

# The Barn Dance Opera Journal

Official Publication of:  
The Barn Dance Historical Society Inc.  
and Entertainment Museum

Barn Dance Website: <http://www.barndance.on.ca>

Vol. 27 2000

Fall Edition

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## Entertainment Museum A Growing Tourist Attraction

Wingham was, and still is, remembered as the Radio Television Town of Canada. It is also the home of Canada's Largest Travelling Barn Dance which continues to showcase premier Canadian talent. A museum to display this musical and broadcasting heritage of the area only made sense. What makes this museum such a special place to visit, is it's not just a trip down memory lane. Of course there are lots of pictures, stage outfits, and unique musical instruments, but there are a lot of hopes and dreams captured in time, as well as gold records, trophies, and awards.

With funding from the Trillium Foundation and the continuing success of the current travelling Barn Dance, the museum project has taken on a life of it's

own. No small task, mind you, since the members of the museum committee and others involved have laboured many hours to make this a reality to be proud of. Situated behind the Wingham Heritage Theatre, the museum is currently housed upstairs in the Wingman Armouries building. I say "currently" since there are future plans to move the museum to a larger, more visible site which will hopefully incorporate interactive music, live musical guests, and special events.

With Barn Dance shows being performed throughout Southwestern Ontario over the last number of years, a lot of people have become more acquainted with the Barn Dance Historical Society and subsequently the

museum as well. Museum attendance and inquires were definitely up this year as well as bus tours.

The following is a transcript from the museum brochure as written by Dave Wall and will provide those interested with valuable information.

*"This Museum is dedicated to preserving the history of the internationally known CKNX Saturday Night Barn Dance which was broadcast weekly over CKNX Radio AM 920 from 1937 until 1963. Beginning in the early 1940's the program began originating from area villages, towns and cities within a hundred mile radius of Wingham. The weekly event became known as Canada's Largest Travelling Barn Dance. Country music artists who performed on the show considered it the Canadian equivalent to the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville. Some stars even appeared on both shows.*

*The tradition of broadcasting live music began when W. T. "Doc" Cruickshank founded a radio station in 1926 which went on to include both CKNX Radio and Television.*

*The Barn Dance Historical Society Inc. and Entertainment Museum, founded by Earl Heywood in 1993, opened this museum in 1996 to preserve this great part of our Canadian musical heritage. Pictures, artifacts and showcases tell the stories of the many people who made the Barn Dance possible. Visitors will see the first Trophy awarded at the Canadian Open Fiddle Contest in Shelburne, a Juno*

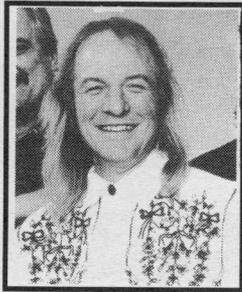
*Continued on Page 4*



**THIS IS WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT FOLKS.** (Grand Ole Opry style) Barn Dance shows like this give local entertainers a chance on the "big stage" and provide funding for the museum project to grow. Pictured is an "I Saw The Light" grand finale at one of Canada's Largest Travelling Barn Dance performances this past summer.

## The Editor Speaks

by Grant Heywood



This has been a banner year for Barn Dance performances. With 8 show performances over this past season, it has certainly been busy to say the least. It's likely no secret that while some of those involved with the barn Dance are retired and give freely of their time, there are others who still have to do that daily grind thing called "WORK". Now I'm not complaining, although some musicians have been known to whine a bit, but most musicians love what they do and really don't regard playing music as work. Of course that's not to say they don't work, what with practice schedules, driving to and fro between jobs, juggling rehearsal time, arranging a baby sitter, putting on new strings, setting up equipment, tearing down equipment, making payments on the equipment, and maybe finding time for a Horton's coffee ... well you get the picture.

Personally, I had taken on more jobs this past year than I could handle (Too Many Hats Syndrome) but it was a labour of love. (was I just whining?) One of those jobs in particular was being musical director for the Barn Dance musicians. I must say I enjoyed working with the entertainers and the band musicians. At times it was a lot of fun and other times a real pressure cooker.

Thanks to fellow musician Bill Simmermaker for arranging rehearsals. Thanks also to Jim Swan for being so understanding when he didn't receive the faxed show schedule on time. Thanks to the musicians and entertainers when it was a coin toss over the key of certain songs. The sound and light crew (Wayne and Scott) deserve thanks when it was so darn hard

for a musical director who was singing and playing drums to communicate if something was amiss. And last, but not least, thanks to everyone who came out to the Barn Dance shows to see and hear some great talented performers. You are the #1 reason we enjoy playing 'good' country music. (all whining aside) And do you know what? We're already putting together even greater shows for next year. Now that calls for some whining. Oh I'm sorry, I mean wining. Make mine a dry Chianti. Cheers!!

Grant Heywood,  
R. R. #2,  
Wellesley, Ont. N0B 2T0  
Phone or Fax: (519) 656-2552

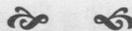


## NEWS, NOTES 'N EVENTS

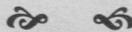
Michael T. Wall reports he is appearing as a movie extra, in the new movie "Cletus Tout", starring James Garner, Richard Dreyfuss, Tim Allen and Chris Slater. Wall is a briefcase carrying salesman in the movie, which is to be released before late spring. The singing Newfoundlander also took part in the Inter-Tribal Pow Wow 2000 celebrations at Christian Island in Georgian Bay on July 8th as well as the Newfoundland Vinking Celebrations on July 28th.



Thanks to Doug Dietrich's band "Sunrise" for a great performance at this year's Tara Barn Dance. We'll be hearing more from these guys again next year.



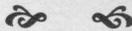
Also: Thanks to George Lonsbury for the use of a practice space, where else??, but George's barn.



Les and Jean Dowell, The Colorado Kids, and Sister Susie Chambers, received the Pioneer Award at the Carlisle Barn Dance on July 15, 2000.



Hank and Nettie Bedard, and Mary Elliot received the Pioneer Award at the Forest Barn Dance on August 12, 2000.



From L to R: Hon. President Earl Heywood, Ray and Larry Mercey, Awards Presenter, Linda Elder, and Lynn Russwurm, as they receive the Pioneer Award at the Barn Dance in St. Clements, Ontario this past summer. Absent was Lloyd Mercey.

## The Barn Dance Historical Society and Entertainment Museum

P.O. Box 68

Wingham, Ontario N0G 2W0

Phone (519) 357-2160

(or leave a message)

BARN DANCE WEBSITE:

<http://www.barndance.on.ca>

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Founder, Honorary President, Advisor

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*Memories of a*  
**DON MESSER JUBILEE CHRISTMAS**

It's amazing how many folks still recall fond memories of the Don Messer Jubilee show which was broadcast on CBC network television. It is even more amazing how former maritimer and show producer, Barbara Martin, has brought together all the elements of that "down east" musical tradition back to the live stage. Starting on Nov. 22nd, a combination of original cast members and some very talented newcomers will unite to pay tribute to a beloved piece of Canadiana played in true Messer style. Besides Ontario dates, the show will tour western Canada starting in January 2001.

The show will feature renowned Canadian Fiddle Champion, Scott Woods, Canadian Jr. Fiddle Champion, Mark Sullivan, joined by Jubilee alumni Vic

Mullen, on banjo / guitar, and alumni host, Sandy Hoyt. The "Memories" show will also feature the duet style singing that made Marg Osbourne and Charlie Chamberlain famous and will be performed by veteran member of the touring show, tenor Tom Leadbeater and newcomer Rena Gaile as Marg. The line-up includes Messer's evergreen jigs and reels and a fitting rendition of the Buchta-styled dancing by a professional dance troupe from Russia. Messer's philosophy of inviting talented guests on his program will be observed as local champion step dancers from each community will be featured. The entire show is woven tastefully together by the seasoned host Sandy Hoyt as he shares humorous anecdotes and personal stories of the Messer gang with the audience.

**PERSONAL INFORMATION  
 ABOUT THE MESSER CAST**

There are only three band members still alive today: Vic Mullen who is with this show; Cec McEachern who is in his early 80's and is badly afflicted with arthritis; and Waldo Munro who has advanced Parkinson's disease. Don Tremaine, the host of the TV show for all 11 years, toured with this show until 1999, when he was made an Immigration Judge of Atlantic Canada. Had Messer lived, he would be 91 years old this May. Charlie died in the fall of 1971 of heart failure, Messer in the spring of 1972 of heart failure, and Marg died while performing on stage in 1977 at age 50 of the same illness

*2000 Tour*

*Memories of a*  
**DON MESSER  
 JUBILEE  
 CHRISTMAS**

*Don't miss the memories of this year's Christmas recreation of the celebrated TV show featuring ...*

**Champion fiddlers SCOTT WOODS and MARK SULLIVAN  
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 and the famous "Marg and Charlie" songs & duets**

Tue. Nov. 21	Parry Sound High School*	Fri. Dec. 01	Chatham Cultural Centre
Wed. Nov. 22	North Bay Capitol Theatre	Sun. Dec. 03	London Centennial Hall
Thu. Nov. 23	Pembroke Festival Hall	Mon. Dec. 04	Brantford Sanderson Ctr.
Fri. Nov. 24	Ottawa Centrepointe	Tue. Dec. 05	Lindsay Academy Theatre
Sat. Nov. 25	Belleville Centennial High**	Thu. Dec. 07	Orillia Opera House
Tue. Nov. 28/29	Owen Sound Roxy Theatre	Fri. Dec. 08	Newmarket Theatre
Thu. Nov. 30	Blyth Festival Theatre	Sat. Dec. 09	Orangeville 2ndary High***

For tickets at schools call: \*(705) 746-9213, \*\*(613) 962-1309, \*\*\*(905) 941-5683

**\* WATCH FOR OUR ALTA./SASK. TOUR STARTING JANUARY 2001 \***



# Barn Dances during the 2000 Season



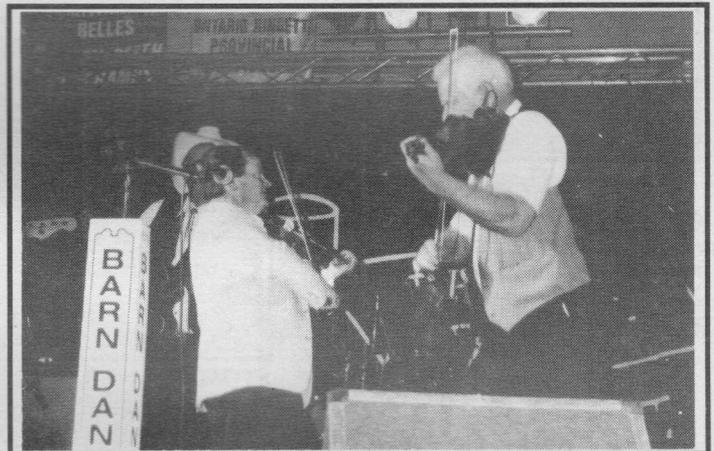
Legendary steel player, **Rusty Walker** performed with Canada's Largest Travelling Barn Dance at this year's St. Clements and Carlisle shows.



**Jay Riehl** was flawless in his rendition of the Vince Gill classic "Go Rest High On That Mountain". Pictured singing harmony is **Linda Murray**. Picture taken at Barn Dance at Carlisle, Ontario.



Talented singer / songwriter, **Jamie Gordon** gets to perform to a hometown crowd at the Barn Dance in Tara, Ontario.



The long and short of fiddle playing as demonstrated by, "Little" **Johnny Heaman** on the left, and **Vic Pasowisty** on the right.



Smiling Grammy Award Winner, **Walter Ostanek** played his heart out for the capacity crowd at Forest, Ontario.



Now here's a happy gang. From left to right: fiddler **Vic Pasowisty**, dobro guitarist **Al Widemeyer**, fiddler **Mathew Johnson**, and steel guitarist **Ron Coulthard** enjoy a moment backstage at this year's Barn Dance Show at Bingeman Park, Kitchener.



Elder get the  
ance Show in  
with **Verna**  
arence Adlam.  
e family's be-

# Photos from various Barn Dances during the



Pasowisty is pictured backstage, with a surprise visit from Sokach, a 1977 Juno Award winner for dance choreographer Anne while televising the Bob McLean show. Picture Barn Dance show, at the Steam Era Reunion, in Milton.



Legendary steel player, Rusty Walker performed with Canada's Largest Travelling Barn Dance at this year's St. Clements and Carleton Place shows.



Earl Hey is about to bestow the Pioneer Award to (from L to R) Nettie Bedard and Mary Elliot, at the Barn Dance in Forest, Ontario.



Finally . . . smiling Hughie Elder get the Pioneer Award, at the Barn Dance Show in Tara this past August, along with Verna Birch, daughter of the late Clarence Adlam. Verna accepted the award on the family's behalf.



Talented singer / songwriter, Jamie Gordon gets to perform to a hometown crowd at the Barn Dance in Tara, Ontario.



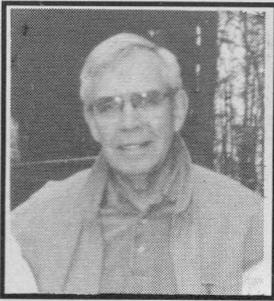
Earl Hey presents the pioneer award from Honourary President Earl Hey to Les and Jean Dowell (The Colorado) at the Barn Dance in Carlisle, Ontario.



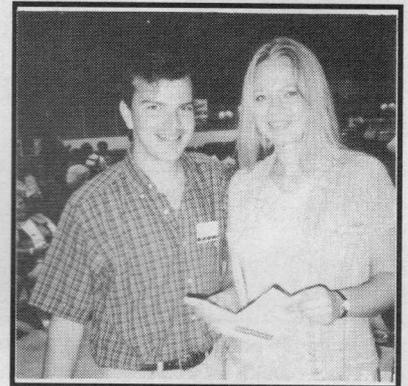
Smiling Grammy Award Winner, Walter Ostanek plays his heart out for the capacity crowd at Forest, Ontario.

# Just Fiddling Around . . .

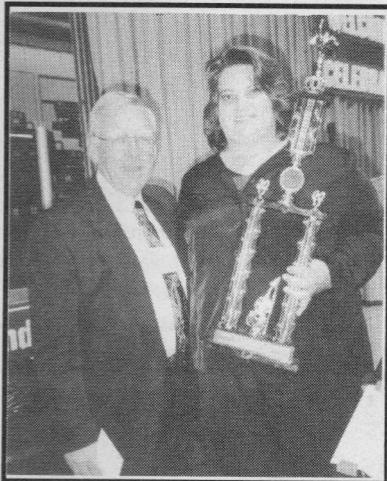
## with Bill Oja



At Black Creek Pioneer Village, Fiddle and Stepdance Contest fiddler, **RAY LA MARCHE**, of Kirkfield rehearses a competition selections with step dance judge **GINNY ARBUCKLE**.



Canadian Grand Masters Champion **SCOTT WOODS** of Fergus welcomes **CRYSTAL PLOHMAN** of Nashville as judges at this years Chelmsford Fiddle and Step Dance Contest.



The 25th Annual Pembroke Fiddle and Step Dance drew 298 entries and there were 1400 motor homes registered at this year's Fiddle Park. Presenting the Open Class trophy to Winnipeg's **PATTI KUSTVROK** is contest chairman **JIM HICKEY**.



**STOMPIN' TOM CONNORS** welcomes Friends of Canadian Old Time Fiddle Association members, **GEORGE** and **SHEILA LINSEY** and **PHYLLIS OJA** backstage at Dr. Tom's Robcay-geon sold-out concert.



**CHARLIE LANG**, head honcho of the 4th annual Sturgeon Falls Fiddle & Stepdance Festival welcomes fiddler **BRUCE WILSON**, from Abbotsford, B.C. and wife **ALICE**. Bruce needed a wagon to take home the trophies he won at a number of Ontario Fiddle contests.



At the popular Blyth Campout, we see veteran performers **EARL** and **MARTHA HEYWOOD** congratulating singer **GARY BOYLE** on his new C.D.

Two of Canada's top musicians performed at this year's Valley Bluegrass Festival in Renfrew. **STEVE PITTICO**, many time Guitarist of the Year (L), and New Brunswick's fiddler / mandolinist of note **RAY LEGERE** sal hello to International Bluegrass Association Representative **JULIE CHADBOURNE**.



## COUNTRY CALENDAR



by Doreen Brown

(Toronto and surrounding area)

\* **The Academy Theatre**, Kent St., Lindsay will feature Johnny Burke on Oct. 29. The show is produced by Chef Adams. Please check with theatre for times.

\* **Country Troubadours Jamborees**, with Al and Alberta Weatherall, Willis Rowbotham and W. Hill, play dates as follows: Nov. 4, Durham Legion dance 9 to 1; Nov. 5, Bognor Jamboree 2 to 7; Nov. 10 Bognor Dance 8 to 12; Nov. 18 Club 86 on Hwy. 86, 8 to 12; Nov. 25

Anniversary Thornbury Community Centre; Dec. 9 Club 86 on Hwy. 86 8 to 12; Dec. 10 Bognor Jamboree 2 to 7; Dec. 17 Christmas Party Durham Legion, afternoon.

\* **Bond Head Old Tyme Fiddles Club**, community hall, Hwy. 27 and 88, Oct. 24 and Nov. 28. Dec. 11 Christmas special with spot prizes.

\* **Appearances by Doreen Brown** - The Best of Texas Awards Show, Beaumont, Texas, U.S.A.; Nov. 4, 11, 18, and 25 - Oprey Toronto; Nov. 26 - Sutton Traditional Country Music Jubilee RCL, Br. 356, from 1 to 5 p.m.; Nov. 16 - Holland Landing Christmas Party; Dec. 16 - Oprey Orillia (TBD); Dec. 17 - Maple Leaf Christmas Show with Chef Adams.

\* **Michael T. Wall**, the Singing Newfoundlander celebrated his birthday and performed at Oprey Orillia on October 21.

\* **Oprey Orillia**, the homeplace of Canadian Country Music, Sundial Restaurant, 600 Sundial Dr., Orillia. For information, call Chuck Moore. Showtime 8 to 12 p.m. Following dates - Nov. 18 and Dec. 16.

Call Chuck or Wilma at 1-705-325-2703

\* **Appearances** by Gerald Davidson of the Country Versatiles: October 28, Lynden Legion; November 16, Bingeman Park, Kitchener; November 18, Lakeside; November 25, Waterdown Legion; December 16, Lakeside; December 31, Listowel Agricultural Hall.

\* **Collingwood Legion**, features Country Music from 1 to 5 p.m. the second Sunday of every month. Bring your musical instruments and there's dancing.

\* **It's a little early**, but last Country Calendar for 2000. All best wishes to all for 2001.

Doreen.

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Newsletter columnist and country performer **DOREEN BROWN** is pictured here holding the Barn Dance Opera Journal, with a couple of friends while visiting the Dominican Republic this past July.



### HOWDY FOLKS:

Since 1946 it has been a tradition for CKNX radio to be broadcasting from the International Plowing Match site. That was the year I first began attending this great farm machinery show, known as the greatest outdoor event in the world. As you probably know, this year the plowing match was held on the outskirts of Elora, Ontario, in Wellington County.

Each year, Martha and I have been travelling to the Plowing Match, and this year was no

exception. Helen and Lloyd Otterbein were with us again to set up our showcase of memorabilia from Canada's Largest Travelling Barn Dance, where we sell tickets on a quilt to help fund and preserve the history of Canadian country music and entertainment. I visited the CKNX broadcasting booth where Don Fraser and Murray Gaunt were on hand covering the week's events over the radio.

Martha and I have attended plowing matches over the past 7 or 8 years. It was a good week in Elora, and special thanks to Bob and Bert Black who invited us to set up our booth at this year's match. Also, thanks for their help in getting our showcase equipment to our car, as it rained on the last day. We got stuck not far from the entrance, as did many others. Fortunately, the good folks there pulled us out of the mud and onto the highway. we had to keep

going and waved a goodbye thank you to those who helped us out.

It's great to attend the International Plowing Match as we get to see some old friends and make new ones as well. We appreciate the opportunity to keep people informed about the Barn Dance and our museum, especially at such a large and colourful event.

On behalf of the Barn Dance Historical Society and Entertainment Museum, as well as Canada's Largest Travelling Barn Dance, thanks again and

Remember,  
**THE SHOW MUST GO ON.**

Earl Heywood  
Founder, Hon. President,  
Director, Advisor

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