloud," battles "Waterloo," and the sea. However, the most common theme of Broadsides is the 'Broken Ring.'

'Broken Ring' ballads tell the tale of two lovers, separated by war, poverty, or adventure. The woman waits for the man for many years, typically seven, before he returns and asks her to marry him. He does not identify himself and as the years have changed him, she does not recognize her true love. He proceeds to test her loyalty by telling her that her lover is dead or will not return. Still she refuses to marry him. He produces half of a golden ring that was split between them before he departed. She breaks down in joy and they are reunited at last.

Just as in the rest of the English-speaking world, Broadsides make up the largest portion of the English-language folk-song repertoire in Nova Scotia. Songs such as "Rambling Boy of Pleasure," known by most as "The Sally Gardens" since it was 'resung' by William Butler Yeats, and "Peggy Gordon" are common songs from this branch of the tradition. Many of these songs are from the Irish ballad tradition, although they spanned the traditions in the New World. (See **Irish Music**, pages 75 - 80.)

Six broadsides of the 'Broken Ring' variety collected in Nova Scotia by Helen Creighton were made into a folk opera in the 1950s

## Native North American Ballads

The third category of ballads found in Nova Scotia is made up of songs native to North America. Many of these songs originated in Nova Scotia and her neighbouring provinces, often depicting local occurrences such as murders, mine disasters, and other tragedies. The lifestyles of sailors, fishermen, lumbermen, and notable characters are described, praised and lamented in these local ballads.

These ballads were spread primarily throughout the region by the men who spent their winters in the lumber camps of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, and the north-eastern United States. The men in the lumberwoods came from all walks of rural life. Farmers, fishermen, and labourers would all go to work in the woods to supplement their income. These camps were tremendous sources of cultural exchange. After labouring all day in the woods, the men would gather in the evenings to sing songs and share tunes. By winter's end the men would have greatly expanded their own repertoires, which would spread throughout their communities upon their return home. So it is not a surprise that a song such as 'Mary Tuplin,' about the murder of a girl in Charlottetown, was collected by Helen Creighton on Devil's Island under the name of 'A Prince Edward Island Murder.' (See also *Irish Music*, pages 75 - 80.)

### SEA CHANTIES

*I've put in a good many hard years on shipboard and I've shipped with some queer lookin' crews, but let me tell ye that when the shanties was started everything got jolly and cheerful at once, and men that never seen each other before acted like wot they was old friends. — And ye needn't think that the shanties was all noise and yellin'. There was some fine singers in the old crews, and it was great to hear them at the shanties.<sup>3</sup>*

Sailors were also great ambassadors of song. Much like the lumbermen, after a long day's sailing and hauling, they would gather in the forecandle or on deck to sing. Originally these leisure songs were what are called 'Dibdin's songs,' "which the orthodox sailor of the last

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<sup>3</sup> W.R. MacKenzie, *Ballads and Sea Songs of Nova Scotia*, xxv.

half century [1850 - 1900] was supposed to adhere to as closely as the Scotch Presbyterian to his Pastor."<sup>4</sup> However, in 1926 Robert Long noted that these songs were being replaced by "the negro melodies and the popular shore songs of the day."<sup>5</sup>

Sailors also sang chanties, or shanties, to accompany their labour, thus the term shantymen. These were a tremendously important part of sailors' lives. There are three different varieties of chanties, each sung alongside a different task. The first was sung during strong pulls, "as in boarding a tack, hauling aft a sheet, or tautening a weather-brace."

*'Haul the Bowline,' is a favourite for this purpose. The shantyman, as the solo singer is called, standing up 'beforehand,' as high above the rest of the crew as he can reach, sings with as many quirks, variations and quavers as his ingenuity and ability can attempt, "Haul the bowline, Kitty is my darling;" then all join hands in the chorus, "Haul the bow-line, the bowline haul," shouting the last word with great energy and suiting action to it by a combined pull, which must once be witnessed by one who desire an exemplification of "a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull altogether." This seldom fails to make the ropes "come home."<sup>6</sup>*

The second type of chanty was sung during long hoists, "or where so large a number of pulls is required that more frequent exertion must be used, than is called for by the first set [of songs], lest too much time be occupied."<sup>7</sup> Common examples of this type of song, often sung while hoisting the topsail to the masthead, are "Reuben Ranzo" and "Sally Brown." In the first, the sailors hoist on the first Ranzo in the chorus:

*Oh, poor Reuben Ranzo, Ranzo, boys, Ranzo!  
Oh, poor Reuben Ranzo, Ranzo, boys, Ranzo!*

Songs sung while working at the pumps, capstan, and windlass comprise the third type of chanty. Such tasks required continuous effort. Some songs from the second category of chanty were used for these jobs, but songs like "Rio Grande" are exclusive to the third category. Many sea songs have been collected in Nova Scotia, the most famous being "Farewell to Nova Scotia."

Robert Long makes some interesting comments about the shantyman:

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<sup>4</sup> Robert J. Long, *Annals of Liverpool and Queen's County*, 1152.  
<sup>5</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>6</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 1153.

*Great latitude is allowed in the words and the shantyman exercises his own discretion. If he be a man of little comprehension or versatility, he will say the same words over and over, but if he possesses some wit, he will insert a phrase alluding to some peculiarity of the ship, or event of the time, which will cause mouths to open wider and eyes to roll gleefully, while a lively pull follows that rouses the sheet home and elicit the mate's order "Belay!" A good shantyman is highly prized, both by officers and crew. His leadership saves many a dry pull, and his vocal effort is believed to secure so much physical force, that he is sometimes allowed to spare his own exertions and reserve all his energies for the inspiring shanty.<sup>8</sup>*

## **"Ballad Bagging " in Nova Scotia**

There is a strong tradition of song collecting in Nova Scotia, especially of the English-language ballads. Regional interest created by Child's collection of *Popular Ballads* had a direct influence on the province. Not long after its publication, scholars began scouring the communities of Nova Scotia in search of the elusive Child Ballad. Fortunately, the trend occurred early enough to rescue countless songs from imminent oblivion.

### **WILLIAM ROY MACKENZIE (1883 - 1957)**

Born in River John, Pictou County, William Roy MacKenzie was the first collector of English-language folk-song in Canada. Despite this distinction and much critical acclaim, he remains relatively unknown in Nova Scotia. Educated at Dalhousie and Harvard Universities, MacKenzie fell under the influence of George Lyman Kittredge. Kittredge was the successor of Harvard's renowned Francis James Child. Inheriting his own interest in Child Ballads from Kittredge, MacKenzie recognized many songs that he learned as a child growing up in River John. He returned home to begin collecting in 1908 and established a summer home. In 1909, MacKenzie published an article entitled "Ballad Singing in Nova Scotia," in the *Journal of American Folklore*. His first book, *The Quest of the Ballad* (1919), remains the primary description of folk-song collecting in Canada. It describes his adventures amongst the people of Pictou and Colchester and Cumberland counties. He undertook this work just as the ballad-singing tradition was dying out. Indeed, most of his informants were between seventy and eighty years of age.

In 1928, MacKenzie published *Ballads and Sea Songs of Nova Scotia*, the

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

culmination of his collecting career. It contains sixteen of the Child Ballads that he treasured so greatly. In addition, it contains 146 Broadside Ballads and 42 melodies. Among the Broadside Ballads are contained the largest repertoire of sea shanties collected in North America. The book contains excellent references, notes, and information about the informants. Many of these were anglicized French Huguenots, such as the Langilles and the Tattries. The descendants of these French settlers lost many of their own traditions while maintaining English traditions for longer than the British settlers of the area. They considered themselves to be of Swiss origin, as they fled religious persecution in France to Switzerland before finally settling in Nova Scotia. *The Quest of the Ballad* contains much historical information, as well as information regarding traditions, songs, and the people from whom MacKenzie collected.

Although MacKenzie is not as well-known as Helen Creighton, he was one of her own inspirations. She contributed a brief biography of MacKenzie in the *Newsletter of the Canadian Folk Music Society* (July 1967).

William Roy MacKenzie, the Father of ballad collecting in Canada, died in River John in 1957 after a teaching career at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. His papers can be found at the Dalhousie University Archives.

**For further reading:**

- Creighton, Helen. "W. Roy MacKenzie, Pioneer." (July 1967) 2 *Newsletter of the Canadian Folk Music Society*: 15 - 22.
- MacKenzie, W. Roy. "Ballad-Singing in Nova Scotia." *Journal of American Folklore*: 22, 1909. 327 - 31.
- MacKenzie, W. Roy. "Ballad-Singing in Nova Scotia." *Journal of American Folklore*: 25, 1912. 182 - 87.
- MacKenzie, W. Roy. "Three Ballads from Nova Scotia." *Journal of American Folklore*: 23, 1910. 371 - 80.
- MacKenzie, W. Roy. *The Quest of the Ballad*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1919.
- MacKenzie, W. Roy. *Papers*. Dalhousie University Archives.
- McKay, Ian. *The Quest of the Folk*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994.

## **HELEN CREIGHTON (1899 - 1989)**

Without doubt, Dr. Helen Creighton is one of the most notable names in Nova Scotian cultural history. She spent the majority of her life recording and preserving Nova Scotian folk culture. In the process, she helped to give shape to the contemporary Nova Scotian identity. She was also the most accomplished and outstanding collector of English-language folk-song and folklore in Canada. She is also a notable collector of Gaelic, German, Acadian, Mi'kmaq, and ethnic-Black folk music.

Creighton was born on September 5, 1899 on Portland Street, in Dartmouth. In 1916, she graduated from Halifax Ladies College and contributed to the war effort as a driver for the Royal Flying Corps in Toronto. She was a Red Cross Ambulance Driver in 1920 and by 1926 she began to be heard on CHNS radio as 'Aunt Helen.' Journalistic interests led to curiosity in pirate lore, which eventually caused her to take her fateful journeys to Hartlan Point and Devil's Island. Helen Creighton had fallen in love with folklore.

She began collecting folklore in 1928, and in 1932 she published her first book, *Songs and Ballads of Nova Scotia*. Creighton was well on her way to prominence in her chosen field. Throughout her career she published frequently in books, magazines, collections, newsletters, and newspapers. She travelled throughout Nova Scotia, venturing occasionally into neighbouring provinces, visiting isolated communities that had yet to lose their folk-ways. Some of these experiences are documented in her autobiography, *A Life in Folklore* (1975).

During her career, Creighton received six honorary degrees, several civic and provincial awards, fellowship in the American Folklore Society, and the Order of Canada.

From the start, Creighton contributed a considerable amount of material to the Public Archives of Nova Scotia. However, in 1986 she placed her entire collection in the hands of the Archives. She helped greatly in the organization and transfer of her collection. The 'Helen Creighton Fonds' contain four categories of information: main photos and art; moving image and sound; published items; and manuscripts. This collection contains significant information and is a monumental contribution to the cultural history of Nova

Scotia.

In 1987, Creighton published her final book, *La Fleur du Rosier*, a collection of songs from the Acadian tradition. She passed away in 1989. The Dr. Helen Creighton Foundation was founded in her memory in order to promote research and work in the field of folklore and song. The Helen Creighton Folk Festival is held annually in Halifax and features talent from all Nova Scotian-based cultures.

**For further reading:**

- Creighton, Helen. "Ballads from Devil's Island." (1935) 32 *Dalhousie Review*: 503 - 10.
- *Bluenose Ghosts*. Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1957.
- *Bluenose Magic: Popular Beliefs and Superstitions in Nova Scotia*. Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1968.
- "Canada's Maritime Provinces - An Ethnomusicology Survey (Personal Observations and Recollections)." (1972) *Ethnomusicology*: 404 - 14.
- "Collecting Songs of Nova Scotia Blacks." *Folklore Studies in Honour of Herbert Halpert*, edited by Kenneth Goldstein and Neil V. Rosenberg. St. John's: Memorial University, 1980.
- "Easter on Cape Sable Island." (1964) 54 *Atlantic Advocate*.
- "Fiddles, Folk-songs and Fisherman's Yarns." (1955) 51 *Canadian Geographical Journal*, no. 6: 212 - 21.
- "Fishing for Albacore." (1931) 3 *Canadian Geographical Journal*: 65 - 76.
- *Folklore of Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia*. Ottawa: National Museum of Canada, bulletin no. 117, Anthropological Series no. 29 (1950). Reprinted Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1976.
- "Folklore on Victoria Beach." (1950) 63 *Journal of American Folklore*: 131 - 46.
- "Folk-Singers of Nova Scotia." *Canadian Forum* (July 1952).
- *Folk-songs from Southern New Brunswick*. Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1971.
- "Hooked Rugs for Colour: Nova Scotia's Great Home Industry." *The Chatelaine* (May 1929).
- *A Life in Folklore*. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1975.
- *Maritime Folk Songs*. Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1962. Reprinted St. John's: Breakwater, 1979.
- "Nova Scotia Folk-songs." (1937) 4 *Nova Scotia Journal of Education*, no. 8.
- "Rudyard Kipling and the Halifax Doctor." (June 1965) 55 *Atlantic Advocate*: 50 - 55.
- "Sable Island." *Maclean's* (1 December 1931).
- *Songs and Ballads from Nova Scotia*. Toronto and Vancouver: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1932. Reprinted New York: Dover, 1966.

- "Song Singers." *Maclean's* (15 December 1937).
- "Songs of Nathan Hatt." (1953) 32 *Dalhousie Review*: 259 - 66.
- "Teachers as Folklorists." (1943) 14 *Nova Scotia Journal of Education*, no.7.
- "W. Roy MacKenzie, Pioneer." (July 1967) 2 *Newsletter of the Canadian Folk Music Society*: 15 - 22.
- , with Sandy Ives. "Eight Folktales from Miramichi as Told by Wilmot MacDonald." (1962) 4 *Northeast Folklore*: 3 - 70.
- , and Calum MacLeod. *Gaelic Songs in Nova Scotia*. Ottawa: National Museum, bulletin no. 198 (1964).
- , and Doreen Senior. *Twelve Folk-songs from Nova Scotia*. London: Novello, 1940.
- , and Doreen Senior. Traditional Songs from Nova Scotia. Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1950.

Most of these titles are available at P.A.N.S. and there are countless articles written about Creighton that are accessible through Novanet.

### **MALCOLM MACODRUM**

In 1922, fourteen years after W.R. MacKenzie began his collecting career, Maxwell MacOdrum published *Nova Scotia Ballads*. MacOdrum was a native of Marion Bridge, Cape Breton. He eventually became President of Carleton College in Ottawa. His collection was self-published and is not that well-known. He was the son of a Presbyterian minister and sometimes a minister himself. He also lived in Halifax for a period.

As a point of interest, MacOdrum was asked by Helen Creighton to undertake the references and songs information for her first publication, while he was teaching at Queen's. After an extended period of time, MacOdrum had still not done anything with Creighton's manuscript. Tired of waiting, Creighton went to Kingston, retrieved the manuscript and learned how to do the work herself.

#### **For further reading:**

MacOdrum, Malcolm. *Nova Scotia Ballads*. Halifax: The Author, 1922.

## **STUART MCCAWLEY**

In 1929, Stuart McCawley, a resident of Glace Bay, published *The Cape Breton Come-All-Ye; A Book of Songs and 'Come-All-Ye' of Cape Breton and Newfoundland*. This was the third published collection of Nova Scotia folk-songs. It is a short compilation of songs, intermixed with poetry and jokes. It contains one Gaelic song, "Ho Ro Mo Nighean Donn Bhoidheach," and is imbued with a fiercely Cape Breton Nationalist sentiment. McCawley espouses the virtues of Gaelic, fiddling, fighting, coal mining, and the bravery of the Cape Breton Highlanders in World War I. He also features poems by William Ross of Victoria County and himself.

### **For further reading:**

McCawley, Stuart. *The Cape Breton Come-All-Ye; A Book of Songs and 'Come-All-Ye' of Cape Breton and Newfoundland*. Glace Bay: Brodie Printing Services, 1929. P.A.N.S.

## **ALPHONSE MACDONALD**

In 1935, Cape Breton native, Alphonse MacDonald, published *Cape Breton Songster: A Book of Favourite English and Gaelic Songs*. Sydney: The Author, 1935.

## **J.W. BYERS**

Following the death of his father, George Byers, J.W. Byers set about collecting the songs that he'd heard sung during his youth in West New Annan. George Byers learned to sing in the pre-phonograph era; the songs range from pure lumberwoods such as "The Flying Cloud" and "The Shanty Boy" [the Jam on Gerry's Rock], to Robert Burns and other popular ballads of the day. It is quite a remarkable collection and deserves publication.

J.W. Byers was an informant for Helen Creighton and her collection contains a copy of his manuscript. Most of the lyrics were dictated by George Byers' brother, Robert, and his wife, Annie. The melodies are from J.W.'s memory. There are a few editorial comments but relatively little information accompanying the songs.

### **For further reading:**

Byers, J.W. "Ballads of Long Ago." compiled 1930s, P.A.N.S. MG 1 #1195e.

## **JOHN C. O'DONNELL (1935 - )**

Up until quite recently, very little work had been done in Nova Scotia in the sphere of the industrial song. Notably few coal mining songs had been collected in the province, despite the wonderful work done by Helen Creighton.

In 1966, John C. (Jack) O'Donnell, a graduate of Saint Francis Xavier University and later Director of St. Ninian's Choir, Antigonish, was asked to direct the newly formed coal-miners' choir, The Men of the Deeps. He quickly realized the lack of locally collected Coal Mining songs, although he had the good sense to know that they existed.

For a long time, folk music was seen to be a rural manifestation and industrialization, its inherent enemy symbolizing the decline of rural folk-ways. However, it had also been observed that wherever and whenever men gathered, they would sing. Whether in the lumber camps, shipyards, fishing boats, or aboard sailing ships, there always seemed to be a creative tradition. Why would coal miners be any different?

O'Donnell began to collect coal mining songs from the area in order to provide material for his choir. Ninah Cohen, who had come up with the original idea for the choir, held an open competition in 1966 to find traditional and original songs connected with the coal mining trade. The attempt proved fruitful. O'Donnell's first collection, *The Men of the Deeps*, was published in 1975. Prefaced by Helen Creighton, it is largely the result of Cohen's song competition. This collection is the forerunner to the much more complete collection that O'Donnell published in 1992, *"And Now the Fields are Green: A Collection of Coal Mining Songs in Canada,"* organized by themes, including History, Life and Love, Disaster and Danger, and Union songs. It is put together well, complete with notes, cross-references, a glossary of mining terms, a discography, and a very useful bibliography. The collection is a truly valuable contribution to the collecting tradition in Nova Scotia.

O'Donnell has been President of the Canadian Folk Music Society and is currently a Professor of Music at his alma mater. He is still extremely active with the Men of the Deeps and in the field of folk-song collecting. He received the Order of Canada in 1983.

### **For further reading:**

O'Donnell, John C. *"And Now the Fields are Green": A Collection of Coal Mining*

- Songs in Canada*. Sydney: UCCB Press, 1992.
- *The Men of the Deeps*. Waterloo, Ontario: Waterloo Music Co., 1975
- , with the Men of the Deeps. "Contributions of American Folklorists to Research on Canadian Coal-Mining Songs." *Work, Ethnicity and Oral History*, 223 - 35.
- "Labour's Cultural Impact on the Community." *Canadian Folk Music Journal*. Fall 1986.

See also Cecil Sharpe and A.L. Lloyd for Industrial Song.

### **ALLISTAIR MACGILLIVRAY**

Having achieved renown for his song-writing abilities, the composer of such well-known songs as "Song for the Mira" and "Looking Back," Alistair MacGillivray has also done a lot of work in the realm of folk music in Nova Scotia. He has published several significant works. In 1981, he published *The Cape Breton Fiddler*. As a sequel to this work, he published *A Cape Breton Ceilidh* in 1988. These works are an important resource in the field of Gaelic music. (See **The Gaelic Tradition**, pages 32 - 74.)

MacGillivray has also published two collections of songs with the help of his good friend John C. O'Donnell (O'Donnell scored the songs for the collections). The first, *The Cape Breton Song Collection* (1985), is a collection of songs composed by known authors in Cape Breton. However, many of these songs have entered the folk-song tradition. This collection also contains two English songs by the great Gaelic bard, Malcolm Gillis (Calum MacGill-iosa).

The second of MacGillivray's collections is *The Nova Scotia Song Collection* (1989). This work follows the same format as its predecessor — known authors, but in a traditional vein. This collection does feature some traditional songs from the collection of Helen Creighton.

MacGillivray is also the author of *Diamonds in the Rough: 25 Years of the Men of the Deeps*. This work discusses the history and life of the coal miners' choir.

#### **For further reading:**

- MacGillivray, Alistair. *A Cape Breton Ceilidh*. Sydney: UCCB Press, 1988
- MacGillivray, Alistair. *The Cape Breton Fiddler*. Sydney: UCCB Press, 1981

MacGillivray, Allistair. *The Cape Breton Song Collection*. Sydney: Seacape Music, 1985

MacGillivray, Allistair. *The Nova Scotia Song Collection*. Sydney: Seacape Music, 1989

Another worthwhile piece of literature contained by P.A.N.S. is a paper by Holly Gunn, entitled "The Ballads of Nova Scotia." This work deals with aspects of traditional song singing in Nova Scotia, in English, Gaelic, and Mi'kmaq. It also discusses the social and historical role of the ballad, as well as the role of songs of the sea, the mines, the lumberwoods, and the farm.

## **The Performance of English-Language Song**

As in most cultures, songs in the English-language tradition were sung unaccompanied. The lack of availability of instruments, especially in the lumberwoods and on board ships, meant that instrumental accompaniments were not devised for these songs until their revival in the second half of the twentieth century. Many of these songs are sung 'between keys' and do not conform to the western classical scales, so they are often damaged when forced to accompany the piano or guitar. Nevertheless, most singers of traditional English-language songs today have devised compatible instrumental arrangements.

## **The English-Language Instrumental Tradition**

Unlike the Gaelic tradition, there is no typically English-based tradition of instrument repertoire in Nova Scotia, although the early hornpipes played in the region probably had an English source. Traditional English-language songs were sung unaccompanied. For dance purposes, the English people would borrow from the traditional repertoire of the Gaels — the Highlanders and the Irish — stamping the instrumental style with the characteristics of the individual's interpretation. With the introduction of guitars and the widespread use of pianos, pump organs, and harmoniums, English-language songs were

increasingly given accompaniment. But an indigenous English-based instrumental music never took root in Nova Scotia.

For an example of traditional instrumental music by people of English extraction, there are various recordings of 'valley fiddling,' which comes from the Annapolis Valley area. It is much more direct than Gaelic or Irish fiddling, lacking the number of 'cuts' and various other styles of grace notes. This style of fiddling, being less ornamented, is played a bit faster. 'Valley fiddling' is closer to the style commonly referred to as 'Canadian fiddling,' which is known to most as the style played by Don Messer.

## **ACADIAN SONG AND MUSIC IN NOVA SCOTIA**

Acadian settlement in Nova Scotia began with the foundation of a colony on the Island of St. Croix in 1604. By 1671 there were approximately four hundred colonists, numbers which grew to about eighteen hundred by 1707. Most of the settlers came from the province of Poitou in western France. Since they came from a common area, there were many familial ties in place before their arrival. Intermarriage and their common method of farming the dykelands of Acadia further encouraged strengthening of these bonds. The strong community ties forged a cooperative identity amongst the settlers. This community spirit is of immense importance in relation to traditional Acadian song and their interpretation of traditional music.

One of the great tragedies in North American history is the expulsion of the Acadians, in 1755 - 58. This event added communal pain to the collective identity of the Acadian people. The Expulsion dispersed the Acadians throughout North America, some returning to Europe. During the post-Expulsion era, many Acadians returned to rejoin fellow settlers who had managed to avoid the clearance. They set about re-establishing farms and ties they had forged over one hundred and fifty years.

One of the many ways that community spirit and strong maintenance of traditions translated for the Acadians was into a great allegiance to their musical heritage. A great number of traditional songs were preserved, for the most part unaltered, from the pre-settlement period. A great deal of collecting has been done amongst the Acadian people by independent collectors, as well as institutions like the National Museum and Laval University. The music of these French-speaking Maritime communities is a surprisingly large corpus of song considering their relatively small population. Considering their common origins, the variety in the Acadian cultural store is amazing.

As a note, the Acadian communities of Nova Scotia are spread throughout the province, combined they form about five per cent of the population. The major Acadian settlement areas are Pubnico in South-West Nova Scotia, Grand Pre in the Annapolis Valley, Isle Madame and Arichat in southern Cape Breton, Pomquet in Antigonish County,

and Cheticamp in Northern Cape Breton Island.

**For further reading:**

Arsenault, Georges. *The Island Acadians*. Charlottetown: Ragweed Press, 1989.

## **The Collection and Classification of French-Language Song**

There is a long tradition of collecting French-language songs in Canada and it is worth noting that some of the best work in that field has been done in Nova Scotia. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, small-scale publications of traditional songs from Quebec began to emerge. The first influential work of this period came in 1865, with the publication of Ernest Gagnon's *Chansons Populaire du Canada*. The purpose of Gagnon's work was to show the relationship between French-language songs and Gregorian chants. His comparison would prove that these rural songs were more than just simple ditties, but in fact truly artistic pieces of work.<sup>9</sup>This is the first authoritative work in the collection of French-language songs in Canada; many believed that Gagnon's collection contained every French-language song in the country. This belief was largely held until Marius Barbeau (1883 - 1969) began his collecting career in 1917. Barbeau's work was carried out while he was employed by the National Museum. Trained as an anthropologist, Barbeau had a strong appreciation for tradition. During his career as a collector, Barbeau collected an amazing number of songs, many more than contained in Gagnon's publication. Barbeau's work, and the collections he gathered, played a significant role in the formation of the modern Quebec identity. Although Barbeau did his best to promote Quebecois pride in their heritage, he also had a desire that all Canadian cultures be preserved and appreciated. In this manner, his work parallels that of Helen Creighton and her role in the formation of a modern Nova Scotian identity. In fact, Creighton was hired to collect Nova Scotian lore by the

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<sup>9</sup> Helmut Kallman, *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* 341.

National Museum while under the auspices of Barbeau.

Luc Lacourciere founded 'Les Archives de Folklore' at L'université de Laval in 1944. The founding of these archives began the process of classifying and increasing the collection of French-language songs throughout the country. Lacourciere has played an extremely important role in the development of French-language culture since taking on the influential position of heading these archives.

Conrad Laforte, working out of Les Archives de Folklore, developed the system of classification of French-language songs. His work is roughly equivalent to Child's collection although much broader in scope and not as elitist. His work, *Le Catalogue de la Chanson Folklorique Francais*, was largely completed by 1958 and is commonly referred to as 'Catalogue LaForte.' It is the authoritative collection and classification of French-language songs and has been adopted by the National Museum of Canada, the University of Moncton, and the University of Sudbury. It has also been applied to the large personal collections of Marius Barbeau and Edouard-Z Massicotte. Most important to this report, it was applied to the collections of Father Anselme Chiasson and Helen Creighton.

Laforte's collection organizes songs according to poetic form, which are then subdivided according to dominant themes. For example; one poetic form is the love song, which is then divided according to themes such as 'separation and return' or 'gallant adventure.' The songs receive a catalogue name, which is a standard name that can be used for reference purposes. In this way, it is much like the Child collection. *Catalogue Laforte* contains songs from throughout the French-speaking world, so the catalogue names simplify identification and cut down on confusion.

Laforte's five categories of French-language songs are: **les Chanson en Laisse**, which are sung to accompany movement, such as group work, walking, as well as dancing. These songs are usually of epic variety, having many medieval themes, as well as features; **Strophic songs**, which are usually epic religious songs; **Les Chansons en Dialogue**, which consist of responses between characters in the songs; **Les Chansons Enumerative**, which count a wide variety of objects; and **Les**

**Chansons en Timbres**, which are sung for games, dancing, lullabies, to occupy children etc.

## **The Collection of French Language Song in Nova Scotia**

Although a considerable amount of collecting has been done among the Acadians in Nova Scotia, there have been only a few published works. They do, however, present a good representation of the tradition as a whole.

### **FATHER ANSELME CHIASSON**

Fr. Anselme Chiasson (b. 1911) of Cheticamp is a very important figure in the field of the preservation of the Acadian oral tradition. A member of the Capuchin Fathers, Fr. Chiasson set out early in his life to document and study the history, traditions, and lives of the people of his hometown. His major work, *Cheticamp: histoire et traditions acadiennes*, is the result of collecting songs, stories, and recollections, as well as historical information about the Cheticamp area. He gathered over 1,000 songs from the area, 225 of which are found in the first five volumes of *Chansons d'Acadie*. This collection, published along with Brother Daniel Boudreau's musical transcriptions, is the first and largest published collection of Acadian folk-songs in Nova Scotia. Fr. Chiasson and Brother Boudreau have recently added six more volumes to the series. These new installments were originally published in Cheticamp, but have been reissued in a longer run by l' Université de Moncton.

In *Cheticamp*, he recounts that Mr. Charles V. Boudreau "alone . . . knew the words and tunes of more than four hundred songs." He also comments that the Acadian tradition of song draws more from the past than the present. The Acadian material does not dwell on tragedy, such as the Expulsion, rather it is music to pick up the spirit, make one laugh and carry one through the sadness.

Fr. Chiasson suggests that most of the songs are Old-World Cantilenas. There are love songs, enumerative songs, children's songs, songs of the sea, and work songs — especially milling songs. These songs were sung while shrinking wool to prepare it

for spinning. The collection also contains some *rondes*, which were sung to accompany dancing.

There are few notes in the Chiasson/Boudreau collection; however, the first edition features an introduction from Marius Barbeau, in which he mentions that one song in the collection, "La Passion," dates from the twelfth century, and another, "Prince Eugene," dates from 1525.

**For further reading:**

Chiasson, Fr. Anselme with Fr. Daniel Boudreau. *Chansons d'Acadie*. 11 vols. Moncton: Editions des Aboiteau, 1943, 1945, 1946, 1972, 1979.

Chiasson, Fr. Anselme. *Cheticamp: histoire et traditions acadiennes*. St. John's: Breakwater, 1986. (translation)

## **HELEN CREIGHTON**

Besides the work of Father Chiasson, the only other major published collection of Acadian folk song is the joint work of Helen Creighton and Ronald Labelle. It is the result of Creighton's collection in the Acadian regions of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island. However, the collection deals primarily with Nova Scotian songs from the south-western region of Pubnico, balancing out Fr. Chiasson's work, which consists exclusively of songs from Cape Breton.

Not a native French speaker, Creighton solicited the aid of Acadians such as Edith Butler to help translate and organize the songs. However, when she decided to publish a collection of these songs, she needed a more scholarly-based partner. She found the necessary talents in Ronald Labelle of l' Université de Moncton, which has the largest existing repository of documents relating to Acadian history, language, and culture. Together they were able to classify and organize Creighton's Acadian songs according to Conrad Laforte's catalogue. The collection, *La Fleur du Rosier*, is an excellent work in both local and global contexts.

Most of the songs in *La Fleur du Rosier* are of French origin; there is a section of ballads of Acadian origin and local subject matter. In reference to the scope of song in the tradition, it is noted

. . . how varied the Acadian Folk-song Tradition is, ranging from delicate little light-hearted songs all the way to tragic ballads over-flowing with melancholy and sadness.

Other characteristics of Acadian song are the lack of refrain (as compared to Quebecois song because of a greater affinity to narrative-type ballads) and the common theme of the sea

Most of the recordings were done in the Pubnico region after Creighton's initial visit in 1947. The songs that she acquired from the Cheticamp region are from two visits made in 1944 and 1959. On her second visit to Cheticamp, she filmed 'a foularie' with the National Film Board. This became part of their film, *Songs of Nova Scotia*.

Despite the abundance of Acadian material, Creighton felt restricted by her lack of French language and did not record as much as she would have liked. Accounts of her experiences amongst the Acadians are found in her autobiography, *A Life in Folklore*. *La Fleur du Rosier* is truly a monumental work in the field of Acadian music.

*Musique Acadienne du Sud-Ouest de la Nouvelle Ecosse* is a small collection of traditional, as well as recently composed songs from south-western Nova Scotia. It was published in 1981, and contains very little information about the songs and their origins.

## **Instrumental Music from the Acadian Tradition**

The reliance on family and neighbour to help maintain the dykes, which were the lifeblood of Acadian farms, encouraged the development and sustenance of a communal spirit. This spirit manifests itself in the modern cooperatives that play a prominent role in most Acadian communities. This spirit is never more evident than when one is witness to a real Acadian party. These evenings are truly participatory. There are many fiddlers and accompanists who play everything from spoons to jaw harps to pianos. It is not uncommon to hear the saw or even the forks and knives being played. Those who don't play, dance. The music is full of fun. It truly embodies the communal, sympathetic, and joyous spirit of the Acadian people.

## **THE FIDDLE**

The Acadian fiddle-music repertoire is made up, for the most part, of tunes from the Irish and Gaelic traditions. For some reason, whether no fiddlers or not enough came to the Acadian settlement, an indigenous Acadian fiddle-music repertoire was never established. The tunes that they play are generally the jigs and reels they heard from their Celtic neighbours; however, some Acadian songs that were sung for the purpose of dancing have been arranged for the fiddle. They also drew tunes from the Quebecois repertoire of fiddle music, but again their repertoire is largely based on the Irish and Gaelic traditions.

This is not to say that there isn't a distinctively Acadian style of fiddling. The difference is in interpretation. Acadian fiddling is very light. It is more rolling than the Cape Breton style and has fewer 'cuts' or triplets and is generally faster than the music of the Gaelic tradition.

Common tunes played by Acadian fiddlers are "Paddy on the Turnpike," "Pigeon on the Gate," "Lord MacDonald's," "St. Anne's Reel," "The Irish Washerwoman," "McNab's Hornpipe," and "La Bastrigue."

## **PERCUSSION**

### **The Spoons**

The defining characteristic of percussive accompaniment in the Acadian tradition is practicality. Common household items such as spoons are used to emphasize the beat and to help the fiddler maintain his pace. The spoon-player simply places two spoons, backs facing each other, in his hand, with the handles together in the centre of his palm. The spoons are held apart by either the index or the middle finger. The bottom spoon is held more firmly, while the top spoon moves quite freely. The player moves the spoons up and down between his knee and hand — or some variation of this theme. Some players have quite animated and involved styles, others opt for a more subtle technique.

Some spoon-players play a single-handed style, which is the same technique used by players of the bones. The spoons are held in one hand, separated by the index

and ring fingers. Again, one spoon is held more firmly than the other. The player moves his hand in a small, consistent arc. This technique is more difficult.

Some players use forks and knives in a similar fashion to accompany songs and tunes.

### **The Jew's Harp**

The Jew's Harp is one of the oldest instruments used in Acadian settlements. In fact, four Jew's Harps have been found in excavations of Acadian settlements in Nova Scotia and are in the possession of the Nova Scotia Museum. This instrument, called a *guimbarde* in French, is used for various purposes. Most European cultures use the Jew's Harp for dancing. To play the Jew's Harp, the lamella [moveable wire] is placed in front of the mouth and activated with one finger, so that the sound resonates and amplifies. The constant pitch of the instrument is manipulated by movement of the tongue, as well as the larynx.

## **Repositories of Acadian Music**

L' Université de Moncton is the largest repository of Acadian music. In the 'Folklore and Oral History Archive,' in their 'Centre d'Étude Acadienne,' they possess a collection of professionally recorded Acadian music. They also have many songs from Nova Scotia, most of which are from the collection of Father Anselme Chiasson. They also hold some smaller collections of Acadian songs from Nova Scotia.

For more information on their archives contact Ronald Labelle in the 'Centre d'Étude Acadienne' (506-858-4000).

L' Université St. Anne is committed to educating people on the subject of Nova Scotian Acadian culture. Barbara LeBlanc, an instructor there, is well versed in the Acadian song and dance traditions of the province. She can be reached at (902) 769-2114.

L' Université Laval has a substantial archive of folklore material from Nova Scotia. They

have in their possession the collections done by Eddie Comeau, J.R. Cowell, Arthur LeBlanc, Jeanne d'Arc Lortie, and Simone Voyer. All of these collectors were active in Cape Breton. An inventory of the material at the Laval archives can be found at l'Université de Moncton.

There is also a decent amount of Nova Scotian material that was collected in Cape Breton on behalf of the National Museum. These are the collections of Maguy Andral, Laura Boulton, Fr. Anselme Chiasson, Gaston Dulong, W.F. MacKey, Carmen Roy and Liliias Towers. A partial inventory of their material can be seen at l'Université de Moncton.

## **THE GERMAN TRADITION IN NOVA SCOTIA**

Following the founding of Halifax by the British in 1749, the English began to search for a means to counteract the cultural and religious domination of the predominant Roman Catholic Acadians in their Nova Scotian colony. The Acadian presence was a source of anxiety for the British since they were suffering from continually unstable relations with France. If war broke out again - and it did in 1756 - who would the Acadians side with? What they felt was required to change the balance of power in the colony was a large body of Protestant settlers. Since France was larger than England, the British could not afford to lose able-bodied fighting men. However, the current King of England was William II, the Elector of Hanover (in Germany). William maintained his hereditary powers in Hanover, which were then transferred through his family. So when England required 'foreign Protestants' to settle Nova Scotia, England had a large and ready body of loyal subjects. These Germans were used to counteract the Acadian population in the colony while avoiding a drain on England's limited military reserves.

In 1750 - 51 approximately 1500 'foreign Protestants' were settled in what would become Lunenburg County. Lunenburg was close enough to Halifax to provide security, while being relatively near to the Acadian settlements in the Annapolis Valley. This act established yet another culture in Nova Scotia; the German presence contributed a different language and body of cultural traditions to the French and English balance.

### **The German Song in Nova Scotia**

Certain factors led to an early loss of many German traditions in Nova Scotia. Unlike the Acadians and the Gaels, the Hanoverian Germans were traditionally loyal to the figure of William II, now King of England. They did not share the historical grievance with the English Crown that characterized the French and Gaels. This factor, along with a relatively small population, led to an early loss of the German tongue. What German

language that remained was preserved "in the chorales still sung in the Lutheran Church in Lunenburg town."<sup>10</sup>

When Helen Creighton began collecting in Lunenburg, she expected to find "a profusion of ballads and folk-songs." However, by the time she published *Folklore of Lunenburg County*, in 1950, she had only three Child Ballads, three Broad-sides and a few similar-type songs. These, of course, are English-language songs.

*As for German songs, few people still remember the old tongue. I [Creighton] have made phonograph recording of one lullaby, the songs sung at the firing in of the New Year, two folk-songs and one nursery song.<sup>11</sup>*

Why didn't German songs survive? Perhaps it was the emergence of the popularity of brass bands and singing groups in pre-immigration Germany. Regardless, with the loss of their language the retention of their cultural lyric-music was virtually impossible.

## The Instrumental Music of Nova Scotian Germans

Very little is written about the traditional instrumental music of the Germans in Lunenburg. However, Helen Creighton mentions that "good instrumental music [was] found all over the county."<sup>12</sup> As far as tunes are concerned, Creighton mentions the following fiddle tunes: "The Irish Washerwoman" [Irish Jig], "Soldier's Joy" [Gaelic Reel], "Fisher's Hornpipe," "Devil's Dream" [Gaelic Reel], "Lord [Mac]Donald's" [Gaelic Reel], "Crooked Stove Pipe," "Pigeon on the Gatepost" [Irish Reel], "Moneymusk" [Gaelic Strathspey-come-Reel], "devil-among-the-tailors" [Gaelic Reel, the same as Devil's Dream], "ricket's hornpipe," "Liverpool Hornpipe," "and burnt potato" [Gaelic Reel changed by Colin Boyd].

As with the Acadian tradition, the German repertoire is largely Gaelic and Irish-Gaelic. However, difference in interpretation provides stylistic differences.

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<sup>10</sup> Creighton, *Folklore of Lunenburg County*, 78.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 73.

## THE GAELIC TRADITION

The Highland Scots are descended from a branch of the Celtic peoples who once held vast tracks of land throughout Western Europe. Caesar fought Celts in Gaul and Britain, St. Paul wrote to the "foolish Galatians," some even say that Homer was a Celt. These warrior bands eventually worked their way west, crossing what is now the English channel, to settle the British Isles and Ireland. Along with the Picts, who may also have been a Celtic people, they controlled these islands until the coming of the Romans. Despite Roman control of much of mainland Britain, they never were able to extend their power past Hadrian's wall to the North, nor did they extend their domain across the Irish Sea. Celtic bands were constant thorns in the side of the Romans, with large-scale rebellions led by leaders like Boadicea, a Celtic princess and warrior. Due to the Roman presence on the mainland, the Celts were pushed into the corners and peninsulas of Britain. As time wore on these people grew apart. There are two major groups of Celts: the 'P,' or Brythonic, Celts are comprised of the people of Wales, Cornwall, and Brittany; and the 'Q,' or Goidelic (Gaelic), Celts who are made up of the Irish, the Highland Scots, and the Manx. The letter distinctions represent a linguistic difference best demonstrated using the word for 'son'. In Welsh, the word 'Map' means 'son,' however, in Gaelic, the word for 'son' is 'Mac.' Hence the designation of the Welsh as 'P' Celts and Gaels as 'Q' Celts.

The Gaelic people were centred in Ireland until 563 A.D. This was when St. Colm Cille, or Columba, of the Clan Ui Nill began a mission at Iona. This was followed by the movement of the Irish tribe, Dal Riada, to Argyle - the shore of the Gael. For a period, the Kingdom of Dal Riada was maintained on both sides of the Irish Sea; however, they were eventually forced out of Ireland by the Ui Niell. Through the efforts of the Iona mission, Christianity spread throughout Scotland and amongst the Picts. Kenneth MacAlpine united the thrones of the Picts and Gaels in 884. Eventually the Gaels became the dominant people throughout what is modern Scotland. Being separated from Ireland, their language evolved differently. Their culture, although tied

to Ireland's by common roots and history, became uniquely Scottish. However, there are many similarities between the traditional songs and music of the two peoples.

As English influence crept into Scotland and the Gaelic dominion receded back beyond the Highland line, the cultural make-up of Scotland changed. Therefore, the culture of the Scottish Gaels cannot be described as simply Scottish, it is a Scottish-Gaelic culture.

Following the Jacobite rebellions, the English set out to tame the Gaels. In order to accomplish this, they proscribed aspects of Gaelic culture such as the music of the pipes and the fiddle, traditional dress (the breacan or pladdie), as well as the language. Traditional lands were taken away from the staunchest of Jacobites as they attempted to weaken the clan system. During a visit to the Highlands thirty years after Culloden, Samuel Johnson commented:

*The clans retain little now of their original character; their ferocity of temper is softened, their military ardour is extinguished, their dignity of independence is depressed, their contempt for government subdued, and their reverence for chiefs abated. Of what they had before the late conquest of their country, there remain only their language and their poverty.*<sup>13</sup>

The English gradually subdued the Gaels through their policy of cultural ethnocide. Eventually the music would be changed — losing its Gaelic character and being rebuilt according to the classical idiom — the breacan would become the kilt and tartans were created for the purpose of satisfying the vanity of Anglicized Chieftains and Lowland Scots who longed to be 'Scottish.' Gaelic culture was misappropriated and changed, the dress and music of the 'wild Highlanders' became the evening wear and pipe bands of a people that were anything but Gaelic. The aspects of Gaelic life were changed, made palatable and then held up as the umbrella of Scottish culture.

## Gaelic People in New Scotland

As Chieftains and landlords sought to raise their economic status, they searched for different ways to take advantage of their lands. New agricultural methods were in contradiction with the Gaelic system of landholding. The arrival of the Great Cheviot — a hardy breed of sheep — made sheep farming more profitable. First people were relocated to poor grazing lands, then they sought to remove them altogether. Rather than being forced into cities and inhabitable lands, many Highlanders and Islanders emigrated.

The first settlement of Gaelic Highlanders in the New World occurred on Prince Edward Island in 1772. Along with Captain John MacDonald, Laird of Glenaladale, these settlers fled religious and cultural persecution. MacDonald sought to relieve his fellow Catholics of their plight by re-establishing their culture in Canada. This settlement had its successes and failures, and would eventually decline due to oppressive land regulations that were not much different than those they left behind. Much of the second generation left once again, this time for Cape Breton.

In 1773, the *Hector* landed in Nova Scotia with the first of many boatloads of Highlanders. They settled in what is now Pictou County. Despite being unprepared for the harsh winters of the New World, their settlement eventually proved successful.

Following the arrival of the *Hector*, the floodgates of emigration opened up. Major emigrations in the early 1790s quickly swallowed up the available property on the mainland. Since Pictou was primarily a Protestant settlement, Catholics were encouraged to move further to the north-east which is why Antigonish County is characteristically Catholic. Following the northward trend, Highlanders began to move up into Cape Breton.

Immigration slowed during the Napoleonic Wars (1793 - 1815); however, following the victory at Waterloo, people were once again able to leave. The post-war recession also contributed to the large flow of Gaelic settlers to Nova Scotia. Due to the nature of the clan system and the clearances, the Gaels tended to emigrate and to

settle en masse. Therefore, Gaelic communities in Nova Scotia tend to be of common clan and regional extraction. Inverness County was settled primarily by mainland Gaels, coming from the areas of Lochaber, Moidart, and Arisaig. Inverness County also received Gaels from the islands held by Clanranald, such as part of South Uist and Eigg. Since Moidart and Arisaig were also Clanranald territories, Inverness County became, to a large extent, a Clanranald settlement; however, there is a sizeable Lochaber representation in the county. Settlers of Cape Breton's North Shore are primarily of North Uist, Harris, and Lewis extraction, while the area around Iona was generally settled by those from Barra and South Uist.

One characteristic pattern of the settlements is that lands near the shore and in the river valleys were the first to be filled due to ease of access and the fishery. Later settlements were in more mountainous and less habitable land.

Although Gaels went to other parts of Nova Scotia, the Gaelic characteristics of the settlers were best maintained on Cape Breton Island and in the north-eastern mainland. Since they settled in communities, there are various dialects of language, song, and music, that remained intact.

According to John Shaw, the life and isolation of Cape Breton Island produced a

*striking degree of cultural conservatism among Cape Breton Gaels . . . Cape Breton is the most recent and far-flung outpost of the Scottish Gaelic-speaking region . . . and it is a well-documented phenomenon that archaic survivals of social and cultural institutions are most likely to be found at the periphery of a given cultural area.*<sup>14</sup>

And John Lorne Campbell comments that both in Cape Breton and Antigonish County, "inherited nostalgia and old habits and customs have survived in an astonishing way."<sup>15</sup> These statements are made evident by the musical traditions of the Nova Scotian Gaels. Cape Breton fiddling preserves aspects of traditional music that has since disappeared from Scotland and many of the songs preserve archaisms in language that

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<sup>14</sup> Donovan.

<sup>15</sup> John Lorne Campbell, *Songs*, 38.

are present in the vocabulary of Cape Breton Gaelic speakers, but absent in Scotland. Many songs sung by Cape Breton Gaels have been lost in the Scottish Gaidhealtachd.

## **Gaelic Song**

There are many different types of Gaelic songs. Each kind is uniquely suited to specific situations and developed to suit various specialized purposes. Some Gaelic songs are quite old, bearing linguistic features that date back to Ireland, while others are rather recent and distinctly Scottish-Gaelic. The songs were sung at dances, at parties, while working, and at special occasions. They formed a very important social aspect of the lives of the Scottish Gael.

The oldest type of Gaelic song is the **Ossianic Ballad**, which has its roots in the mythology of Ireland which, however, shares common origins with Celtic mythology and, in turn, Indo-European mythology. Gaelic mythology is divided into three cycles: The Hero Tales or the 'Red Branch' Cycle, which recount the deeds of Cuchulain, King Conor, and Fergus, among many others; the Ossianic Cycle, which is concerned with Finn MacCool and his Fianna; and the Cycle of the Kings, which deals with the lives and deeds of historic kings of Ireland.

Ossianic Ballads are concerned, for the most part, with the second cycle of Gaelic mythology. However, a few of these ballads mention figures and events from the Red Branch, as well as from Arthurian legend. These songs are sung slowly and with a hymn-like reverence. They were once spread throughout Ireland and Scotland, but gradually began to disappear from folk memory. Few of this type of song have been collected, although some have been found in Nova Scotia.

### **WORK SONGS**

There are many different kinds of Gaelic work songs. Most of these songs were composed to accompany labours that are traditionally associated with women. Their subject matter often concerns the feminine perspective and they provide interesting insights into women's lives. The nature of the songs, as well as their intent, give

insights into the past, informing us what had to be done in order to enjoy the simple amenities of life.

One of the most important resources in the Highlands and Islands was wool. The process of transforming wool into clothing was very time consuming, so songs were composed in order to 'trick time' throughout production. These songs were written and sung to the rhythm of the task. One of the first stages of cloth production was the spinning of wool into yarn. **Orain Sniomhaidh**, or **Spinning songs**, were sung to the rhythm of the wheel and the foot of the labourer. This job required a steady, regular rhythm; some specifically designated spinning songs have been collected in Cape Breton, although they are not overly common.

Many **Weaving songs** deal with the subject of weaving itself. Just as with the other labour songs, they are sung to speed the passage of time. They are not as common as Milling songs, but they are quite interesting pieces because of the lore that they preserve.

The most common type of work song is the **Oran Luathaidh**. These are the songs that were sung during the fulling of the cloth. In Scotland these songs are referred to as 'Waulking songs;' however, in Cape Breton they are called '**Milling songs**.' The name 'Oran Luathaidh' comes from the Gaelic word 'luadhadh,' which means "to roll or toss."

With the advent of the water-mill, which greatly reduced the labour required to full cloth, the process of milling by hand ceased in many areas of Scotland. However, water-mills took a long time to reach the Outer Hebrides, so these songs were maintained longer in isolated outer areas. The majority of Gaelic Milling songs have been collected in these regions.

After the wool had been cleaned, carded, spun and dyed, it was taken to the weavers. The weaver would set a pattern and produce cloth. In order to thicken the cloth, it had to be fullled. Since there were no water-mills, this work had to be done by hand. This work was done exclusively by women in Scotland. The occasion of a 'waulking' or 'milling frolic' was quite an event. The neighbours would be notified, food

prepared, and everyone would gather for a good time. This is not to say that milling was easy; in fact, it was very strenuous. Between ten and fourteen women would sit around a table, each one would grab a piece of cloth that was already soaked in the 'maighstir.' Maighstir is Gaelic for 'Master,' but the substance was actually stale urine, that fixed the dye. The millers would pound the cloth against the table rhythmically, while simultaneously passing it to their side. The oldest women, most experienced in the art of milling, knew exactly how thick the cloth needed to be. They also knew exactly how many songs it would take produce the desired shrinkage. If their hands grew tired they would do the milling with their feet. The songs were sung to the rhythm of the milling with one person singing the verses and the rest joining in for the chorus. The verses are often comprised of vocables or nonsense words.

When milling by hand became obsolete, the tradition of milling cloth and Milling songs became a form of entertainment in certain areas. Luckily, a great many of these songs have been preserved in the folk memory and in the works of collectors like John Lorne Campbell of Canna. Many of these songs exceed fifty verses. The nature of Gaelic poetry is more descriptive than active, so the songs provide an exceptional window to the past.

Subjects of Milling songs include the appearance, apparel, and armour of men going off to battle, which detail clothing, hair, complexion, sword, and horse. According to John Lorne Campbell,

*The subjects of these songs are usually the praise of great men, of the Chiefs and their magnificence and hospitality; the hunt; love (if the lover is of noble origin, there is no shame in an illegitimate pregnancy; and laments for the dead.<sup>16</sup>*

Aspects of these songs are quite old, so they provide us with terrific information that might otherwise have been lost.

Following the completion of the milling, the cloth had to be dealt with properly. This is when **Orain Basaidh** or **Clapping songs** would be sung. Two women would roll the cloth up tightly, then four others would "fall upon the roll and proceed to pat it

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<sup>16</sup> John Lorne Campbell, *Hebridean Folk Songs*, 18.

violently, straightening out the creases, and those unemployed strike up a song in a different metre."<sup>17</sup> The pace of these songs is often quicker than that of Milling songs. This process was repeated one more time and then the cloth was ready to be dried in the sun.

Other songs associated with the milling process are **Oran Cuartachaidh** or **Circuiting songs**, which were sung by maidens who weren't participating in the milling. They would sit around the edges of the room and each would try their hand at a verse.

One further point of interest is that the grinding of wheat was sometimes done during milling frolics. While most of the women milled, a couple would sit at the side of the room and use a 'quern' to mill the wheat. So sometimes Milling songs also doubled as **Querning songs**.

Another type of work song is the **Orain Bhleoghainn** or **Milking songs**. These songs were usually sung during milking to soothe the cow in hopes that the milker wouldn't get kicked and that the cow would give more milk.

*In sitting down to milk the cow the woman says or sings or intones a short rhythmical prayer. After this prayer the woman sings songs and croons, lilts and lullabies, to cow after cow till all are milked. The secular songs and the religious songs of the people are mixed and mingled, song and hymn alternating in unison with the movements of the hands and the idiosyncrasies of the milker.*

*Nor is it less interesting to observe the manner in which the cows themselves differentiate between the airs sung to them, giving their milk freely with some songs and withholding it with others. Occasionally a cow will withhold her milk till her own favourite lilt is sung to her. The intelligence of these Highland cows is instructive and striking to the student of nature.<sup>18</sup>*

Amongst the Scottish-Gaelic people of Codroy Valley in Newfoundland, it is reported that when a cow was sold the seller had to tell the new owner which songs the cow preferred during milking (refer to Margaret Bennet's *The Last Stronghold* 1989). Since these settlers came from the Broad Cove area of Cape Breton, there is no doubt that this tradition existed there as well.

**Rowing songs** or **lorrams** were sung to keep time while rowing. They also

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>18</sup> Alexander Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica IV*, 64 - 65.

aided the passage of time during the performance of this very difficult labour. The lorrans are sung slower than the Milling songs, since the work was not timed as quickly. Since most of the rowing was done by men, the themes of the songs are fairly masculine.

*The music of the lurrans has always that mixture of grandeur and melancholy that never fails to gain its end. They are sung on board ships and buirlings [old boats similar to those of the Vikings] by sailors, when they row to work, to deceive time. The subject is generally the life and actions of some chief or relation. The language is such as to express the sentiments and actions described; the music, expression, and strokes of the oars, coinciding in such exact time, both the sailor and passenger forget their hardships and fatigue, even in the most inclement seasons.<sup>19</sup>*

## OTHER SONGS

In the Gaelic tradition, just as in most others, there are lullabies, or **Talaidhean**. Songs like "Ba, Ba, Mo Leanabh" are common, although difficult to collect. Many of these songs are about fairies and fairy kidnappings. Others are sung about the child.

Laments and Elegies play an important part in the Gaelic tradition. Many of these songs are concerned with tragic drownings, or the deaths of heroes in battles. The Elegies are sometimes referred to as either **Oran Mor** or **Marbhrann** (Death Verse). They are as descriptive as the deeds and qualities of the subject. One of the most famous Laments in the Scottish tradition is "Mo Run Geal Og," which was composed by a Chisholm woman after her husband was killed at Culloden.

Religion plays an important role in the lives of the Gaels, so naturally hymns were common in the Gaelic tradition. However, until recently, songs sung in Catholic churches would have been in Latin. The most recognized singing in Presbyterian Churches is the Presenting of Psalms. **The Presenting of the Psalms** are an important part of the tradition of Presbyterian Gaels. Just as the psalms are sung in English Presbyterian churches, they are sung at Gaelic services. However, many of these English airs have been Gallicised. The sound is somewhat similar to what Irish *Sean Nos* would sound like if it were sung en masse. The singers sing along a set, but they individualize it as it is repeated. It has a very haunting and beautiful sound.

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<sup>19</sup> Campbell, *Hebridean Folk-songs*, 5.

*Evangelical Calvinism so tyrannized the Presbyterian Highlands that for a time poetry and music came to be limited to the psalms of David which were "lined out" by the precentor, with the congregation repeating the hymn after him phrase by phrase -- a custom dating back to a time when hymn books were scarce and illiteracy was normal.<sup>20</sup>*

## **'SONGS' ASSOCIATED WITH THE INSTRUMENTAL TRADITION**

### **The MacCrimmons and Canntaireachd.**

Often referred to as the 'piper's solfa,' **Canntaireachd** is a form of music used in the instruction of piping. It was invented by the MacCrimmon family to aid instruction in their piping schools on the island of Borerraig. There are actually three different forms of Canntaireachd; however, they all stem from the MacCrimmon system, the other two being the MacArthur and Nether Lorne systems.<sup>21</sup> Canntaireachd is used as a "vehicle for singing the tune not as a score."<sup>22</sup> The following is a brief explanation of Canntaireachd, according to Francis Collinson:

*[Canntaireachd is used to] (1) indicate the pitch of the basic note of the tune. This requires a series of vocables to stand for the nine notes of the bagpipe scale. (2) They indicate grace-notes or groups of grace-notes coming before the theme note. (3) They indicate the piobaireachd figurations of stereotyped chains of grace-notes coming after the theme-note*

*The raw material or 'theme-notes' of the tune as in (1) above are, broadly speaking, indicated by vowel sounds; grace-notes which come before the theme-note as in (2) are indicated by a consonant or consonants before the vowel sound; with the piobaireachd figurations coming after the theme-note as in (3) are expressed by extra syllables coming after the vowel sound.<sup>23</sup>*

Canntaireachd is written down in what appears to be sentences; however, like any foreign 'language,' it appears unintelligible. "*Deedle durroo dittum durree dittum durro ditton durroo etc. ....*"

It is believed that the MacCrimmons withheld certain keys to their canntaireachd system, as well as their piobaireachd technique, so that their secret — their key to supremacy among pipers — would not leave their family.

The final type of Gaelic song is also the most curious sounding. These are the

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<sup>20</sup> *Columbia World Library of Folk and Primitive Music* vol VI.

<sup>21</sup> Francis Collinson, *Hebridean Folk-songs*, 157.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

combination of Gaelic and nonsense words that are sung to the beat of dance music. The Gaelic name for these songs is **Puirt-a-beul**, which means 'music from the mouth,' or simply mouth music. It is theorized that the tunes to which words have been set are among the oldest in the instrumental tradition. Since the playing of bagpipes and fiddles was outlawed by the English, the Gaels placed words to the tunes in order to preserve them. These Puirt-a-beul were then sung for dancing. Some of the words may just as easily predate the tunes. At any rate, the Puirt-a-beul are some of the oldest extant Gaelic songs.

Common Puirt-a-beul's are "Calum Crubach," "Muillean Dudh," and "S Math gu Dannsa," all of which are also fiddle tunes.

## **The Collection of Gaelic Song in Nova Scotia**

There is a substantial tradition of Gaelic Song collection in Nova Scotia. The earliest figures to gather Nova Scotian material were Alexander MacLean Sinclair, the grandson of the Bard MacLean of Barney's River, Jonathan MacKinnon, and the Rt. Rev Mgr. P.J. Nicholson, who edited the works of Malcolm Gillis as well as contributing a weekly column to the *Antigonish Casket*.

Notable collectors, such as John Lorne Campbell, Helen Creighton, C.I.N. Macleod, and John Shaw followed the pioneers. There is still a considerable amount of work being done in this field, although there is much at risk of being lost.

### **ALEXANDER MACLEAN SINCLAIR (1840 - 1923)**

Son of the daughter of the Bard John MacLean, a native of Tiree, Scotland, Alexander MacLean Sinclair was born in Glenbard, Antigonish County. Glenbard, of course, is named for his grandfather. He was a minister, but spent much time and money promoting the indigenous Gaelic culture of Nova Scotia. He published several books, including: *Na Baird Leathanach* (The MacLean Bards), *The Clan Gillean* (MacLean Clan History), *Filidh na Coille* (the Poems of the Bard MacLean), *The Gaelic Bards from 1411 to 1715*, and *The Peoples and Languages of the World*. His books are filled with

Nova Scotian lore, song, and culture. They are amazing pieces of work done for the pure love of Gaelic. Sinclair's work, although extremely valuable contributions to the field, ended up costing him considerable money.

**For further reading:**

- Sinclair, Alexander MacLean. *Na Baird Leathanach*. Charlottetown, P.E.I.: Hazard and Moore, 1898 and 1900 (2 vols)
- , *The Clan Gillean*. Charlottetown, P.E.I.: Hazard and Moore, 1899.
- , *Filidh na Coille*. Charlottetown, P.E.I.: Examiner, 1901.
- , *The Gaelic Bards from 1411 to 1715*. Charlottetown: Hazard and Moore, 1890
- , *The Peoples and Languages of the World*. Charlottetown : Hazard and Moore, 1894

**JONATHAN MACKINNON (1869-1944)**

Born in Whycocamagh, Inverness County, Jonathan MacKinnon began publishing *MacTalla* in 1892 at the age of 23. This newspaper would eventually become the longest running Gaelic newspaper ever. It had a circulation of about 1500; however, the actual readership was far greater because when one subscriber purchased an issue it would then be circulated amongst friends and relatives. When the price of publishing doubled between 1899 and 1900, *MacTalla* began to run at a loss. It ceased to exist in 1904. *MacTalla* contained articles of importance to Nova Scotian Gaels, including both new and old songs so that they could continue to be dispersed throughout the area.

MacKinnon continued to publish in Gaelic, with *Fear na Ceilidh*, between 1928 and 1930. He also translated many popular English works into Gaelic. When John Lorne Campbell visited in 1932, MacKinnon proved to be a valuable source of information and contacts. In fact, there is a song from the singing of Jonathan MacKinnon in Campbell's *Songs Remembered in Exile*.

Copies of *MacTalla* can be found in St. Francis Xavier Special Collections.

**RT. REV PATRICK JOSEPH NICHOLSON (1887 - 65)**

A native of Cape Breton, Fr. Nicholson was educated at St. Francis Xavier and Johns Hopkins Universities. He became a Professor of Physics at St. F.X. and eventually the President of the University. He was a tremendous enthusiast of Gaelic culture,

publishing a column in the *Antigonish Casket* called "Achadh nan Gaidheal," meaning "Field of the Gael." His column contained Gaelic poems and songs, both local and traditional. He also edited *Smeorach nan Cnoc 'S Nan Gleann*, which contains poetry and songs composed in Nova Scotia. Most prominently, this book contains the poems of Malcolm Gillis, who was born and raised in St. Joseph's Parish, South-West Margaree, Inverness County, Cape Breton, and Donald MacPharlane.

Nicholson, Rt. Rev P.J. ed. *Smeorach nan Cnoc 'S nan Gleann*. Glasgow: Alex. MacLaren and Sons, 1939.

### **JOHN LORNE CAMPBELL (1905?? - 1996)**

Known for both his intellect and his commitment to the preservation of Gaelic culture, John Lorne Campbell is one of the most renowned figures in the field. He collected many Gaelic folk-songs throughout the Hebrides, as well as mainland Scotland. Along with his wife, Margaret Fay Shaw, also a well-known folklorist, Campbell came to Canada with the desire to collect in 1932. The goal of this first visit was to test the waters for information. He discovered that Gaelic traditions were exceedingly well kept, although the language was in the process of decline. He conducted an informal survey of the parishes in areas of Gaelic settlement throughout north-eastern Nova Scotia, Cape Breton, and Prince Edward Island. The fact that much of the dialect and culture of areas now depopulated in Scotland was thriving in the Maritimes proved very interesting to him. The presence of a large Barra and South Uist population in the areas of Iona, Grand Narrows, Christmas Island, and Boisdale greatly intrigued him, for it was in these areas of Scotland that he had done most of his work.

Encouraged by the strength and quality of the Nova Scotian Gaelic culture, Campbell and Shaw returned in 1937 equipped with an Ediphone recorder. They wanted to record songs from the Barra and South Uist descendants in order to compare the traditions. They discovered that in some cases the Cape Breton songs were better preserved, while in others it was the reverse. His visits resulted in his book, *Songs Remembered in Exile*, published in 1990. The work contains recollections from his two visits to the province, as well as an historical account of the causes of Hebridean

emigration between 1790 and 1835. Interesting comments on the state of the culture at the time of his visits serve as a valuable resource.

Campbell continued to collect throughout Scotland; however, he retained a love for Cape Breton and Antigonish County and he returned many times. In 1953, he received an honorary LLD from St. Francis Xavier University. Margaret Faye Shaw was given the same honour in 1983. John Lorne Campbell died in 1996.

**For further reading:**

Campbell, John L., Francis Collinson. *Hebridean Folk-songs*. 3 vols. Oxford UP: 1977.

Campbell, John L. "Scottish Gaelic in Canada: An Unofficial Census." *The Scotsman*, 30 January 1933.

----- "Scottish Gaelic in Canada." *American Speech*, vol. XI, April 1936.

----- "A Visit to Cape Breton." *Scots Magazine*. September and October, 1938.

----- "Highland Links with Nova Scotia." *Scots Magazine*, October 1953.

----- "More Notes on Scottish Gaelic Waulking Songs." *Eigse*. IX, 129, 1959.

----- *Songs Remembered in Exile*. Aberdeen: Aberdeen UP, 1990.

Shaw, Margaret Fay. *Folk-songs and Folklore of South Uist*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1955

All of these titles are available at St. F.X.

**HELEN CREIGHTON**

As mentioned previously, Helen Creighton also collected Gaelic songs. Although she went to Cape Breton in search of English songs, she could not avoid collecting at least some material from the Gaelic people. As far as English songs went, Cape Breton had relatively few; Gaelic songs, however, were plentiful. Altogether she recorded about ninety-five songs from Gaelic speakers, many of which appear in her work, *Gaelic Songs in Nova Scotia*. This book was translated and edited by C.I.N. MacLeod, then Chair of Celtic Studies at St. Francis Xavier University. The unpublished songs are held at P.A.N.S. and at the National Museum in Ottawa.

There is an interesting variety of songs in the collection, although they are mostly Milling songs. The collection does contain some songs composed in Cape Breton.

Creighton mentions that she did not aggressively continue to collect Gaelic songs, since they were in the least danger of disappearing.

**For further reading:**

Creighton, Helen and C.I.N. MacLeod. *Gaelic Songs in Nova Scotia*. Ottawa, 1964.

**CALUM IAIN N. (MAJOR) MACLEOD**

Born in Dornie, Kintail, Ross-shire, Scotland on March 12, 1913, Calum MacLeod was educated in Celtic Studies at the University of Edinburgh. A poet, piper, and dancer, MacLeod adjudicated at the major Mods in Scotland. He also composed pipe tunes. A member of the British Army Intelligence Corps, MacLeod reached the level of Major before being released in 1947. Pursuing a zeal for Gaelic language and culture, MacLeod became Associate Professor in the St. Francis Xavier Department of Celtic Studies in 1958. Possessing a great wit, MacLeod was quite popular among his students.

While living in Nova Scotia, MacLeod published several works, many of which were concerned with traditional songs in the province. The most well-known of these works is *Gaelic Songs in Nova Scotia* (1964), which consists of songs from Helen Creighton's collection. Not a Gaelic speaker herself, Creighton needed an educated Gaelic man with knowledge of the tradition. MacLeod fitted the role quite well.

MacLeod died in 1978, still actively teaching at St. F.X. and residing in Antigonish.

**For further reading:**

MacLeod, C.I.N. "The Gaelic Tradition in Nova Scotia." *Lochlan* I, 235.  
---- and Helen Creighton. *Gaelic Songs in Nova Scotia*. Ottawa, 1964.  
---- *Bardachd a Albainn Nuaidh*. Glasgow, 1970.

**SISTER MARGARET MACDONELL**

Born in Judique, Inverness County, Sister MacDonell grew up in a large Gaelic family. She was educated at Harvard in their renowned Celtic Studies Department. Former Chair of the Department of Celtic Studies at St. Francis Xavier University, she played an important role in the preservation of Gaelic culture throughout North America. Her doctoral thesis on the songs of Highland emigrants to North America was published in 1982 under the title *The Emigrant Experience*. The book contains vital information

about the song tradition in Gaelic North America, as well as about the Bards who composed the pieces. It is accompanied by the airs for the tunes. This book is currently out of print; there are hopes that it will be reissued.

**For further reading:**

MacDonell, Sister Margaret. *The Emigrant Experience: Songs from the Highland Emigrants in North America*. Toronto, 1982.

**DONALD FERGUSON**

Donald Ferguson has published two books, *From Furthest Hebrides* (1978) and *Beyond the Hebrides*. Both of these works deal with Gaelic songs collected in Nova Scotia, as well as those from virtually anywhere Gaels established themselves, including Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and other parts of Canada.

**For further reading:**

Ferguson, Donald. *Beyond the Hebrides*. Toronto: MacMillan of Canada.

Ferguson, Donald. *From Furthest Hebrides*. Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1978.

**JOHN SHAW**

Educated at Harvard, John Shaw is a native of the United States. At a young age he moved to the community of Glendale, Inverness County, where he began to learn the Gaelic language from Fr. John Angus Rankin. Dr. Shaw already had a solid grounding in the culture and traditions of Cape Breton Island when he completed his doctoral studies at Harvard. He edited and transcribed *Tales Until Dawn*, the stories of the late Joe Neil MacNeil. This work is among the most important contributions to Cape Breton Gaelic culture.

Between 1977 and 1982, Dr. Shaw conducted the "Cape Breton Gaelic Language and Folklore Project," another important contribution to the field. This collection contains over nine hundred different songs, as well as multiple variants (see **Major Repositories of Gaelic Music**, pages 50 - 52). He also played a vital role in the formation of 'An Co-Chumann Ceap Gael.'

Dr. Shaw is currently a lecturer in the Department of Celtic Studies at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. His presence in Cape Breton is greatly missed.

## **KEN NILSEN**

Following in the tradition of previous Chairs of St. Francis Xavier's Department of Celtic Studies, Dr. Ken Nilsen has collected much Gaelic material from the residents of Antigonish County and Cape Breton. In his collection he has video and audio tapes, as well as documented interviews with such notable tradition-bearers as Danny Cameron of Beaver Meadow, Neil MacLean of Boston, and Donald John MacDermaid of Framboise. Dr. Nilsen also collected from the Irish-Gaelic speakers in north-eastern United States. Educated at Harvard, Nilsen has a strong knowledge of the traditions of all the Gaelic peoples, as well as their Celtic compatriots in Brittany and Wales.

## **Major Repositories of Gaelic Music in Nova Scotia**

### **ST. FRANCIS XAVIER UNIVERSITY**

The collection of Gaelic music at St. F.X. is made up of two major groupings of collections. The largest is the "Cape Breton Gaelic Language and Folklore Project," which was collected by John Shaw between 1977 and 1982. It is catalogued and available to be heard at the university. It consists of approximately two thousand items, of which more than half are songs. There are about nine hundred different songs, as well as multiple variants.

The second part of the St. F.X. collection is made up of smaller ansular collections from independent collectors such as John Shaw, Rosemary MacCormack, and Ron Caplan. These collections contain language and songs, as well as other forms of folklore.

St. F.X. Special Collection also contains many texts of printed Gaelic music and songs. This collection is the largest repository of Gaelic books in North America, many of which are concerned with the instrumental music and song of the Gaels of Nova Scotia.

For more information contact Dr. Kenneth Nilsen, Chair of Celtic Studies at (902) 867-2116. Information is also available via the Internet.

## **THE BEATON INSTITUTE**

The Beaton Institute began in 1957 with the work of then Xavier College Librarian, Sister Margaret Beaton. She collected a tremendous amount of information dealing with Gaelic Cape Breton language and culture. Tragically, Sister Beaton died in an accident in 1975, soon after which the collection formally took her name. There is a great deal of information pertaining to the Gaelic music traditions of the island, most of which is reflected in the over one-thousand piece audio collection. This collection contains both song and instrumental music, the highlights being the work of Winston 'Scotty' Fitzgerald and Angus Chisholm, both great fiddlers of their day. There are also small collections of various past and contemporary musicians. The manuscript collection contains material from Gordon F. MacQuarrie, Jonathan G. MacKinnon, Malcolm Beaton, John C. O'Donnell, and Winston Fitzgerald. This library is a tremendous repository of Gaelic music, especially with its concentration of Cape Breton material.

### ***AM BRAIGHE***

*Am Braighe* is a quarterly newspaper primarily dedicated to the Gaelic culture of Cape Breton Island. Published out of Mabou, Cape Breton, by Co-chomuinn An Crann Co-operative, *Am Braighe* contains many articles pertaining to the song and instrumental tradition of Gaelic Nova Scotia. Gaelic editor, Jim Watson, is a recognized expert in the Milling song tradition of Cape Breton and virtually every issue contains valuable information in this area. Every issue contains John Donald Cameron's "Tunes" column, which provides musical notation as well as historical information associated with featured compositions. Numerous interviews with local musicians and tradition-bearers make this newspaper a valuable resource.

The *Am Braighe* office in Mabou also has numerous videos and audio tapes that can be viewed and heard on site. These tapes document various lectures staged by the editor, Frances MacEachen. They also have current releases and books with relevance to Gaelic music worldwide.

### ***CELTIC HERITAGE***

Published in Halifax, *Celtic Heritage*, formerly *The Clansman*, contains numerous

articles pertaining to Celtic music. A quarterly magazine, *Celtic Heritage* contains the usual columns on the subject of piping, by Scott Williams, as well as musical reviews and other information pertaining to the musical culture of the province.

### **CAPE BRETON'S MAGAZINE**

Celebrating its twentieth year of publication in 1997, *Cape Breton's Magazine* contains many articles and interviews pertaining to the Gaelic musical culture of Nova Scotia. It features musical information regarding every aspect of the tradition, much of which comes from the personal collection of editor, Ron Caplan. Caplan has done a considerable amount of collecting in the area, which has proven to be an invaluable resource in the field of music. *Cape Breton's Magazine/Breton Books* have issued commercial recordings of fiddler such as Mike MacDougall, Winston Fitzgerald, and Johnny Wilmot. Soon to be released is a collection of tunes played by Alex Francis MacKay of Kingsville.

## **The Gaelic Instrumental Music of Nova Scotia**

Following the Highlands Clearances, a marked change occurred in the music of Scotland. The influence of classical music and the result of mass burnings of fiddles and bagpipes altered the Scottish-Gaelic musical idiom. According to tradition, Scottish-Gaelic music used scales that were directly linked to the Highland bagpipes. These 'gapped' scales omit certain notes, with the spacing of the tones differing slightly from the piano scale. In Scotland, the piano accordion replaced the fiddle and bagpipes as the dance-music instrument of choice. Since it uses the piano scale, the music changed to suit the instrument. The influence of classical music, best represented by the music and ideals of J. Scott Skinner, not only adapted the piano scale, but also moved away from the traditional ornamentation of Gaelic fiddling. This ornamentation includes the use of 'cuts,' drones, and other bowing techniques that were also adopted from the playing of the bagpipes, as well as characteristics of the Gaelic language; for instance, the existence of 'hiatus' in the pronunciation of certain Gaelic words.

For an excellent description of the technical and historical aspects of Scottish-Gaelic fiddling, best represented in the music of Cape Breton Island, refer to Kate Dunlay and David Greenberg's *Traditional Celtic Violin Music of Cape Breton*.

The Gaelic style was brought to the province by settlers coming from the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. They came during the period that is commonly referred to as 'The Golden Age' of the Scottish fiddle. This era reached its height at the end of the eighteenth century. The major publications of tunes from this era were collected and published by 1817. By the time the English proscription on certain aspects of Gaelic culture was lifted, a trend had already taken hold that permanently changed the style of music in that country. For reasons such as isolation, both geographical and cultural, the style of fiddle music in north-eastern Nova Scotia and Cape Breton Island maintained the Gaelic characteristics of the 'Golden Age.' Possessing the freedom to cultivate their heritage, the traditional style of fiddling in Cape Breton flourished.

Purveyors of the Scottish-Gaelic tradition in Nova Scotia possessed certain skills that also contributed to the survival of their older style of playing. They learned to play by ear, so that the music maintains the Gaelic 'blas' or flavour. In order to properly interpret a tune in this tradition, one must first understand the musical language, such as the instinctive use of gapped scales. Another value of this tradition is 'correctness,' or the strict adherence to either the written note or the aural setting of the tune. Unlike Irish fiddling, there is no principle of improvisation. Fiddlers may, however, apply the use of grace notes and bowing techniques that can provide room for individuality. This emphasis on correctness means there is little variance in the settings of tunes in the Cape Breton fiddling tradition.

With the introduction of many of the older manuscripts from the 'Golden Age,' as well as collections from the Irish-Gaelic tradition, the repertoire has exploded. Many players devote large amounts of time to searching out tunes that fit into the tradition. Other fiddlers compose; their tunes maintain the Gaelic aspects of the music, although they can never be free of outside influence.

The Gaelic music tradition in Nova Scotia, which is commonly referred to as 'Cape Breton music,' is one of the greatest fiddling traditions in the world. It stands on equal footing with Irish fiddling as possibly the greatest of all fiddling traditions in terms of core repertoire and vitality. Many deem the Cape Breton tradition to be the authentic music of Scotland. Many Scottish musicians are now flocking to Nova Scotia to learn how to play their own music.

Strathspeys are the most unique type of tune in the Cape Breton repertoire. These tunes originate from the Spey Valley of Scotland. Legend has it that James MacPherson played the first ever strathspey just before he was hanged. After playing this melody, called 'MacPherson's Rant/Farewell Lament,' the condemned fiddler smashed his instrument to pieces. In any case, these tunes became very popular in the Highlands and Islands, where they were played on both bagpipes and fiddle for dancing. However, when the nature of music changed in Scotland, the British military use of pipe bands required that strathspeys be slowed down for marching. Being a less traditional and percussive style of dancing, highland dancing did not require the quick rhythms of the traditional-style strathspey. The result was the development of a marked difference between the playing of strathspeys in Scotland and Cape Breton.

The most individualistic traits of strathspeys is their use of eighth notes and the short-long note pairings called the 'Scotch Snap.' The beat of strathspeys is quite accented, but they are played at a slower tempo than reels. Common strathspeys in the Cape Breton Tradition include "King George IV," "MacKinnon's Brook," "Cawdor Fair," "Christie Campbell," "Bog a'Lochain," "Tulloch Gorm," and "The Duke of Gordon's Birthday" (For a more in-depth explanation, refer to pages 13 -14 of Dunlay and Greenberg's, *Traditional Celtic Violin Music of Cape Breton*.)

Reels are characterised by their 4/4 time and their upbeat tempo, which is quicker than that of strathspeys. Common Cape Breton reels include "Muilean Dubh," "King George the IV," "West Mabou," "Pigeon on the Gate," "The Old Time Wedding Reels," and "The Red Shoes."

Jigs are played in 6/8 time. Although they are a relative newcomer to the Gaelic tradition, they comprise an important part of the Cape Breton tradition. There are relatively few jigs in the old Scottish collections, so a great number of jigs were composed by Cape Bretoners. Other jigs were borrowed from the Irish tradition, where jigs are played in a similar style. Common jigs include "Cha Dean Mi'n Obair," "The Hills of Glenorchy," "The Whiskey Jig," and "The Swallow's Tail."

Other types of tunes in the Cape Breton tradition include Marches, Lament/Airs, Hornpipes (similar to Reels), and the occasional Waltz to break up a dance.

## **Regional Styles**

There is a distinct sound to Cape Breton fiddling as a whole. But for reasons such as settlement patterns, places of origin, and isolation from other Cape Breton communities, regional styles exist within the larger tradition. These traditions have slightly different settings and 'blas' to their sound. The most commonly mentioned regional style is the Mabou Coal Mines style. Players from this tradition play a lush Gaelic style of fiddling that many believe has the greatest communion with the fiddling of the 'Golden Age.' However, there are several other equally brilliant styles, each conveying the spirit of their respective communities. From the clenched-fist drive of the 'Braigh na h-Aibhne' fiddlers (Glendale, Queensville, and Kingsville) to the sweet tone of the Margaree players, the existence of regional styles provide a wonderful, yet subtle, variety in this living tradition.

Among the other regional styles are the Mabou, Judique, Iona, and the Northside Scottish. Although styles can be generalized, each fiddler puts his or her own personality into their playing.

## **Accompaniment**

For the purpose of accompaniment, the instrument of choice in Nova Scotia's Scottish-Gaelic tradition is the piano. Up until quite recently, the use of the piano within the tradition was relatively limited; however, it has risen quickly in significance. Earlier players used a simpler, more basic style of chording. However, with each successive generation, the piano accompaniment has developed into a uniquely Cape Breton-style that incorporates aspects of the main fiddle melody and the rhythm of the dance style. A good accompanist will help the fiddler maintain a consistent pace, while injecting life into the key musician when he or she begins to tire. Influential musicians in the development of this style of playing include Elizabeth Beaton, Maybelle Chisholm, John Morris Rankin, Joey Beaton, Howie MacDonald and, most recently, Jackie Dunn.

After the piano, the next most important instrument is the guitar, which has been increasingly popular since the 1930s. The primary exponent of the guitar in the tradition is David MacIsaac, while newcomers like J.P. Cormier and Gordie Sampson have gained recognition in recent years.

Other forms of accompaniment include dance steps, the spoons, and knitting needles, which are tapped to the beat of the music. Most critical to the Cape Breton fiddler is the accompaniment that they supply themselves — the tapping of their feet. According to Alistair MacGillivray, Coal Mines Fiddler, Mary MacDonald (Mairi Alaisdair Raognail), devised a way to accompany herself by wedging three keys down on a pump organ, using toothpicks. She would pump the pedals in order to provide droning.

## **Scottish Gaelic Fiddling on the Mainland**

Just as the Gaelic language was once spoken throughout north-eastern Nova Scotia, the Scottish-Gaelic Fiddle style was once commonly played throughout the area. These areas also had regional styles with a similar sound to the current music of Cape Breton.

For instance, in the Antigonish area polkas were commonly played for square sets. Polkas, not part of the traditional Gaelic repertoire, are quite rare to find within the tradition. However, Hugh A. MacDonald composed a series of polkas that are commonly referred to as "The Antigonish Polkas." These polkas have a distinctly Gaelic feel, despite their non-Gaelic origins. MacDonald, himself, was dubbed 'The Polka King' by contemporaries such as Colin J. Boyd. Besides Boyd, other popular names amongst mainland fiddlers include Wilfred Gillis, Stan Chapman, and James Burns Barry. There are currently a number of younger Antigonish fiddlers who play a predominantly Cape Breton style; however, they are actively trying to maintain and recover as much of the Antigonish sound as possible. For a prime example of this, listen to Kendra MacGillivray's new C.D., "Clear the Track," which is devoted to much of the repertoire of her grandfather, Hugh A. MacDonald.

For biographies of some well-known Antigonish fiddlers see Alistair MacGillivray's *The Cape Breton Fiddler*.

Just as in other Maritime areas where Scottish-Gaelic fiddling was predominant, mainland fiddling suffered an influx of influence from non-traditional sources. Fiddlers such as Don Messer, as well as styles coming from the United States via the radio, seem to have emphatically changed the sound of Pictou County fiddling, which has lost most traces of its Gaelic heritage. The encroachment of these foreign influences is clearly shown in an unpublished manuscript of fiddle tunes by James Burns Barry.

### **JAMES BURNS BARRY**

Born in 1819 at Six Mile Brook, Pictou County, James Burns Barry was a popular local fiddler in his day. He was also a miller, who printed and bound books on the side. Two manuscripts from the hand of Mr. Barry were donated to McCulloch House — a Nova Scotia Museum site — by Mrs. Freda Munroe of Salt Springs. These manuscripts, along with Mr. Barry's diaries, provide an interesting case study of a tradition in flux. One interesting point is that Barrie's era was pre-radio, so his influences were most likely coming from sources such as sheet music and travelling musicians.

The first of Barry's manuscripts is a collection of twenty-three self-composed fiddle tunes. They include strathspeys, jigs, reels, a clog, and a lament. One tune, "Black Jock," is played throughout in the seventh position, which is entirely at variance with tradition.

The second collection contains 2,248 tunes. Including Barry's self-penned tunes from the first collection and at least two other original pieces. Tunes from the hand of Finlay MacIntyre of Truro and Colin MacKenzie of Roger's Hill, as well as settings taken down by Barry from their playing, are also included in this collection. In addition to these new compositions, there are about two thousand tunes learned from popular collections. A few of these tunes were 'improved' by Barry, MacKenzie, and MacIntyre.

The remainder of the tunes in this collection come from a wide sphere of influence. Amongst these are Marches from Bach and Handel, Waltzes, Quadrilles, Gallops, a Mazurka, Quicksteps, Polkas, as well as folk pieces from Switzerland, France, and Italy. The subject of how Barry acquired these tunes would be an interesting subject for future research.

In addition to tunes, Barry gives small pieces of information such as suggested set orders, dates of compositions, as well as a key to his notation.

The Public Archives of Nova Scotia have, in addition to a microfilm copy of the manuscript, a microfilm copy of Barry's diary. This document provides interesting information about the life of a traditional musician and the role that music played in his life.

As mentioned previously, Barry took down tunes from the repertoire of Colin MacKenzie of Roger's Hill, Pictou County. P.A.N.S. has a microfilm copy of a manuscript of the tunes from MacKenzie's repertoire, whom Barry describes as "a good old Niel Gow player of Strathspeys and Reels ... he played by ear wholly."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Colin MacKenzie Notebook, PANS microfilm reel 10881.

**For further reading:**

P.A.N.S. Biography - James Burns Barry

P.A.N.S. Biography - Colin MacKenzie

Langille, Fulton D. "Six Mile Brook Shelters Shrine." *The Chronicle-Herald*. Halifax, N.S., October 7, 1965.

## **The Collection of Instrumental Gaelic Music in Nova Scotia**

There are two main branches in the Nova Scotian tradition of the collection of Gaelic instrumental music. The first is the collection of traditional tunes — the greatest number of which have been carried through tradition since the pre-immigration era — and the collection of tunes composed by local musicians, most of which have been composed since 1900.

### **KATE DUNLAY**

Most of the work in the first section of the collecting tradition has been done by Kate Dunlay, although Gordon MacQuarrie's *Cape Breton Collection* also gives local settings of traditional tunes commonly played within the tradition. In 1985, Dunlay published *Traditional Celtic Fiddle Music of Cape Breton*, the result of field work in the Cape Breton area. It contains tunes that are part of the core repertoire of the tradition; however, many of the tunes are not contained in the major Scottish Collections. This leads to the assumption that many of these tunes were composed in Cape Breton. Of the older Scottish tunes, many in Dunlay's collection are arranged in traditional Cape Breton settings.

In 1996, the bulk of this collection was reissued by Dunlay, and David Greenberg, as *The Violin Music of Cape Breton*. This work combines the notation of the melodies with historical information such as the original collections, recording details, and any idiosyncrasies. It is the most authoritative work on the subject of Cape Breton fiddle music to date, since it provides historical and technical information about the tradition.

Kate Dunlay was trained in Folklore and Ethnomusicology at the

University of Indiana, which has produced some of the most influential folklorists of our time. Greenberg is a Baroque violinist, who also plays the fiddle in the Cape Breton style.

**For further reading:**

- Dunlay, Kathleen E. "A Cape Breton Primer; Canada's Old World Music." *Sing Out!*, volume 34, number 4, Fall 1989.
- Dunlay, Kathleen E. "The Playing of Traditional Scottish Dance Music: Old and New World Styles and Practices." *Celtic Languages and Celtic Peoples: Proceedings of the Second North American Congress of Celtic Studies*. Ed. Ceril Byrne, Margaret Harry, Padraig O Siadhal. Halifax, N.S.: D'Arcy McGee Chair of Irish Studies, St. Mary's University, 1992. 173 - 191.
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- Dunlay, Kathleen E. and David Greenberg. *Traditional Celtic Violin Music of Cape Breton*. Toronto: DunGreen Music, 1996.

Being a living tradition, the repertoire of Cape Breton fiddle music is constantly expanding. The Cape Breton tradition is largely literate, which places a strong emphasis on correctness; many of the tunes that are added daily come from the great collections of Scottish music like the Skye Collection, the Simon Fraser Collection, the works of the Gows, William Marshall, as well as from Irish works such as Ryan's Mammoth Collection (a.k.a. 1000 Fiddle Tunes) and O'Neill's Music of Ireland. However, the Cape Breton tradition is incredibly creative, with almost every fiddler trying his or her hand at composing. Many of the best newly composed tunes have entered the tradition. There are also many published collections from prominent tunesmiths.

**GORDON MACQUARRIE**

Gordon MacQuarrie's *The Cape Breton Collection of Scottish Melodies for the Violin* was published in 1940. This work contains tunes composed by Cape Breton musicians of his era, such as Dan R. MacDonald, Dan Hughie MacEachern, Vincent MacLellan, Sandy MacLean, as well as himself. This collection is the first to be done exclusively in relation to the Cape Breton tradition. Many pieces from this publication have entered

the tradition and are, for all intents and purposes, 'traditional.' As mentioned previously, this collection also includes traditional tunes in Cape Breton settings.

### **DAN R. MACDONALD (1911 - 1976)/JOHN DONALD CAMERON**

Dan Rory MacDonald was born in Judique in 1911. Amidst all the different fiddlers and composers, it is possible that he had the greatest impact on the expansion of the traditional repertoire. A genius when it came to composing tunes in the traditional idiom, he is said to have created over two thousand pieces. There is not a fiddler in Cape Breton who doesn't play at least one of his tunes. Many of his tunes have spread throughout Canada, the U.S., and Ireland. While serving overseas in the Canadian Army, Dan R. purchased copies of many of the great Scottish collections of fiddle tunes. Many of these collections were made during the 'Golden Age of Scottish Music.' MacDonald sent his collections to his first cousin, Alec Francis MacKay of Glendale, who is still one of the most prominent fiddlers in the province. Many of these collections were never before seen in Nova Scotia; tunes from them were disseminated throughout Cape Breton. It cannot be judged just how many tunes were brought into the repertoire via Dan R.; however, his impact has been without equal.

The first published collection to contain one of Dan R. MacDonald's tunes was Gordon MacQuarrie's *Cape Breton Collection of Scottish Melodies for the Violin*. Among the tunes in this work is the first piece that Dan R. ever made, the 'Red Shoes.' MacDonald died in 1976; some his tunes have since been collected and published by his nephew, John Donald Cameron, also of Judique. These compilations are entitled *The Heather Hill Collection* (1985) and *The Trip to Windsor Collection* (1994). The first collection is currently out of print, but there are hopes that it will soon be reissued. An even greater number of 'Dan R. Tunes' are entering the tradition through the use of these publications.

### **DAN HUGHIE MACEACHERN (1914 - 1996) /MARGIE DUNN**

Another of the most influential composers of tunes in the traditional style is the late Dan Hughie MacEachern. He composed a large number of tunes, many of which have become part of the repertoire of Cape Breton fiddlers. Like Dan R. MacDonald, hardly

a fiddler in the tradition doesn't play at least one of his tunes. Among his most famous compositions are "Trip to Mabou Ridge March," "The Kennedy Street March," "My Friend Buddy Jig," and "The Snowplough Reel."

The tunes of Dan Hughie have been collected and published by MacEachern, himself, and his niece, Margie Dunn, of Lower South River. They have been published in two editions: *MacEachern's Collection of Cape Breton Scottish Music for the Violin* (1975) and *MacEachern's Collection Volume II* (1993). Since the publication of these collections, many more of Dan Hughie's tunes have entered the core repertoire of the tradition.

### **DONALD ANGUS BEATON (1912 - 1982)/KINNON BEATON**

Another of Cape Breton Island's most gifted composers of fiddle tunes is the late Donald Angus Beaton of Mabou. One of the most renowned dance fiddlers of his time, Donald Angus began to compose tunes at the age of twenty-three. Many of his tunes, such as "Beaton's Delight Strathspeys and Reel," "Angus Ronald Beaton's Strathspey," "Memories of Paddy LeBlanc March," "The Mabou Jig," and "Ann MacQuarrie's Reel," are commonly heard throughout Cape Breton.

The tunes of Dan Angus Beaton were published by his son, Kinnon Beaton, himself a composer and one of the best dance fiddlers in Cape Breton. The work, *Donald Angus Beaton's Cape Breton Scottish Violin Music*, is currently out of print; however, like *The Heather Hill Collection*, there are hopes that it will soon be reprinted.

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### **KINNON AND JOSEPH BEATON**

The sons of the late Donald Angus Beaton, Kinnon and Joey inherited the gift of composition from their father. Both have published collections of tunes; Joey's *Mabou Music* and Kinnon's *Beaton's Collection* contain some of the best new compositions in the Cape Breton tradition. Tunes such as "Kay Gerrior" and "Gerhard Heintzman's

Piano" are from the hand of Joey, while tunes like "Joan Beaton's Reel" and "John Angus Beaton's Strathspey," have been composed by Kinnon.

**For further reading:**

Beaton, Joseph. *Mabou Music*. Antigonish: Casket Printing and Publishing, 1980  
Beaton, Kinnon. *Beaton's Collection of Cape Breton Scottish Violin Music*. Port  
Hawkesbury, N.S.: Kinnon Beaton, 1984.

**PAUL CRANFORD (1953 - )**

In recent years, there have been very few people as active in the publication of traditional and recently composed fiddle tunes as Paul Stewart Cranford. Originally from Ontario, Cranford moved to Nova Scotia in the 1970s and quickly fell in love with all aspects of the fiddle music of Cape Breton Island. In recent years he has begun to edit and to reissue the old Scottish Collections of fiddle tunes, such as the *Skye Collection* and *The Simon Fraser Collection*. He has also been publishing a series of tunes from the repertoires of prominent player/composers. The first two editions feature the music of Jerry Holland and Brenda Stubbert. These collections contain original melodies as well as traditional favourites associated with the featured musician.

A lighthouse keeper, Cranford is himself also a fiddler/composer. He has recently released a volume of his own tunes, *The Lighthouse Collection*.

For more information about Cranford Publications, contact Paul Cranford at:

Box 42 Little River, via RR#1 Englishtown  
Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia  
B0C 1H0  
(902) 929-2811 (phone), (902) 929-2794 (fax)

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- . "Cape Breton." *Canadian Folk Music Bulletin*, vol. 19, number 3, September 1985.
  - . "From Mike MacDougall's Tape for Fr. Hector." *Cape Breton's Magazine*, number 38, 1985.
  - . "From Cape Breton Fiddlers on Early LP's." *Cape Breton's Magazine*, number 41, 1986.

- . *Jerry Holland's Collection of Fiddle Tunes, 2nd edition.* Cape Breton, N.S.: Cranford Publications, 1992.
- . *The Lighthouse Collection.* Cape Breton: Cranford Publications, 1996.
- Fraser, Simon. *The Airs and Melodies Peculiar to the Highlands of Scotland and the Isles.* Edinburgh and London: John Gow, 1816. Inverness, Scotland: 1874 (with corrections and additions by Angus Fraser). Sydney, Nova Scotia: Paul Stewart Cranford, 1982.
- MacDonald, Keith Norman. *The Skye Collection of Best Reels and Strathspeys.* Edinburgh, 1897. Sydney, N.S.: Paul S. Cranford, 1980.

Also from Cranford Publications:

*The Alexander Walker Collection*  
*J. Scott Skinner, Scottish Violinist.*

There are also collections of original compositions by the following composers:

- Briand, Elmer. *Fiddles Tunes.* The Author.
- Farrell, Mike. *Cape Breton Medleys. Scottish Violin Music by Jimmie MacLellan.* Westport, Ontario: The Wordsmith, 1992.
- MacDonald Dougie. *Fiddle Tunes.* Cape Breton, N.S., 1993.
- Whitcomb, Ed. *Canadian Fiddle Music, Volume 1.* Ottawa: Ed Whitcomb, 1990.  
 (Contains Biographies, Tunes and Basic Information about Cape Breton Fiddlers and the general tradition)

See also the *Newsletter of the Cape Breton Fiddlers Association* and *Cape Breton's Magazine.*

## **Other Works on the Fiddle Music of Nova Scotia Gaels**

There have been several other important works written on the subject of Cape Breton fiddle music. They deal with a variety of subjects, such as the relationship between the music and the Gaelic language, technical and historical details, and biographies of important Cape Breton Fiddlers. The following authors have made significant contributions to this field of study.

### **ALISTAIR MACGILLIVRAY**

As mentioned previously, Alistair MacGillivray is an important figure in the Gaelic tradition, as well as English one. His work, *The Cape Breton Fiddler* (1981), is one of

the most significant historical works on the subject. It consists of a brief description of the music, both historical and technical, and the biographies of over ninety fiddlers. In addition to the biographies, MacGillivray offers a directory of over five hundred fiddlers, both past and present.

The biographies were culled from interviews with the fiddlers themselves or those who know them. There is a lot of trivia, such as the first tune Buddy MacMaster learned to play. Traditional tunes and newly composed ones are intermixed with the sketches wherever relevant.

MacGillivray also published *A Cape Breton Ceilidh* (1988), which deals with the accompanists, dancers, and other prominent figures in the tradition. This work serves to fill in the gaps left by his previous book. It provides an interesting glimpse at the festivities of a Cape Breton summer.

### **JACKIE DUNN**

While studying music at St. Francis Xavier, Jackie Dunn embarked on an interesting topic for her Senior Thesis — the relationship between Cape Breton fiddle music and the Gaelic language. Following a hypothesis that the diction and idiosyncrasies of the Gaelic language had found their way into the modern interpretation of Cape Breton fiddle music, Dunn carried out a series of experiments using sound equipment, fiddle tunes, and *Puirt-a-beul*. She also included a historical survey of the tradition. The result was her unpublished thesis, “*Tha Blas na Gaidhlig air a h-uile Fidhler*,” or “every fiddler has the Gaelic flavour.” Her work provides the Gaelic words that accompany many fiddle tunes and has been used as a reference by Kate Dunlay and David Greenberg.

#### **For further reading:**

Dunn, Jacqueline Ann. “*Tha Blas na Gaidhlig air a h-uile Fidhler*.” Senior Essay, St. F.X.U., Antigonish, Nova Scotia, 1991.

### **IAN MACKINNON**

Ian MacKinnon, piper with the popular band, Rawlins Cross, completed a Masters thesis at the Memorial University of Newfoundland, “*Fiddling to Fortune: The Role of Commercial Recordings Made by Cape Breton Fiddlers in the Fiddle Music Tradition*”

of Cape Breton Island." Part of this work is a catalogue of all the tunes and albums recorded up until 1989. It is unpublished, but can be seen at the MUN archives.

**For further reading:**

MacKinnon, Ian Francis. "Fiddling to Fortune: The Role of Commercial Recordings Made by Cape Breton Fiddlers in the Fiddle Music Tradition of Cape Breton Island." M.A. Thesis, MUN, St. John's 1989.

As an additional note, **Liz Doherty**, an Irish fiddler from the Donegal region, did her doctoral thesis on the subject of Cape Breton Fiddle Music. She currently teaches at The University College Cork, County Cork Ireland.

## **Authorities on the Cape Breton Tradition**

There are also several notable figures who are known to be quite knowledgeable on the subject of Cape Breton Fiddle Music. Any in-depth research project could not be accomplished without consulting them about repertoire, history, and technique. They include David MacIsaac (repertoire and technique), Buddy MacMaster (repertoire and technique), Paul M. MacDonald (repertoire), John Donald Cameron (history and repertoire), Sheldon MacInnis (history), and Dr. John Shaw (history and the Gaelic language).

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- MacInnis, Frank. "Dan Hughie MacEachern." *Scotia Sun*. Port Hawkesbury, Feb. 21, 1973.
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- MacKenzie, Archibald J. *The History of Christmas Island Parish*. 1926.
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- "Fiddling has Long History in N.S." *Dartmouth Free Press*. June 18, 1975, p. 9.
- "Johnny Mooring [Champion Fiddler] Dies From Brutal Attack." *Springhill Record*. Springhill, N.S. April 2, 1974, p.1.
- "Mairi Alisdair Ruaidh: A Rich Tradition Preserved." *The Cape Breton Highlander*. Sydney, N.S. 11 March 1976, p. 10.
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- "88-year-old Bible Hill Man Violin-Maker in Spare Time." *Chronicle-Herald*. June 27, 1962, p. 26.

## **The Highland Bagpipes**

The bagpipe is an instrument played in various cultures throughout the world. There are indigenous variations of this instrument in most European countries, but the most recognizable, of all these is the Great Highland Bagpipes. Called the Warpipes by the Irish, the Highland Bagpipes were considered a weapon of war and were banned post-Culloden. In time the British recognized the benefits of the bagpipes, for a large portion of their armies were made up of Highland regiments. Highlanders, in fact, played critical roles in British victories at the Plains of Abraham, Assaye, and Waterloo, as well as in most British campaigns since 1746. In order to tap this strength, the military adopted the pipes as a marching instrument. This change in use from dancing to marching brought about a change in the style. The military style was technically strict and used different ornamentation than the traditional dance style. Out of the military style developed the pipe band tradition that is most often associated with piping. When the Gaelic speaking Highlanders and Islanders came to Nova Scotia, they brought with them the traditional style of playing. Many Cape Breton fiddlers learned and shared repertoire with these traditional pipers. For instance, the Bard Malcolm Gillis was both a fiddler and a piper, while famed dance player, Donald Angus Beaton, often played

with pipers, from whom he learned much of his repertoire. The military style became dominant in Scotland and eventually replaced the traditional style entirely. The popularity of the military style found its way to Nova Scotia, where it is currently much more common than the traditional dance style. In fact, very few players in the province still play in the old style.

There are two broad categories of Highland Bagpipe music, *Ceol Mor*, or *Piobaireachd*, and *Ceol Beag*. *Ceol Mor* - in English, 'big or great music' - was developed by the most famous of all hereditary piping families, the MacCrimmons. According to Francis Collinson,

*The most important event of the sixteenth century in the history of the Highland Bagpipe was the appearance on the scene of the MacCrimmons, for they changed the whole face of the art of piping ... They raised the status of the pipes from that of a rustic instrument mostly used for the playing of short airs and dance tunes, to one possessing its own extended art-form, that of piobaireachd.*<sup>25</sup>

The MacCrimmons were the hereditary pipers to the Clan MacLeod, whose stronghold was at Dunvegan, Isle of Skye. There are various versions of the origin of the clan. The true answer remained clouded by the mystique that the family surrounded themselves with and by the fact that their version of their ancestry, which was contained in Captain Neil Macleod's *The History of the MacCrimmons and the Great Pipe* (1826), was suppressed by the clergy.

The first tradition is that members of the family left their homes in southern Harris for Northern Ireland in the twelfth century. A descendent of these Irish MacCrimmons, Iain Odhar, returned to Scotland in 1595 along with Rory Mor MacLeod, who had been fighting against the English under Red Hugh O'Donnell. Iain Odhar became the progenitor of the MacCrimmon pipers. Iain Odhar's son, Donald Mor, "is the first known composer, and possibly deviser of piobaireachd."<sup>26</sup> Another strain of this story is that Iain Odhar was the illegitimate son of Alasdair Crotach, who was the eighth

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<sup>25</sup> Francis Collinson, *The Bagpipe*, 141 - 142.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

chief of the MacLeods.

The second version of their origins is that the first MacCrimmon was a piper from Cremona, Italy, who returned with crusading Christians to Ulster in 1510. This man, Guiseppe Bruno (a priest), had a son named Petrus/Patrick, who married into a piping family in Ireland. Patrick took the Gallicised name of MacCrimmon. He then had three sons, one of whom was Fionnlaigh a'Breacain Bhain, the father of Iain Odhar. Many scholars on the subject of the MacCrimmons reject this story, as well as the supposedly suppressed history of the clan. However, tradition has it that one of the surviving copies of Captain MacLeod's original history was taken to Canada.

Regardless, Donald Mor MacCrimmon is credited with being the originator of piobaireachd/ceol mor. This category of pipe tunes is quite complex. It begins with the *urlar*, meaning floor, which is the main theme of the piece. The *urlar* is then followed by a series of variations, the first being the *siubhal* (travelling/walking), which is played a bit quicker than the *urlar*. The next variation, the *taorluath*, is the theme-note followed by four rapid grace-notes. This variation is followed by the *crunluath*, or the theme-note, followed by seven rapid grace-notes. These variations may be extended; if so they are called the *taorluath amach* and the *crunluath amach*, respectively. The *urlar* is then repeated to finish the piece.<sup>27</sup>

It is not known how Donald Mor devised piobaireachd, but some theorize that he based the variations on the harp music, which was still popular during his lifetime.

Before the MacCrimmon, the main style of piping was *ceol beag*. Literally translated as "small music," *ceol beag* consists of strathspeys, reels, marches, and now jigs and hornpipes. This is the traditional dance music that was once played throughout the Highlands and Islands. Virtually lost in Scotland due to the proscription and militarization of the instrument, "Gaelic traditional piping lasted longer in rural Cape Breton and probably rural Nova Scotia roughly east of the Pictou-Colchester county line

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 145 - 157.

than anywhere else in the world."<sup>28</sup> This music lasted longer in Nova Scotia due to the strength of the step-dancing tradition, which required lively timing for strathspeys and reels. This style of playing *ceol beag* was maintained since the early Gaelic settlements; however, according to historians in Scotland, *ceol beag* hardly existed at the time of Culloden and "any *ceol beag* that may have existed for dance music was performed on a separate (and conveniently extinct) instrument, the small pipe."<sup>29</sup> Doubtless, traditional piping lasted much longer than historians acknowledge, since it does exist in Nova Scotia. *Ceol Beag* did, nonetheless, die out in Scotland. Gibson does go on to say:

*The British military stimulated fresh interest in ceol beag after the supply of ceol mor pipers had dried up, and also created new ceol beag, which is played by all modern pipers, who have imposed its style upon older, traditional tunes now considered rather as freaks from the past, Finally, with but a few traditional exceptions, piping ceol beag is in fact a nineteenth century invention.*<sup>30</sup>

Glace Bay native Barry Shears has compiled two collections of Nova Scotian pipe tunes devoted to the traditional style of piping. Shears, himself, first learned to pipe from a traditional piper, but took on the military style while serving as a cadet. These collections draw notice to various renowned traditional pipers in Nova Scotia's past, as well as to notable composers of Nova Scotian *ceol beag*. Shears discusses differences between the military and traditional styles, while analysing the state of the tradition. Sadly, there are very few remaining traditional pipers. However, there is a growing interest in traditional piping. This interest is feeding largely off of interest in Cape Breton fiddling - which, ironically, is largely derived from traditional piping. A number of young players are playing strathspeys, reels, and jigs in the proper timing for square sets. Hopefully they will be able to learn from the existing tradition-bearers and reverse the disappearance of this tradition.

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<sup>28</sup> Gibson, "Traditional Piping in Nova Scotia," 162.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

**For further reading:**

- Shears, Barry W. *The Cape Breton Collection of Bagpipe Music*. Halifax N.S. Taigh a' Chiul/The House of Music, 1995.
- Shears, Barry W. *The Gathering of the Clans Collection of Bagpipe Music*. Halifax, N.S. Taigh a' Chiul/The House of Music, 1991.
- Bond, Nelson S. "Bagpipes of Braemar." *Étude* 55, May 1937.
- Collinson, Francis. *The Bagpipe*. London: Routledge and Keogan Paul Ltd, 1975.
- Erskine, Bruce. "Dance to the Piper." *The Mail-Star*. Friday March 14, 1997. B1.
- Gibson, John. "Traditional Piping in Nova Scotia." *Celtic Languages and Celtic Peoples: The Proceedings of the Second North American Congress of Celtic Studies*. Halifax, N.S. : D'Arcy McGee Chair of Irish Studies, St. Mary's University, 1992.

Scott Williams of Antigonish has also published a pair of collections of his own compositions

## **THE IRISH IN NOVA SCOTIA AND THEIR MUSIC**

Ireland is a fascinating case study for the subject of music. In a country continuously divided by politics and religion, the musical tradition is also split. Two separate musical traditions thrive in parallel worlds, the older Gaelic tradition and the relatively recent English-language tradition. The Gaelic song tradition survives, naturally, in the Irish Gaeiltacht. There are several regional styles of Gaelic singing, but, in general, there are two distinct broad styles. The first is the more ornamented 'Sean Nos' style singing; the second is a less complex and more direct style. The stronghold of 'Sean Nos' is Connemara, while the latter style is more represented in the singing of Donegal. These songs deal with the usual subjects: history, local events, praise, satire, etc. Irish Gaelic song was brought by immigrants to Nova Scotia, but unlike the Scottish Gaels, the Irish did not relocate as family and community units. They emigrated, primarily as single families and solitary men. Instead of settling in the province's countryside, most Irish settlers came to the larger urban centres where there was a demand for labourers. Outside of the cultural and social network, the Gaelic language was lost rather quickly. There are, however, rural Irish communities in Nova Scotia. For instance, the Erinville/Roman Valley area of Guysborough county, Herring Cove, and Prospect have distinctly Irish characters. Many traditions were maintained in these areas until quite recently.

Another factor that influenced the absence of Irish-Gaelic material in Nova Scotia is that most Irish immigrants came to Nova Scotia during the language shift in Ireland. Factors such as the famine and laws forbidding instruction of the Irish language, quickly changed the linguistic scene in Ireland. The majority of the victims of the famine were in the Gaelic speaking areas of Ireland. The language of commerce was English, which is emphasized in the Irish folk-saying, 'Irish doesn't sell the cow.' An analogy to describe the language shift is that English spread into Ireland like a radio signal, the source being Dublin with the reception getting weaker as it moved further away. The areas closest to Dublin became Anglicized first. This region around Ireland's

capitol is what is commonly referred to as 'the Pale.' According to Terence M. Punch, "The greatest number of Catholic Irish to settle here [Nova Scotia] arrived before 1845, and most of this majority came here between 1816 and 1845."<sup>31</sup> The majority of Irish immigrants being young men and young families meant that most new Irish-Nova Scotians did not speak Gaelic, although the Irish tongue was indeed spoken in the province.

The English-language branch of the tradition, on the other hand, survived quite strongly. In her publication, Debra Meeks deals with the subject of what exactly Irish folk-songs are:

*The simplest but arguably the most precise definition of Irish folk-songs are folk-songs historically sung by the people of Ireland. Hence, for the purpose of this project, Irish folk-songs will be any song (as previously defined) that is found in a standard collection, songster or broadside of Irish folk-songs.*<sup>32</sup>

Some songs in the English-language tradition in Nova Scotia that are derived from traditional Irish sources are "Ramblin' Boys of Pleasure," "The Flying Cloud," "Brennan on the Moor," and "Jack Donahue/Wild Colonial Boy." The Anglo-Irish tradition was dominated by Broad-sides such as the "Come-all Ye." Alison Jones comments that the "Come-all Ye"

*originally gained popularity in English streets in the 17th century. Irish peasants made it their own and developed the style in the succeeding centuries, and with massive Irish working-class immigration across the Atlantic it took firm hold in the new world of America.*<sup>33</sup>

At the risk of generalizing, much of the English-language tradition in Nova Scotia has an Irish flavour. Many of Helen Creighton's best informants were Irish. For example, many residents of Devil's Island, whose songs basically form Helen Creighton's first book, *Songs and Ballads of Nova Scotia*, were of Irish descent.

Another factor that gave the English-language tradition in Nova Scotia

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<sup>31</sup> Terrence M. Punch, *Aspects of Irish Halifax at Confederation*, 14.

<sup>32</sup> Debra Meeks, *The Irish Traditional Folk-Song in Halifax*, 30.

<sup>33</sup> Alison Jones, *Dictionary of World Folklore*, 121.

a strong Irish flavour is that the Lumberwoods tradition was largely Irish. The Broadside ballads and local-themed songs were often set to Irish airs. The Irish immigrants and residents were, after all, driven through necessity to be labourers. Often maligned by the Nova Scotia elite, who inherited the British prejudice of stereotyping the Irish as useless drunks, the easiest and most readily available work for an Irish immigrant was labour. A primary case with reference to the lumberwoods tradition is one of Debra Meeks' informants, Mr. Charles Savary.

Mr. Savary worked in the lumbercamps on the "Fourth, Fifth and Chub Lakes in Digby County, in Westfield Beach, Welsford and Grand Bay in New Brunswick; and spent one especially hard winter in New Hampshire."<sup>34</sup> At these camps there would be men from throughout the Maritimes and the north-eastern States. Beginning work in the woods at the age of sixteen, Savary had a repertoire of over one hundred songs, including such lumberwoods standards as "The Jam at Gerry's Rock" and "Peter Emberly." Mr. Savary sang in the camps, participating in the exchange that characterizes the lumberwoods tradition.

The lumberwoods were filled with young men from predominantly Irish areas such as the Miramichi and Western Prince Edward Island. The men from P.E.I. were noted to be the best singers in these camps, having large repertoires. The Island song tradition bears many startlingly Irish characteristics.

The story of Mr. Savary is common to many Nova Scotian Irish. Their historical repertoires of Anglo-Irish broadsides were supplemented by their lumberwoods experience.

Besides the work of Debra Meeks, there has been little research done on the subject of the Irish-Nova Scotian tradition. Perhaps researchers assumed that since the Irish mostly settled in urban areas, they lost much of their song tradition. However, while collecting in Erinville, Helen Creighton collected from Irish descendants such as John Francis Sullivan. There is an urgent need for further research into the Irish

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<sup>34</sup> Meeks, 11.

tradition in rural Nova Scotia before any memory of traditional song has disappeared entirely.

There has been a revival of Irish song sung in Nova Scotia; however, these songs are being learned from Irish sources, such as musical collections and the popularity of recording artist like The Clancy Brothers, Tommy Makem, and Ryan's Fancy. Just the same, all of these artist do perform material from the Maritimes.

**For further reading:**

Meeks, Debra. *Irish Traditional Folk Song in Halifax: A Preliminary Study*. Halifax: International Education Centre, Ethnic Heritage Series vol 4, 1982.

Punch, Terence M. *Aspects of Irish Halifax at Confederation*. Halifax: International Education Centre, 1983.

## **The Irish Instrumental Tradition in Nova Scotia**

There is a true Irish fiddling tradition in Nova Scotia. This is the Northside tradition of Cape Breton Island. According to Paul S. Cranford,

*In the 'twenties and 'thirties, prominent local players in the Cape Breton Irish tradition included Henry Fortune and Joe Confiant. As time went on, recordings of Winston Fitzgerald, Johnny Wilmot and Inverness County Scottish players influenced the new generation and today Northsiders play an even mix of Cape Breton Scottish and Cape Breton Irish styles.<sup>35</sup>*

The primary living exponent of this tradition is Robert Stubbart of Point Aconi. He learned the bulk of his repertoire from fiddlers like Henry Fortune, the Confiants, and John Walker. Many of these old Irish tunes are unique to the Northside tradition. Learning entirely by ear, and possessing an extremely good memory, Stubbart retained a large amount of the Irish material. He also learned many tunes from recordings of Irish fiddlers. Through Stubbart, many Irish tunes have entered the Scottish-Gaelic fiddling tradition of Cape Breton. His daughter, Brenda, learned many of her father's tunes, some of which are published in Cranford Publications' *Brenda Stubbart's*

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Paul Cranford, *Brenda Stubbart's Collection of Fiddle Tunes*, iii.

### *Collection of Fiddle Tunes.*

The popular Cape Breton group, the Barra MacNeils, draw many tunes from Stubbert's repertoire, as well as from the Scottish-Gaelic tradition.

Many Northside tunes are related to Irish tunes found in the two major collections of Irish fiddle music that have been in wide circulation over the province: *O'Neil's Music of Ireland* and *Ryan's Mammoth Collection/1000 Fiddle Tunes*.

The recordings of the late Johnny Wilmot, another noted exponent of the Northside tradition, provide good examples of the Northside Irish sound. In many cases, Wilmot is accompanied by the tin whistle, which is commonly found in the Irish tradition. Since the Irish- and Scottish-Gaelic traditions are historically related, it is interesting to note markedly different settings of common tunes in both traditions.

As with the song tradition, the Irish instrumental tradition in Nova Scotia has been largely ignored. Many of the tunes in the tradition have been, or are in danger of being lost.

### **UILLEAN PIPES**

Traditionally, there were two different types of bagpipes played in Ireland: the Warpipes, which were similar to Highland Bagpipes, and the Uilleann Pipes, which are quite common today. These pipes are played while sitting down and use bellows to inflate the bag. They are quite mellow in comparison to Highland Pipes.

St. Mary's Church records note that on August 12, 1824, John Casey, "a native of Kilkenny who died in the Poor House, a professor of the Union-pipes [Uilleann Pipes], he left after him not a single minstrel to awake the sad strain of a mournful dirge to his memory."<sup>36</sup>

### **For further reading:**

- Jones, Allison. *Dictionary of World Folklore*. Edinburgh: Larousse, 1995.  
Meeks, Debra. *Irish Traditional Folk Songs in Halifax: A Preliminary Study*. Halifax, n.d.

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<sup>36</sup>

PANS, Miscellaneous Music Microfilm.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERPRETATION:**

### **Milling Frolic/Une Foularie**

The tradition of fulling cloth by hand existed in both the Scottish-Gaelic and the Acadian cultures of Nova Scotia. This was very time-consuming labour. In order to aid the passage of time, both peoples created songs to accompany the rhythm of the task. A great many of these songs have been collected over the years, and the tradition is well documented.

Both the **Wile Carding Mill** and the **Barrington Woolen Mill** are associated with a post-hand fulling stage of technological development, and neither community have strong Gaelic or Acadian characters; however, it would be interesting to put on a series of milling frolics/foularies at these sites in the context of the historical development of fulling in general, but specifically within the province of Nova Scotia. The activity of milling is quite fun and the choruses are easy to learn. Both children and adults would enjoy trying their hand at milling and singing, while learning a valuable part of Nova Scotia's history. It is interesting how such a difficult labour was transformed into a social event.

#### **CONTACTS:**

**Rosemary and Brian McCormack** (B&R Heritage Enterprises). Rosemary is a native Gaelic speaker and a trained educator who specializes in the Gaelic-song tradition of Nova Scotia. In the past, she has had a radio show on the CBC and she currently devotes her time to the promotion of Nova Scotian Gaelic Culture. One of her many strengths is her skills in working with children, combining fun with education. She has many contacts within the Gaelic singing world of Nova Scotia, so she is an essential contact .

Rosemary can be reached at: PO Box 3 Iona, Cape Breton, NS B0A 1L0. Her phone number is listed in the Iona directory.

**Jim Watson** is a member of both the Cape Gael Co-op and the 'An Crann' Co-op, both

of which are organizations involved in the promotion of Gaelic culture in Nova Scotia. He is **the** expert on Nova Scotian Milling songs. Himself a singer, Watson possesses a tremendous amount of lore on the subject, as well as countless songs.

He can be reached through Sandy Publishing/Am Braighe in Mabou, Cape Breton.

**Barbara Leblanc** of St. Ann's and **Fr. Anselme Chiasson** and **Ronald Labelle** of L'Université de Moncton are the best contacts on the subject of the Acadian traditions. Fr. Chiasson is the primary collector of Acadian songs in the province. Labelle co-authored *La Fleur du Rosier* with Helen Creighton, which is the most authoritative publication about the Acadian song tradition in the province.

Barbara LeBlanc can be reached at 769-2114 (work) or 837-4500 (home).

Ronald Labelle can be reached at 'Centre d'Étude Acadienne' (506) 858-4000

Fr. Anselme, a native of Cheticamp, can be reached through Labelle.

There is an extensive amount of information available on this topic. The NFB filmed an Acadian fouldarie along with Helen Creighton and there are numerous videos such as 'Se Ceap Breteann Tir Mo Graidh,' which feature footage of Gaelic milling frolics. I suggest the museum put together an educational video on the milling traditions of Nova Scotia that would go through all of the stages of cloth preparation. There are Gaelic songs for every stage.

## **Songs of the Sea**

**William Roy MacKenzie** of River John, Pictou County, was the first collector of English-Language Folk Songs in Canada. His publication, *Songs and Ballads of Nova Scotia* (1928), contains the largest body of Sea Chanties in North America. Helen Creighton collected a great number of Sea Songs as well. There are countless Gaelic songs about the sea; the same is true of Acadian culture. Nova Scotia is the most

valuable field in the New World for Sea Songs; there is an unbroken tradition of the composition of Sea Songs in this province. Many popular Nova Scotian songwriters are still captivated by the sea.

The **Maritime Museum of the Atlantic**, the **Fisheries Museum of the Atlantic**, the **Dory Shop**, **Lawrence House**, the **Nova Scotia Museum of Industry**, and the **Fisherman's Life Museum** all could benefit from an exhibit on the subject of the Songs of the Sea as they deal with so many different aspects of traditional Nova Scotian life and both the fishing and shipbuilding industries. Much of the information in the Sea Chanty section of this report is from Liverpool.

There are many performers in Nova Scotia that have Sea Songs in their repertoire. This is probably the most common topic in any Nova Scotian song. Performers from the different cultures of Nova Scotia could be gathered to make an atmospheric recording for sites, but they could also prepare a series of performances for individual sites that would provide a good, entertaining sample of the Nova Scotian Songs of the Sea. These performances could also educate visitors about the importance of the sea in the development of the provincial economy. A facilitator could be used to place the songs in an historical context. (Perhaps one of the performers could do double duty.)

#### **CONTACTS:**

For English-language songs, **Clary Croft** is a repertoire expert and a performer

For Gaelic songs, call **Jeff MacDonald** (625-0138). A resident of Glendale, he is a young Gaelic speaker and an excellent traditional singer, in both English and Gaelic. He usually performs at a number of festivals during the summer and would probably be available if notified in advance. He also knows a considerable amount about Gaelic life and traditions.

**Sutherland Steam Mill.** The lumber industry played a significant role in the composition and distribution of traditional English-language songs in Nova Scotia and

the Maritimes. I suggest a small exhibit for the Sutherland Steam Mill that provides information about the musical life of the lumberwoods.

W. Roy Mackenzie collected songs in the Denmark area, so many of the songs in his collection would have been sung there at one time. A performance of songs from Mackenzie's collection, possibly a small recording, would be very appropriate.

Songs from J.W. Byers' collection would also be very pertinent to this site and area as West New Annan is so nearby, and many of the songs are from the lumberwoods.

**McCulloch House.** I believe that there is a need for an exhibit about William Roy Mackenzie, since he was the pioneer collector in English-speaking Canada and since his collection is the foremost source of Sea Shanties in North America. Most of his collecting was done in Pictou County and primarily from people of similar heritage to McCulloch. Since these are the songs of the people of the Pictou County area, I believe that this form of exhibit would be very appropriate.

Just as with the Sutherland Steam Mill, I believe a series of performances could be given, and perhaps recordings of this performance used for 'atmosphere.' This theme could be done in conjunction with the **Balmoral Grist Mill** and the **Nova Scotia Museum of Industry**, for they lie within Mackenzie's field. This would be a great way of both celebrating the year of music and honouring Mackenzie. An exhibit recalling the life of the Bard MacLean and the events surrounding the composition of "A' Choille Gruamach" and "Bithibh Aotrum 's Togaibh Fonn" would be both entertaining and educational. **McCulloch House** would be a terrific place to have it, since Maclean was a resident of the area and the story behind the songs documents two major periods in the settlement of the area - disillusionment and the realization and appreciation of the benefits of the New World. I think an excellent performance could be made about these two songs, perhaps a pseudo-musical play, which could be performed on site of **McCulloch House** or another Pictou County area site.

In addition to the Bard MacLean and Mackenzie, an exhibit should be made about the contribution and works of MacLean's grandson, Alexander MacLean Sinclair. His commitment to the Gaelic culture, and the quantity of local information contained in his works is quite amazing. He deserves to be recognized. A great number of excellent songs are contained within his collection.

**Lawrence House** is probably the best site to demonstrate aspects of Irish traditional music. I think that performances of Thomas Moore-type songs would be appropriate. These songs are somewhat traditional, but they still appealed to the higher classes, of which Lawrence was a part. These are the types of songs an 'Irish Tenor' would sing. For children, perhaps some penny-whistle demonstrations/instruction would be appropriate. Maybe on occasion an *uilleann* piper, although Highland pipes would have been far more common. Also, as mentioned previously, a performance of Songs of the Sea would be ideal.

**Haliburton House.** Songs from the works of Haliburton, perhaps a Sam Slick character who would approach visitors and sing little ditties such as:

- from Attache "Jim Brown"
- from Attache, excerpt from "Old Zip Coon" or "Turkey in the Straw"
- from the Clockmaker, "The Coast of Peru" and "Sitting on a Rail"
- from the Old Judge, "Old Dan Tucker"
- from the Season Ticket, "Oh Susannah"

Also appropriate would be the occasional demonstration of a Scottish reel set and some steps that Slick performed. He could encourage visitor participation.

**Ross Farm.** I haven't found any songs about farming; however, a demonstration of songs from the Gaelic tradition – since Ross is originally Highland name – would be suitable. They might also be interested in Milking songs and Querning (Grinding) songs.

The **Museum of Industry** would benefit from a demonstration or recording of a

selection of Milling songs and the work songs from the Gaelic tradition. See the work of John C. O'Donnell for Industrial Songs. Perhaps a series of sessions with him could be arranged, as he is **the** expert. Contact John C. O'Donnell at St. F.X.

**Piping in Nova Scotia.** A demonstration of the different kinds of traditional piping in Nova Scotia featuring the Highland Pipes played both for dancing and in the military style, Scottish small pipes, and the Irish Uilleann Pipes. The use of a facilitator to explain the traditions (such as Barry Shears, an authority on traditional Nova Scotian piping), could be both entertaining and educational. It could be followed by dancing – maybe even whiskey tasting!!

Contact Barry Shears of Halifax (Highland Pipes and Scottish Small Pipes) at (902) 423-5305 and Ian MacInnis of Antigonish (Uilleann Pipes and Highland Pipes).

**Fiddling in Nova Scotia.** The ideal exhibit would be a demonstration of fiddling from the Irish, Gaelic, and Acadian traditions, featuring tradition-bearers from all three traditions. This could be staged at the main museum as well as at Cossit House, perhaps Lawrence House, and Uniacke House.

Contact Willie Kennedy of Mabou, Robert Stubbart of Point Aconi, Jarvis Benoit of Halifax.

### **The Collectors of Nova Scotia**

Since Nova Scotia has been the site of some of the best folklore collecting in the world, I think an exhibit for the main museum on the subject of "the Collectors of Folk Music in Nova Scotia" is most appropriate. Much like the Acadian exhibit, it would feature a series of stations, each one featuring the work done in each of the major European cultures. Taped versions of songs from their collections and prime examples of traditional Nova Scotian music could be listened to at each exhibit. A series of lectures about the major collectors and the traditions of Nova Scotia could be combined with folk

dances put on at the museum, as well as basic-step dancing lessons etc ...

This could be quite a draw during tourist season if there was consistent entertainment available. Perhaps a fiddler could perform periodically all summer (I'd suggest Bonny Jean MacDonald, a Cape Breton fiddler living in Halifax)

The lectures could be given by a wide variety of people, from performers to academics. Mind you, you'd probably have to lay a few sheets of plywood on the floor for dancing.