The Barn Dance Opera Journal

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The Barn Dance Historical Society Inc. and Entertainment Museum

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Winter Edition

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New Barn Dance & Entertainment Museum Location - Bigger and Better

by Grant Heywood

Location, location, location. Getting the right location may be in the cards for some folks but constant persistence, will power and a little luck will usually get the same results. As the saying goes, "We've come a long way baby", to that, the follow-up would be, "Wait 'till you see us now!"

Sometimes it seems to take forever to go from concept to reality. But the new location of the Barn Dance and Entertainment Museum, now situated on the main street of Wingham, directly across from the Heritage Theatre was a natural progression. We will be sharing the old post office building with the North Huron Museum, with the new Barn Dance Museum taking up residence in the basement level. The big plus is, that we now have at least twice as much space to showcase instruments, artifacts and memorabilia, than ever before.

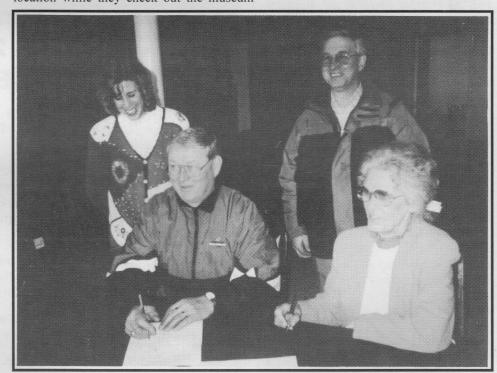
We outgrew the old Armouries location long ago, and through timely negotiations we were able to secure a new home practically across the street. Efforts are now underway to make the new basement location handicap friendly with an automatic chair lift. More office and storage space are available as well as washroom facilities. Needless to say, we won't be able to accommodate all the display items at once, but it will be nice to be able to rotate and showcase specific items from the Barn Dance "glory days" not to mention individual stars who made it big, their awards, pictures, instruments and more. By doing this, people who visit the museum will always see something different upon a return visit.

A cozy corner of the museum will be set up with a large screen television showing memories of past and present Barn Dance performances, videos and interviews, etc. On special occasions, this corner may be utilized for live acoustic performances, C.D. release shows, awards, ceremonies, autograph signings, etc. by Barn Dance performers and musicians. This would work especially well in conjunction with bus tours arriving for shows at the Heritage Theatre across the street. Headliners and featured performers could meet and greet fans at the museum location while they check out the museum

exhibits. Patrons will also be able to view local history of the "Radio and Television Town of Canada" at the North Huron Museum, located in the same building.

The Barn Dance Historical Society has worked diligently and has overcome many obstacles to get this far. It's never a cakewalk. Our number one goal has always been to locate and secure, a better and more prominent site for the Barn Dance & Entertainment Museum, in the home town of Wingham.

Continued on Page 5



Front: George Skinn, North Huron rep. and Shirley Russwurm, Barn Dance Historical Society president, sign the lease agreement for the new Barn Dance & Entertainment Museum. Back: Jodi Jerome, left, (curator of the North Huron Museum) and Dave Wall, Barn Dance Historical Society Museum Committee Chairman.

The Editor Speaks by Grant Heywood



Keeping warm has been my main concern this winter. I don't know about you, but I'm definitely NOT a winter person. Sure I like watching hockey, and after much prodding, I usually end up taking my kids to go tobogganing or ice skating. But if you asked me where I'd rather be this time of year ... well, that would be any place as close to the equator as possible. Yeah, I'm quite aware of the effects of the sun's ultra violet rays and the whole global warming theory, but I would much rather fry than freeze. I guess that puts me in the category of, cremation when my time comes around. Well, I'll have to give that one some thought ... hmm.

Okay, let's talk about something a little more positive. The Barn Dance season for 2003 is looking really good. The March 16th Barn Dance Show at the Wingham Heritage Theatre promises to be a throwback to the CKNX Barn Dance "golden era". The lineup includes many original Barn Dance musicians and performers, such as Ernie King, Earl & Martha Heywood, Larry Mercey, Bruce Robertson, Lloyd Bank, Huey Elder, Ron Coulthard, Gerry Smith and others as well. This will be a special and mainly acoustic performance to mark our anniversary year of the Barn Dance Historical Society.

Some of the Barn Dance performers have been busy doing other dates this past year as well as recording. I had the pleasure of working with John and Geneva Heaman on a new C.D. recording project of traditional country classics as well as a couple of originals by John and Geneva, and one by steel guitarist, Doug Dietrich. Also, our Barn Dance Volume 3 just came out last year, along with the Lost Recordings of Al Cherny, both of which are great collectibles.

If you haven't noticed lately, bluegrass has really had a resurgence in popularity. Likely because the people who play and sing bluegrass, can actually play and sing! Wow! What a concept. Really though, it is

one of the purest forms of music, and is certainly one of the main roots of country music. Our Friday night bluegrass show and jamboree which takes place at our Campout Jamboree in Blyth during the latter part of May has become a fast growing main event. Barn Dance member / performer, Al Widmeyer, is a bluegrass connoisseur and is jointly responsible for putting together some great local bluegrass performers for the Friday night main stage show. It's no wonder, when some of Nashville's finest like, Ricky Skaggs, Dolly Parton, and Patty Loveless have gone back to their roots to rediscover the joys of great pickin' and sweet harmonies.

On another note, if you've been trying to contact me via my fax machine, I apologize. It quit on me! I was so frustrated that I blew up my cell phone in the process. I feel much better now. You can still contact me the old fashioned way, by regular mail, regular home phone, or the (fast becoming industry standard) e-mail. Hope to see you at an upcoming Barn Dance.

Comments? We'd love to hear from

Grant Heywood, 5584 Deborah Glaister Line, R. R. #2,

Wellesley, Ont. N0B 2T0

Phone: (519) 656-2552 E-mail: heywoods@golden.net

The Barn Dance **Historical Society** and Entertainment Museum

P.O. Box 68

Wingham, Ontario NOG 2W0 Phone (519) 357-2160

(or leave a message)

BARN DANCE WEBSITE: http:/www.barndance.ca

Earl Heywood

Founder, Honourary President, Advisor

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Bill Simmermaker, John Heaman, Dave Hedley, Doug Dietrich, Earl Heywood, Dave Wall, and Lynn Russwurm.

THE 2003 BARN DANCE SCHEDULE

* FEBRUARY 16 - Shakespeare Barn Dance Show, and Dinner. Shakespeare Community Centre. 2:00 p.m. Show Only. For details call Shakespeare Co (519) 625-8296.

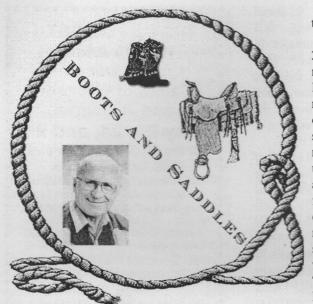
* MARCH 16 - "Golden Era" Barn Dance Show (unplugged), in the Wingham Heritage Town Hall Theatre, of mainly original Barn Dance performers, including Larry Mercey, Earl & Martha Heywood, Ernie King, Huey Elder, Lloyd Bank, Gerry Smith and many more. For reserved tickets, call (519) 356-4082.

* MAY 23, 24 & 25 - 6th Annual Blyth Campout and Jamboree Weekend. Show and Dance at the Blyth Recreation Complex and Campgrounds. For details, call (519) 357-2329 (evenings).

* JUNE 14 - Wellesley Barn Dance. Wellesley Arena, Wellesley, Ontario. Sponsored by the Wellesley Lions. Phone (519) 357-2160.

* AUGUST 2 - Forest Barn Dance. Forest Arena, Forest, Ontario. Call (519) 357-2160.

* OCTOBER 19 - Wingham Heritage Town Hall Theatre. Show only. מתתמתמתמתמתמתמתמתמתמתמתמת



by Lynn Russwurm

This will be the start of a series of reminiscences about some of my own favourite country artists of the past and hopefully some of yours, Canadian, American and in some cases Australian and other overseas people who were the real heroes and pioneers of our beloved music. My preferred singers include the cowboy singers, many of whom recorded with only guitar for accompaniment, then came the light acoustic backup, followed by the western swing music that was highly popular on the west coast of the US.

My all-time favourite was Elton Britt, who possessed the most amazing and mellow voice of all. Elton was discovered while still a teenager by some talent scouts for the "Beverly Hillbillies" group out of California. This was an immensely popular group on radio who helped introduce a number of our greats such as Stuart Hamblen and others. They had heard about this talented youngster and when they heard him, signed him up immediately and brought him to California, amid a great amount of hoopla from their radio station. When Elton arrived he was met by crowds who wanted to see this boy wonder. Remember in those days around 1933 everyone listened to the radio, and live shows were highly regarded. Elton became an immediate star of the show and it wasn't long till he signed up to do some recording, and eventually signed up with RCA Victor where he remained for many years. In time he left the Hillbillies

to strike out on his own.

In 1942, during World War 2, he was in the office of his music publisher, Bob Miller, looking for suitable material to record when he heard a demo of a song which immediately struck his fancy. When the record came out it wasn't long until it was the No. 1 song across the continent. It was the first country song to receive an official gold record for over a million sales. It was a wartime song about a crippled boy who wanted to help Uncle Sam, "There's A Star Spangled Banner Waving Somewhere".

Although highly successful, Elton was never to approach those heights again. He recorded many fine yodel songs as duets with Rosalie Allen, which are today regarded as some of the finest country music ever recorded. As the years rolled by Elton didn't want to do much touring, and most of his time was spent in the east around the Boston area. Several times he abandoned his career for one reason or another, not always practical such as spending a year looking for uranium with a geiger counter and a jeep throughout the western deserts. But he always came back to make some more inroads into music. Sometime in the late sixties he came up with another minor hit "The Jimmie Rodgers Blues" in which he showed off his brilliant yodels. Strangely enough the 7 minute song made a dent in the charts which was unheard of for a song of that length.

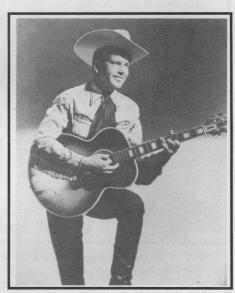
At various time throughout his career he signed up to star on some of the Radio Barn Dances, such as: The Boston Jamboree and the Weeling Jamboree over WWVA. He appeared numerous times on the Grand Ole Opry out of Nashville. He appeared in several movies, most notable "Laramie" with Charles Starrett, The Durango Kid in which he sang his immortal "Chime Bells".

I have in my possession a video tape of Elton with the Beverly Hillbillies when he was barely out of his teens, and even then you could hear the greatness of his singing. Throughout his career Elton did a wide variety of songs, besides his yodelling, he sang many cowboy songs, pop songs, blues songs, etc. The last album he recorded about a year before his death was without yodels, with strings, background singers and the whole ten yards. Usually I don't like my country music this way, but this is probably my favourite of Elton's albums, with such songs as "Stardust" as well as some great country songs like "Born To Lose", "Touch My Heart" and "Release Me".

The great music of Elton Britt rang it's closing chord in 1972 when Elton was scheduled to appear in a concert. He was stricken before the show by a fatal heart attack. In the audience was his close friend and probably his closest rival to the yodelling crown, Kenny Roberts as well as Rosalie Allen. These two did the concert in Elton's place and there were many tears shed by both the performers and the audience. What a traumatic time it must have been for Kenny Roberts and Rosalie Allen.

Elton had about 15 albums to his credit at the time of his death and much of his material has been re-issued on at least 3 CDs since his death, to remind us of the greatness of this man. Elton Britt was buried in an unmarked grave in a Broad Top, Pa. cemetery but later a drive was mounted by his all time fans and there is now a monument bearing the titles of many of his songs. Elton will always be my all-time favourite country singer and pioneer.

Tell me about yours.



ELTON BRITT

From the President's Desk

by Shirley Russwurm

This time my message comes with a great deal of joy. After several frustrating years of hopes and disappointments we have finally found a new location for our museum. As of January 1, 2003 we will be moving into new quarters shared with the North Huron Museum in the old post office building on the main street of Wingham. We look forward to working closely with their people to expand and improve our facilities. We will be located in the basement in a bright, cheery room that will more than double the size of our present location in the Armouries, where we were bursting at the seams. Almost daily we are being offered new artifacts and materials to display. Some we have had to defer due to lack of space. The facility will need a bit of refurbishing, mostly paint and some elbow grease and once again a few volunteers will be welcome. A great way to begin 2003.

By and large, the past year has been filled with many good things such as a full slate of performances of the Barn

Dance. The Blyth Campout Weekend was a real challenge and Simmermaker is to be congratulated on the fine job he did in pulling it off. With the Arena out of commission, the Barn Dance in the barn received many good comments, although space was a bit limited and the weather didn't co-operate very well, a good time was had by all.

The coming year again will be full of many challenges, such as getting the museum into shape for a Spring Grand Opening. We would ask that everyone make an effort to attend the annual meeting on the first Sunday of April, where a new slate of directors will be installed. If you would wish to serve our Society in this capacity, you will be more than welcome. It's a great responsibility but it also carries a lot of satisfaction with

> You may reach me as follows: Shirley Russwurm, President Box 421. Elmira, Ontario N3B 2Z7

Phone: (519) 669-2386 Fax: (519) 669-1814

DON'T FORGET!! The 6th Annual **Barn Dance Campout Weekend** and Jamboree May 23, 24, and 25 at the Blyth Arena Complex

New this year will be a Silent Auction on Saturday, May 24 from 9 am to 12 noon. There will be a lot of great items up for grabs, including many "musical type" items to bid on. We hope that you will participate, as this is a fun way to raise funds to keep our operating costs down, so that you can enjoy a fun-filled "Barn Dance" weekend.

and Camp Grounds.

For details, call (519) 357-2329 evenings. *******



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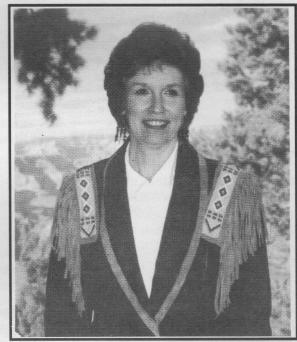
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Michael T. Wall and Singin' Bill Winter getting ready to sing their new hit "No borders and No Walls" at the Royal Canadian Legion in Wingham, Ontario on September 29, 2002.

Photo by Lou Pilkey



Michigan's Yodelling Sweetheart, LEONARD was a special treat as she performed at the Ole Tyme Fiddle Concert and Hayloft Hoe-Down last fall. Joyce credits Patsy Montana and Elton Britt as her mentors.

Continued from Page 1

I personally, grew up in Wingham and I recognized the burgeoning talent scene that grew from Doc Cruickshank's CKNX radio / television. It was a "golden era" and a "golden opportunity" that drew many professional entertainers to the area to be seen and heard live and over the airwaves. Many of whom went on to international fame and success. Because of CKNX, the country music scene, and the Barn Dance, at it's peak (circa 1950's) became as well known locally, as the Grand Ole Opry was to Nashville, at that time. Ah the good old days.

Wingham now has shows running at the Heritage Theatre, the All Ontario Singing Contest at the Westcast Complex, the North Huron Museum, the Barn Dance & Entertainment Museum, Canada's Largest Travelling Barn Dance and CKNX radio still broadcasts country music. With all that activity and history, Wingham is shaping up to become the country music hub it once was. A little ingenuity, and the right people working together could bring in a lot of tourists. It's already started.

It's that time of year again!

Just a reminder to send in your membership dues for this year, 2003, just in case you might have forgotten. Details are on the back cover of this issue. We sincerely appreciate all those who have joined or are about to join as members. It is our members who keep the Barn Dance tradition alive. Thanks!!

Winners of the Barn Dance 2002 Quilt & Silver Buckle Draw

The lucky winners of the Queen Size Star quilt were: Doug and Helen Bennett of Everett, Ontario.

Lucky winners of the Barn Dance solid Silver Buckle were: Janet and Art Hubbard of Wingham, Ontario.

On behalf of the staff and board members of the Barn Dance Historical Society and Entertainment Museum, we extend congratulations to the winners. Very special thanks to the ladies group from Bluevale for making and designing such a beautiful quilt, and to all the volunteers and participants who helped make this fundraising effort a success.

IN MEMORIAM



LORRAINE PASOWISTY - from New Hamburg, Ontario, passed away in early January. Her husband, Victor Pasowisty, was a champion fiddle player and was a member of the Barn Dance Band. Victor passed on 2 years ago. Sadly missed by family and friends, and everyone from the Barn Dance gang.

BEECHER KIRBY - Dobro legend, Beecher "Bashful Brother Oswald" Kirby, died this past October at his home in Madison, Tenn. at age 90. "Kirby", as Roy Acuff named him, was a true pioneer of the Dobro. He played most of his career with Roy Acuff's band the Smoky Mountain

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YOU'RE INVITED!!

Sun., April 6, 2003
The Barn Dance
Historical Society's
Annual General Meeting.

Starting at 11:30 a.m., at the Royal Canadian Legion, Victoria Street, Wingham, Ontario.

Come out and vote, volunteer, participate, have your say - or maybe even stand for election. We need your support.

Donuts & coffee provided. See you there!!

Boys, which began in 1936 and ended when Acuff died in 1992. His solos on songs "Wabash Cannonball" and "Great Speckled Bird" were held up as standards by other Dobro players. While visiting Nashville with friends this past October, local Dobro player, Lloyd Otterbein was just a few miles from Madison, where Brother Oswald died. He was a mentor to many, and Lloyd remembers while he was waiting in line to go to the Opry, (back in the 50's) Brother Oswald stopped and chatted with him for quite a while before he got ready for the show. "He was just like an old friend", Lloyd said. With his trademark floppy yellow hat, oversized shoes, and farmer's overalls, Dobro legend "Bashful Brother Oswald" will be remembered as a key figure in country music history.

On behalf of the members of the Barn Dance Historical Society, may our deepest sympathy go out to the families of those listed above, who were associated with our Foundation.

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Just Fiddling Around . . .

with Bill Oja



Seen at the Renfrew Bluegrass Festival this summer are left to right, one of Canada's top guitarists STEVE PITICCO, songwriter JULIE CHADBOURNE, and New Brunswick's fiddler/mandolinist (on tour with John McDermott) RAY LEGER.



Also entertaining in Vermont was the hot act "KABOOM!" out of North Bay, choreographed by fiddler / step dance champion CHAD WOLFE (l). The other members are PAM HEBERT, STEPHEN ROSIEN, KRISTA ROSEN of Pembroke, and PAUL LEMELIN of Sudbury.



Portraying Don Messer's original group "The Backwood Boys" at Brantford's Sanderson Centre are left to right, BRUCE TIMMINS of Dartmouth, N.S., SCOTT WOODS of Fergus and GREG LEMON of Toronto. This took place during the Tribute to Don Messer Show.



Over a decade ago these legendary entertainers appeared on Tillsonburg Cable Television. Vocals were by EARL and MARTHA HEYWOOD, backed by musicians LLOYD BANK on dobro, BILL MANKISS on accoridon, LYNN RUSSWURM on bass, and VICTOR PASOWISTY on fiddle



The "Tribute to the Don Messer Christmas Show" sells out again up north at Elliot Lake. At intermission we see Master of Ceremonies, JIM SWAN, teen-age sensation LINSEY BECKET, fiddling and step dancing, and Canadian Fiddle Champion SCOTT WOODS.

BOOKING THE BARN DANCE If you are interested in

If you are interested in more information about booking the Barn Dance Musical Production, please write to:
Barn Dance Bookings,
P. O. Box 68,
Wingham, Ont. NOG 2W0;
or call
Wayne Otterbein,
(home) (519) 565-2102,

or (bus.) (519) 235-0559



Barre, VT Fiddle and Step Dance Contest featured New Brunswick's premier fiddler as half-time entertainment. Seen here with Junior Class fiddler KYLE KELLY of Chapeau, Quebec and LYNDEN COULAS of Round Lake Centre, Ontario.



RAY LA MARCHE (1) of Kirkfield and BRUCE WOOD of Puslinch, get their share of trophies at the Ontario Fiddle Championship at Bobcaygeon.

COUNTRY CALENDAR



by Doreen Brown (Toronto and surrounding area)

- * Mitch Jackson Band appears Thurs.
 Sun. night each week at Crossroad
- Country Music Bar, 1544 Danforth Ave., Toronto. Tel. (416) 406-4017.
- * Appearances by Gordon Wilcox Feb. 2, Maple Leaf Jamboree, 707 Srigley St., New Market; Feb. 21, Oprey Orillia.
- * Every Sat. and Sun. Night enjoy country music at Maple Leaf Tavern, 5831 Ferry St., Niagara Falls. Phone (905) 358-6764.
- *** Country Music** the second Saturday of the month 7:30 to 11:30 at Cold Springs Hall, five miles north of Cobourg. For info call Ainos Jones (905)

372-7690.

- * Enjoy Country Music by Dave Noddle and Drivin' Rain at Moose Lodge, Lakeshore & Brown's Line, March 1 and April 26; Sun. Jam at Eurpoean Pub and Grill, 3051 Lakeshore Blvd. W., Toronto. Phone (416) 253-0660 from 5-9 pm.
- * Appearances by Doreen Brown Feb. 12, Heritage Old Tyme Fiddle and Dance, Oshawa; March 2, Maple Leaf Jamboree, Newmarket Legion, 707 Srigley St.; March 20, Bond Head Fiddle Club; March 22, Oprey Orillia, Sundial Restaurant, Galaxy Room.
- * O Brother, It's Bluegrass Show Sat., March 29, Maryhill Kinghts of Columbus Hall. Direct from Louisville, Kentucky, The Boys From Kintuc, featuring: Lorne Johnson, Ed Wells, Dan Jones, fiddle legend Art Stampler, and legendary banjo picker Butch Robbins. Al Widmeyer and his group, Lonesome Wind, along with The Rocky Saugeen Ramblers, and guest fiddle player Randy Morrison. Tickets \$10.00. Info call (519) 638-2636.
- * Country Music every Sat. afternoon at OV's, Queen St., Toronto; also at the Legion at Silverthorn and Rogers Road.

Backroads, featuring Bruce Dyer and Mike Robins at Sandy's Place, Weston Rd. - Feb. 2 9:30-1:30 pm; Also Feb. 28

to March 2; Moose Lodge, LaKeshore on Feb. 7 8 to 12 pm.

- *** Live Entertainment -** Celtic, Wed. to Sat. at 9:30. Fionne MacCools, 70 Esplanade, Toronto. Info (416) 362-2495.
- * Alton Legion has a Jamboree the first Friday of the month. Ladies bring lunch.
- * Maple Leaf Jamboree, 707 Srigley St., New Market, first Sunday of the month.
- * Come out and Enjoy an evening of fun at the Bolton Community Centre. There is lots of round and square dancing. All musicians and singers welcome. Second Wed. of the month 6:30 to 11:0 pm.
- * Oprey Orillia, with host Chuck Moore, at the Sundial Restaurant, third Sat. of the month 8 to 12 p.m. Info (705) 325-2233.
- * Heads or Tails Sports Bar and Grill, 847 Brown's Line, Etobicoke, feature E.J. Cooper on Feb. 14 - Willie Nelson Tribute Show. He has performed in Nashville, Las Vegas, Atlantic City, to name a few.

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THE FOUR STAGES OF LIFE

- 1. You believe in Santa Claus
- 2. You don't believe in Santa Claus.
- 3. You are Santa Claus.
- 4. You look like Santa Claus

BARN DANCE SOUVENIRS

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Last Sept. 29, 2002 at the Ole Tyme Fiddle Concert and Hayloft Hoe-Down Show held at the Royal Canadian Legion in Wingham from left to right are Phil Leonard, Michigan, USA; Bill Winter, Michigan, USA; Michael T. Wall, Canada; Chuck Moore, Canada; Joyce Leonard, USA; and organizer, Earl Heywood, Canada.

Photo by Lou Pilkey



HOWDY FOLKS:

Here we are at the start of a new year with our 36th issue of the Barn Dance Opera Journal, now reaching out to country music fans internationally.

It doesn't really seem all that long ago when this whole organization got started. I can well remember when 15 Wingham citizens gathered around our kitchen table to discuss the possibilities of preserving the history and legacy of the late W. T. "Doc" Cruickshank. It was 1993 when we first got the "ball

rolling" to lay the groundwork for such a project.

Several of the board members were associated with CKNX and/or the Barn Dance, and had a keen interest in developing an organization and museum that would be a glowing testament to the many traditional country music pioneers of the early CKNX Barn Dance era. Notwithstanding, carrying on the tradition, and reviving Canada's Largest Travelling Barn Dance to include original performers and promote new "up and coming" talent as well.

The organization was born on June 29, 1993, and became established as The Barn Dance Historical Society and Entertainment Museum Inc. That makes it a decade old this year, 2003, ideal for an anniversary celebration. We've come a long way in ten long years. Now, with our new museum headquarters

established, our successful Campout Jamboree in Blyth, the fall Fiddle Convention, along with Canada's Largest Travelling Barn Dance events throughout Southwestern Ontario, it's time to celebrate our anniversary year and bring together all of our members and fans who help keep the tradition alive. The Barn Dance show of mainly original performers set for March 16, at the Wingham Heritage Theatre, will be a fitting performance to kick off our 10th anniversary. An annual celebration to mark our anniversary is worth considering for the future.

Remember - - THE SHOW MUST GO ON. . .

Earl Heywood Founder, Hon. President, Advisor, Museum Curator

COME JOIN US!!

We need you as a member of

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