

# The Barn Dance Opera Journal



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## Origins and Roots of Country Music Revisited



*Jimmy Rodgers, Father of country music.*

by Grant Heywood

Country music has gone through many changes ever since it was popularized on radio and then television. Despite its popularity, many would be challenged if they were asked where the roots of country music really began. Some would say back in the 1920's while others might think it came from Nashville specifically or bluegrass or even the singing western cowboy. Tracing the roots of country music to a specific date would be a daunting task. An approximation would likely be more appropriate as country music really began as far back as the 1800's and possibly the early 1800's or even 1700's.

Bristol Tennessee on the Tennessee and Virginia border is where Appalachian mountain folk music has been popular for generations. This seems to be the cradle of country and folk music. Fiddle tunes and song styles came over from the British Isles (mainly Scottish & Irish) sometime in the 1700's. It wasn't called country music then. It was really folk music that told a story using instruments such as fiddle, guitar, penny-whistle and other stringed instruments. Appalachian mountain folk would gather together to sing songs from across the pond and many of these songs became standards amongst the people. Then in the 1800's black slaves from the southern U.S. would sing and play gospel music

which then influenced a new style called blues music.

The intertwining of Appalachian folk music and southern gospel blues music really gave birth to what we call country music. Jimmie Rodgers was an American folk hero who lived from 1897 to 1933. He is widely known as the first American country singer and was known for his rhythmic yodeling and railroad songs. The Carter Family were also early pioneers of country music of that era. During the 1930's & 1940's country music was mainly known as *hillbilly music*. Here in Canada, George Wade and Don Messer popularized the Appalachian style of country (*hillbilly*) music fiddling which was shared by parts of Ontario, the Maritimes and British Columbia. We normally call it 'old time fiddling music'. Even the Quebecois style of fiddle playing became popular and its counterpart in the state of Louisiana became known as Cajun country. The mixture of Irish, Scottish, British, French and aboriginals certainly were a part of the unique contribution to the heritage of country music in Canada.

Wilf Carter was one of Canada's first famous country music singers as well as Hank Snow, and Earl Heywood. It was around the late 1930's and early 1940's that these artists came onto the scene. Because of the popularity of cowboy movies, it spawned a whole new genre of country music called *country and western*. Since the 'big band' era was still popular on radio, bands like Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys, and Spade Cooley from California took the big band sound and cowboy music, to develop what we know as western swing music. Dance halls were jumpin' and jivin' to this new musical rage. The cowboy singers also did well, appearing on radio, television and even Hollywood movies. In Canada, Wilf Carter was known as Canada's Yodelling Cowboy, Earl Heywood was Canada's No. 1 Singing Cowboy and Hank Snow was called the Yodelling Ranger. Hank Snow eventually wound up in Nashville as one of Canada's biggest country stars in the 1950's. Canadian legend, Stompin' Tom Connors would come along much later in the 70's with his own brand of truly Canadian country/folk music.

Cowboy music was most popular in the 1950's when television really promoted this genre of country & western music. Stars like Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, Tex Ritter and many more appeared in movies and had their own television shows. Even local cowboy singer Earl Heywood

had a show on CKNX TV called *Range Rider*, and he made regular appearances on CKNX TV show *Western Roundup and Circle 8 Ranch*. This music typified the simple form of country music with vocals, harmony and romantic melancholy ballads.

Jimmy Rodgers came from Mississippi, and is regarded as the father of country music. But it was Hank Williams from Alabama, who soon became known as the father of contemporary country music. With his style of western, hillbilly, honky tonk, folk and gospel, he became one of the most popular country singer/songwriters of our time. He was popular from the mid 1940's til his untimely death in 1953. His legacy is still the benchmark for country music today. Other country, rockabilly, and country & western stars began to emerge from this golden era of country music. There was Ernest Tubb, Eddy Arnold, Patsy Cline, Red Foley, Webb Pierce, Kitty Wells and Lefty Frizell, just to name a few. Then along came Jim Reeves, Ray Price, Loretta Lynn, Johnny Cash, George Jones, Merle Haggard, and so many more.

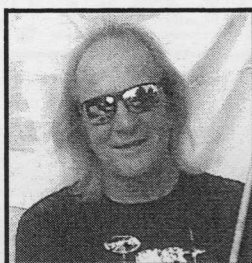
Roy Acuff was hosting the Grand Ole Opry which also broadcast over radio. Country music was 'king' until Colonel Tom Parker came along and discovered Elvis Aaron Presley. This ushered in a new style of music which was already simmering under the radar with other artists. Elvis blew the doors wide open to the era of rock and roll. Nashville had become the home of country music and didn't really embrace rock and roll music. But it didn't take long for country music to be influenced by rock & roll music. Conway Twitty, Buck Owens, Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson, Johnny Cash and later bands like Alabama. Even string and horn sections became prevalent in 1960's/70's country music. To coin a Bob Dylan phrase, 'The times they were a changin'.

*Country Rock*, became a new genre of music in the late 1960's and early '70's. Bands like The Byrds, Poco, Charlie Daniels Band, Marshall Tucker Band, The Burrito Bros. and New Riders of the Purple Sage, and of course The Eagles, married rock and country together, even though Nashville wasn't listening, they were paying attention. It was in the 1980's and 90's that crossover country became popular. The Bellamy Bros., Diamond Rio, Vince Gill, Dolly Parton, Ronnie Milsap, Tanya Tucker, Eddie Rabbitt, The Judds, Sawyer Brown, Dwight Yokam, Dixie Chicks,

*Continued on Page 3*

## The Editor Speaks

by Grant Heywood



I'm sure everyone could agree that summer just kind of flew by. Maybe it didn't feel like a normal summer but I'm sure glad we're not getting wildfires like in western Canada or hurricanes like our southern neighbours. I think we can all be thankful where we live although I heard the Farmer's Almanac is calling for a hard winter. That's something I think we're all used to anyway.

It was an interesting summer for me playing with many friends and colleagues at various venues and festivals. I got to hang out with many musicians and performers as well as fans of good music in general. When the weather was nice, I even got to work on the 'honey do' list around our property. I gave my wife a 'honey don't' list but it wasn't really well received. Oh well, I did get past page # 3 on the list, but for some reason or other it just seems to keep growing another page. I'd get rid of the list but she'd likely just make another carbon copy.

Carbon copy! Now there's a word that really doesn't belong in our vocabulary anymore. Carbon copy was when you actually took a piece of carbon paper to transfer the original copy to another. We just say 'make me a copy' today. It's kind of like when people say 'hang up' the phone. Not really, today we just push a button. We don't even roll up or roll down the windows in our vehicles anymore. We just push a button. For some of us, starting the car is just a push of

the button. When you want to cross the street in the city ... just push a button. If you want to change the channels or change the volume ... you just push a button. Even buttons are being replaced by zippers, Velcro and snaps. What's this world coming to!

Going to the cinema used to mean going to a picture show or seeing a flick. Now we just say we're going to the movies. Or watching television used to mean 'watching the tube'. There is no 'tube' anymore, they're all LED or Plasma flat screens. Even when we listen to music we may want to go back to the beginning of a song and we'd say 'rewind that'. Rewind was a term for reversing audio tape. There is no audio tape anymore. It's like when someone says they taped their musical performance. No, they recorded their performance but not likely on tape.

Many innovations that may seem normal today are relics of the past. I remember when my dad used to dress up with our kids to take them out trick or treating on Halloween. He would always say that he is putting on his 'false face' to scare people. Nobody says 'false face' anymore. It's now simply called a mask. He'd even put on his galoshes as part of his Halloween apparel. They were often called overshoes, gumboots or Wellingtons, but today they're just rubber boots or rain boots.

Our language is forever changing and I always feel we have lost some of the charm that goes with old sayings and terminology. And to that I say, as I lay on the davenport, 'horse feathers and balderdash'. Then again I could say as I lay on the chesterfield ... 'claptrap and baffle-gab'. But then I might be called a blithering idiot full of gobbledygook and gibberish.

Well maybe the words in our language are forever evolving, but one thing

## The Barn Dance Historical Society and Entertainment Museum

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for sure never changes and that's the Barn Dance Shows. If you like your country music mostly traditional with the same stellar lineup, and Jim Swan as host emcee with the ever popular Barn Dance Band, then you won't want to miss the rest of the Barn Dance performances this fall. Please check out the Barn Dance Schedule to see where the Barn Dance will be performing next. Hope to see you there at the next Barn Dance.

Comments? Please contact:

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or send a message on facebook.

## 2016 / 2017 COMING EVENTS

Date	Event Name	Place
Sun., Oct. 22	Barn Dance Show - 2:00 p.m.	Southwold Community Complex, Shedden
Sun., Oct. 29	Barn Dance Show - 2:00 p.m.	Shallow Lake Legion Auditorium, Hepworth

Continued from Page 1

Brooks & Dunn, Travis Tritt, Hank Jr., and of course the American singer/songwriter Garth Brooks, and Canadian singer/songwriter Shania Twain were at the top of the heap with their choreographed Las Vegas style shows. There were many more country music artists who became influenced by all the different music styles that were on mainstream radio and they too incorporated some of it in their songs.

Country music was popularized on television about 1969-70 by the hit Nashville television show *Hee Haw*. Buck Owens, Roy Clark, Minnie Pearl, Grandpa Jones, Gordie Tapp and Archie Campbell became regular stars every week on *Hee Haw*. The show was a big hit but showed the corny 'hayseed' side of country. It wasn't until the late 1980's early 90's that Gaylord Entertainment wanted to rid Nashville of that 'hayseed' image. Gaylord had pretty much taken over Nashville in the 1990's with a massive hotel, a brand new Grand Ole Opry location, Opryland Theme Park and eventually the Opryland Mall as well as Country Music Television. I would have to say that because of the money and holdings of Gaylord Entertainment, country music actually had its 2<sup>nd</sup> golden era. It was becoming more apparent that media and marketing influence was a major factor. Every artist needed to have a music video to accompany their next single. Later on, even Hollywood would help revive bluegrass music with the hit movie 'Oh Brother Where Art Thou'. A golden era indeed.

New stars emerged from this new Gaylord era of country music. There was the ever popular 'Nashville Now' TV show hosted by Ralph Emery, and 'new country' (as it was coined), spawned artists like Randy Travis, George Strait, Hwy. 101, Keith Whitley, Alan Jackson and others. Nashville was hitting on all cylinders and country music was becoming even more popular than ever ... but it didn't last long. Gaylord eventually quit broadcasting the Grand Ole Opry on television and radio. Opryland was replaced by a shopping mall, and many of the old haunts like Printers Alley, Twittyland, and museums soon became a memory. The only real remnants of the original country music city of Nashville are, the clubs on Broadway such as *Legends, Roberts, The Bluegrass Inn, Tootsies, and of course the mother church, The Ryman Auditorium...* although there has been interest from developers to buy the *Ryman* and replace it with offices and condos. That would be sacrilegious for sure. I doubt that this will happen but anything is possible.

Since early 2000 country music changed again and became more pop oriented including hip hop, rap, rock, blues, jazz and pretty much any musical genre imaginable. I don't mean to be rude, but today's country music barely resembles its traditional heritage but for a token banjo, fiddle or steel guitar. Today, most mainstream radio has gone for a much younger audience, and the story or essence of the song gets lost in the party atmosphere of the tune at times. A lot of radio songs (not all) just don't have the staying power of the country music we used to listen to. Some

of these younger artists are great singers, and players, but I think too often the song gets lost, and the true meaning of 'country' becomes jaded, in my opinion.

I might be an old traditionalist, and I do like all kinds of music as long as it's good, but I believe the country music industry has done itself a disservice without recognizing where the roots of country music began.

I have been relieved to have discovered *Americana music* which I think is better than much of the country music of today. It includes folk, country, western, rock, blues, rockabilly, honky tonk and traditional styles that country music was founded on. I listen to *ROOTS Radio* from Germany on the internet. There are many more Americana stations I am sure. *ROOTS Radio* happens to be my favourite. Many of my friends listen to Sirius Satellite Radio, which has

several traditional country music stations without interruption.

If you are listening to mainstream radio, award winning broadcasting personality, Randy Owen, at Classic Country Radio station 107.3 FM in Tillsburg, and John Marshall and Dan Biehman (and everyone else) at CKNX Radio AM 920, are keeping traditional country music alive on the radio. These two radio stations should be congratulated for making traditional country music a big part for their listening audience. Internet radio host, Bryce Butcher at 91.7 in Erin, Ontario also hosts a traditional country music radio show every Sunday afternoon sponsored by Paul Weber at the Commercial Tavern in Maryhill. There still is some 'real' country music to be found on the airwaves. And it includes more than your token banjo, steel guitar, or fiddle. Believe me.

## Local Country News

♦ Fiddle player and founder Shane Guse of the popular band *Western Swing Authority*, was inducted into the Canadian Country Music Hall of Honour. Shane won his fifth award as 'fiddle player of the year' at the CCMA Awards and will now be among his luminaries. Also; Shane's wife singer Stacey Lee Guse appeared on the front of *Cashbox Magazine Canada*. The *Western Swing Authority* will be appearing at the Commercial Tavern in Maryhill on Friday, October 13<sup>th</sup>.

♦ Hats off to one of the best steel guitar players around, Doug Johnson. Doug was among the nominees for this years 'steel guitar player of the year' at the CCMA Awards.

♦ Singer/songwriter, Randy Satchell and his wife Carol, took a vacation this summer to the maritime provinces where Randy performed at a couple of major country music festivals and got to pick with Kurk Bernard (of the South Mt. Band) in PEI.

♦ Country music performer, Amberley Beatty has a new cd called 'Right Back To You' which can be purchased on CD Baby on the internet. Amberley is busy doing Loretta Lynn, Patsy Cline, Connie Francis and Gretchen Wilson tributes throughout the country.

♦ Singer/songwriter, Harold MacIntyre was busy performing in familiar territory recently. Harold did a late summer tour of the Maritimes including Cape Breton.

♦ Singer/performer, Naomi Bristow has had a busy summer performing events throughout the country. I caught up with this busy girl at the Kippewa Country Music Festival in Quebec. I was subbing in on drums for Bill Lewis, in the popular Highwaymen Tribute Show. Naomi was singing 'Jolene' onstage with a backup band when I suddenly appeared from the side of the stage and began singing harmony with her. She had this silly grin on her face. Priceless. LOL

♦ Multi-instrumentalist, Al Widmeyer and his wife Sue, have moved from K/W to Goderich, Ontario. Al recently retired from Grand River Transit. You'll

likely find Al at Ernie King Music in Goderich more often now.

♦ Woodstock country music duo, Jim & Cindy Dixon have released a new cd as well as singer/songwriter/guitarist, Fred Lewis. I guess everyone in Woodstock releases their cd's at the same time. LOL

### OBITUARIES

♫ Singer/guitar player, Bill Ritchie recently passed away from cancer complications. Bill's wife, Angelle is a singer/drummer and they lived in Oshawa. Bill was a fixture on the country music scene and knew his way around a Fender Telecaster guitar. He was sarcastic but had a heart of gold. I remember Bill fondly while doing many tours with the Rick Jones 'Alan Jackson' Tribute band. He will be sadly missed by colleagues, friends and family.

♫ Singer/guitar player, John Turcotte recently passed away from cancer. John is from the K/W area and was a long time guitarist for many bands in the area. I played with John in the 'Fullhouse' band in Kitchener back in the 1970's. John was a great guitarist and always maintained a good sense of humour. He will be missed by many of his colleagues, friends and family.

♫ Chef Adams (Semeniuk) born 1927, who got his name from working in a restaurant, has passed away. Chef was from Saskatchewan and made the Toronto area his home. A country singer/songwriter, he appeared on the original Mainstreet Jamboree as well as CBC's Country Hoedown and performed many country festivals and events. Chef's numerous recordings included the song about marathon swimmer Marilyn Bell, after she conquered Lake Ontario. Chef Adams should be considered a Canadian country music pioneer. He will be missed by family and friends, including his dear friend Doreen Brown.

# THE MAGIC OF THE BARN DANCE

BY JIM SWAN

There is something in story telling referred to as suspension of disbelief. It's what allows us to accept such things as super powers, ghost stories and time travel.

A bit of that happens for every "Barn Dance Show." Johnny Brent and Elmer Purdon are somehow present every time we start the countdown that leads to the announcement "From Coast to Coast People love old Tyme Music Most" and fiddler Bill Norris and The Barn Dance band break into the theme "Down Yonder".

Our disbelief is suspended and we are transferred to a time somewhere between 1943 and 1963, the years that CKNX broadcast the Barn Dance from one of the towns or municipalities where loyal listeners tuned in each Saturday night.

The Barn Dance was already an established show when Johnny Brent joined the staff at CKNX radio in 1942, the year before I was born. Johnny's efforts and the foresight of the station's owner W.T. (Doc) Cruickshank took the show "on the road" for the next 20 years.

My first encounter with the Barn Dance was of a broadcast from Elora Ontario, probably in 1950 or 51. All of the things I've learned about the people who were part of the Barn Dance are mixed with my hazy memory to produce a mental picture of the Big CKNX Bus driven by Roy Bennett pulling into town to set up for the evening broadcast. The event was akin to the circus coming to town. (That analogy is outside the memory scope of many people, but that's another story.) As eight and nine years old, my cousin and I didn't know much about the show except that it was going to be on radio! Now in my reconstituted memory I can see Johnny Brent, Earl Heywood, Ernie King, Don and Cora Robertson, Ross Mann, Bill Mankiss, Lloyd Bank Mel Lavigne, Jack Kingston, Ward Allan, George Jordan, Archie Mann, Cactus Mac, Clarke Johnston.

We didn't get to see the live show, or to hear the entire three hour broadcast that,

according to a souvenir booklet published as part of the Barn Dance promotion at the time, would be heard by one hundred and fifty thousand listeners. But we were in the living room gathered around the radio that my uncle had tuned in to 920, and thrilled that we could hear what was happening inside that concert hall, or arena. You see there are details that just aren't registered in the memory vault. But the "magic" of radio was making its mark on my impressionable mind.

My next conscious memory of the Barn Dance was 1963 at the Woodstock Fair Grounds. It was likely one of the last live presentations of the show. I was working at CKOX, the Woodstock station owned and operated by Monty Weary, an engineer who had abandoned a career at CBC to operate his own station. Like Doc Cruickshank, his interest was the technical magic of radio.

One of the most popular shows on the Woodstock station was "The Oxford County Ranch House" a request show hosted by Dave Timms. Earl Heywood's song "Pickin' Flowers" was requested as frequently as those of Hank Snow, so when we learned that he was coming to town we had to be there. It is very likely that Marilyn Caswell, who along with her husband Joe was the moving force behind the Hank Snow Fan Club, were also responsible for making sure Earl's record got played. I have a very hazy recollection of talking to Earl after the show, relating to him the popularity of his record on the "Ranch House". Al Cherney was on that show too. Cherney was already being featured on "Country Hoedown" where he would eventually take residence as the show's fiddler. And of course, the show was MC'd by Johnny Brent.

The Barn Dance Shows produced by the Barn Dance Historical Society have now been staged for almost as long as the original travelling show was on the air. The musicians who make up the Barn Dance Band, Fred Lewis on guitar, Al Alderson on bass, Bill Norris on fiddle, drummer Grant Heywood, and music director Doug Dietrich on steel guitar back up singers and instrumen-

talists who maintain the purest of traditional country music. Young entertainers like Naomi Bristow, Crystal Gage and Ryan St. Denis, and seasoned performers like John and Geneva Heaman, Randy Satchell, Johnny Burke, Harold MacIntyre and Jimmy Phair as well as Country Music hall of Famers like Larry Mercy and Marie Bottrell continue to make the shows "must see" when the show comes to town.

When I stand on stage and echo the words of Johnny Brent to herald the beginning of another memory making Barn Dance Show disbelief is suspended. We don't so much go back in time as we suspend it. Once the show begins we are in the moment, broadcasting to the past the present and the future. Because "From Coast to Coast, (and decade to decade) People Like Old Tyme Music Most"

## Booking the Barn Dance

*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. N0G 2W0;  
or call ~ (519) 530-8000*

*E-mail: [webmaster@thebardance.ca](mailto:webmaster@thebardance.ca)*



*Canada's Singing Newfoundlander, Michael T. Wall has toured Australia four times already. He was inducted into the Australian Country Music Hall of Fame. Michael has many recordings, including *The Recycling Song*, which received 3 awards and a letter from Al Gore.*

*Michael's new Christmas cd includes *Santa Is Canadian*, and *The Singing Snow Man*, (tribute to Hank Snow) & also recorded by Ray B. Jones and 2 others.*

## BARN DANCE SOUVENIRS

Souvenir Mugs -	\$ 5.00 ea.
CD - Vol. 1	\$15.00 ea.
CD - Vol. 2	\$15.00 ea.
CD - Vol. 3	\$15.00 ea.
CD - Vol. 1, 2 & 3	\$40.00 set
Cassette - Vol. 1	\$ 6.00 ea.
Cassette - Vol. 2	\$ 6.00 ea.
Cassette - Vol. 3	\$ 6.00 ea.
Souvenir 1997 Calendar	\$ 5.00 ea.
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Sizes S, M, L, XL, XXL	\$20.00 ea.
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NEW Al Cherny CD - "Live / The Lost Recordings"	\$15.00 ea.
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Best of The Barn Dance CD	\$15.00 ea.

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## Fred Lewis / Whiskey, Whitley & Time, CD Review



by Grant Heywood

As you may already know, Fred Lewis is the guitar player vocalist with the Barn Dance Band. Besides holding down a day job and gigging almost every weekend, Fred has been quietly working as a songwriter and recording his first CD. It's been a long time coming but I have to say it was worth the wait.

Fred started this recording project well over 2 years ago and he had it in his mind to record in Nashville with some of the best. Fred and his dad, Bill, made the trek to Nashville where Fred hired his guitar hero Brent Mason as well as many other members of the Nashville 'A' team to record his CD. Local pedal steel great, Doug Johnson also plays on the CD as well as Stacey Lee Guse, and myself (Grant Heywood) on background vocals. Fred played mainly acoustic guitar and sang his heart out on every track.

Although there are only 6 tracks on this CD, every track is stellar and Fred gets to concentrate on getting his vocal message across. I've always admired Fred's vocal style and his selection of tunes gives him a chance to showcase his vocal talent. The very catchy self-penned 'I Love You, I Do', has a slight Joe Diffie feel that sets up everything to follow. One of my favourites is the Fred Lewis/David C. Martin song, 'Saviour'. It's almost like a quick bluegrass type shuffle that makes for a great cruisin' song while driving. Fred hit it out of the park when he wrote 'Whiskey, Whitley,

and Time'. It's a well-crafted tune that I could listen to over and over and never get tired of it. The title says it all, but the song says it best. It's too bad that mainstream radio doesn't grab this one for their playlist. It's a winner.

'Caught Up With the Past', written by Fred and David C. Martin, puts a little edge in Fred's country style and the driving beat is quite infectious. Fred's song 'Kept Her in a Cage' has a Waylon style half time beat that really works here. I like the

way Fred has weaved the lyrics in this song. It definitely paints a different picture of love, honour, and cheatin'. If you've ever seen Fred and his band Ridin' High, you'll know that he always includes this last song in his repertoire. It's a classic Z.Z. Top song called 'She Loves My Automobile', and this one is a barn burner for sure. Great delivery on this song, as the musicians get to showcase some smokin' hot guitar, fiddle, slide & dobro and even drums. It's a free for all of great pickin'.

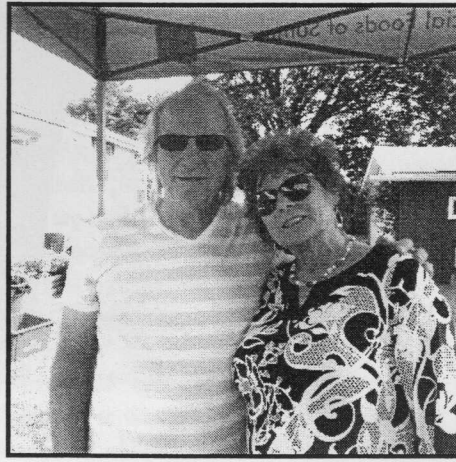
Fred labored on this project for quite a while but the performance and production speaks for itself. Even the packaging is very professional, which was designed by Fred's dad, Bill and photo by Erwin Loewen. The CD was recorded at the Sound Shop, Nashville, TN, and overdubs at Phase One Toronto, Emac in London, and Myth Maker Studio in Toronto. Produced by David C. Martin, engineered by Mark Capps, mixed by Michael Jack and mastered by Nashville's own Hank Williams. This is a CD that should be in your collection, not the least in your vehicle CD player. Good job Fred. Proud to be a part of this project.

There is no info. re: ordering this CD. Contact Fred Lewis directly or whenever you see his band Ridin' High perform or whenever the Barn Dance Band has a show. I'm sure Fred would be proud to sell you a copy of his CD and sign it as well.

# Country Music Memories



*Paul Weber, Uncle Jim and Mike Weber, seen here entertaining on the porch at the annual Weber Corn Roast Picnic & Jam this past August.*



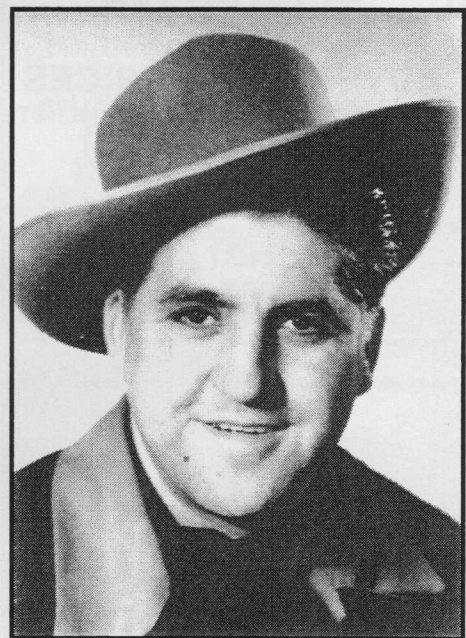
*Grant Heywood and Lena Connors (Stompin' Tom's wife) got to chat and enjoy the music at the Weber Corn Roast Picnic & Jam.*



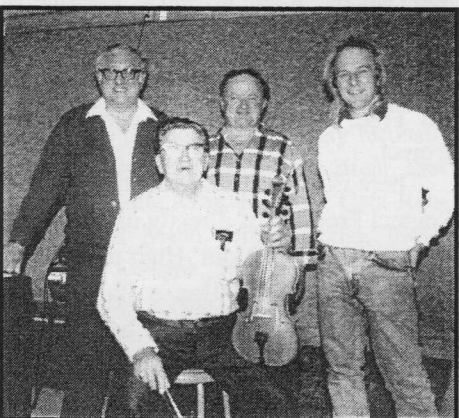
*Part of the original Barn Dance Gang, stand-up bass player, Slim Boucher, seen here pickin' the banjo. He was quite good at it too.*



*Here is a picture of sound/lighting crew Scott Taylor and Wayne Greve with Barn Dance Campout Jamboree chairman Bill Simmermaker, at an much earlier Blyth Barn Dance Campout Jamboree. My how time flies. Look at all the hair.*



*Original Barn Dance fiddler in the 1950's, Mel Lavigne. Mel was the first old time fiddler champion at the Shelburne old time fiddle contest.*



*Bill Mankiss, Mel Lavigne (seated), Ken Ducharme, and Grant Heywood, at the Ernie King Recording Studio in Wingham (circa early 80's), taking time to pose after a recording session.*

## COUNTRY CALENDAR



by Doreen Brown

(Toronto and surrounding area)

for upcoming appearances/jamborees - contact Hensall Circle Jamboree, 456 Hensall Circle, Mississauga, ON 905-277-2902.

Hedley Charles - DJ from Burnie, Tasmania, Australia. Whom is a wonderful DJ and has been playing my music the past 20 years, among other Canadian artists. For further interest, he can be contacted at [hedleycharles@hotmail.com](mailto:hedleycharles@hotmail.com)

Appearances by Gerald Davidson - the country versatile, please visit [www.countryversatiles.com](http://www.countryversatiles.com)

Congratulations to well known Michael T. Wall - the singing New Foundlander, 20 greatest hits, has been nominated by the NTCM in Iowa by Bob Everhart, as CD of the year.

Army, navy and air force vets club - come in and enjoy yourself anytime. Visitors are always welcome. Located at 765 Third St, Mississauga, ON call 905-274-3821.

Appearances by Joe Tucker and Second Wind - country music band, call 905-855-3351 for more information.

For upcoming appearances by Bluegrass Group, Rhyme'n Reason, Bluegrass/Gospel - contact [rhymereasonbluegrass.shutterfly.com](mailto:rhymereasonbluegrass.shutterfly.com) or call 905-679-4049, bluegrass with class.

Many Canadian and American artists will have been familiar with the famous Horseshoe Tavern in the Spadina and Queen area in Toronto. A new book has just been released written by David MacPherson, A complete history of Toronto's Horseshoe Tavern, the birthplace of Canadian rock. To coincide with it's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary this book is available through amazon, [www.horseshoetavernbook.com](http://www.horseshoetavernbook.com). The writer of this column and many others' will remember the wonderful entertainment through the years. For some; Willie Nelson, Loretta Lynn, Stompin Tom Connors, Mac Wiseman, The Stonemans, Wilma Lee and Stony Cooper, Waylon Jennings. Some Canadian artists: Wes Chapman, Buntie Petrie, Slim Rose, Slim Celsie, Don Celsie, Johnny Burke, Norma Gayle, Roy Penney, Chef Adams, Garry Cooper, Al Hooper. Whomever reads this column, can likely remember many more. My late friend Lynn Russwurm would have likely remembered many more. There was likely many more local bands or artists that I did not see or was aware of.

In addition to the above - for many years there were bus trips to Nashville/Wheeling, West Virginia from the Horseshoe hosted by my late friend, Juanita Garron, mother of country music, also aunt Bea.

My long time friend, Chef Adams - It is never easy losing a country music friend and this writer is saddened by the recent loss; to preface my story, I

met up with Chef in the early 90's at our classic country music reunion in Lindsay. Chef was no stranger as I knew him in the 50's when Slim, Doug Rose, lead guitar player played in his band at the famous Brass Rail Tavern in Toronto, was married to Doug at that time. When Chef and I chatted in Lindsay, he had retired from the road and we decided to sing together. We had great times, out sometimes three times a week to places in Oshawa, Whitby, Holland Landing, and at benefits. We belonged to the Bond Head Fiddle Club and played with them at the Beeton Fair many times. At one point, we put on a benefit at the Newmarket Legion for the late, Slim Pringle. Chef managed the entertainment and I signed in artists. That day 80 entertainers got time on stage. We also sang together and as singles at the then well known Oprey Orillia many times, this show was put on by the late Chuck Moore. We also got a group together and were invited to play on Main Stage and Lobby at Roy Thomson Hall. Some time later, Chef decided he wanted to start his own jamboree so we drove to many places until he found Baldwin. He thought a lot about what he wanted to call it and decided to name it Maple Leaf Jamboree. Sure many readers will remember the great times there. Previously to that country music ambassador, Michael T. Wall suggested I do a recording. Chef assembled great artists for me and also wrote a song, namely Blue Mountain Love. Which has received extensive international airplay. Later a second recording was done, I wrote 3 and Michael T Wall also wrote 3. All songs above still receiving international airplay. Chef was a country gentleman, a promoter, a good friend and I will always be grateful to him for his support over the years and will miss him. To quote a good friend whom recently sent me a poem: to the effect with jealousy in music, respect the person and the work that they put in it.

\* 4th Carroll Baker 20th Anniversary Concert, guelph river run centre - Visit their website at [riverrun.ca](http://riverrun.ca)

\* Oct 1 - Purple Hill has a show, namely, east coast calling with the following artists Roy Payne, The Canadian icon; Frazer Newcombe from Nova Scotia, Sandra Glabb, Mattawa; Tiffany Foster, Billy Macinnis. The Purple Hill Country Show, call Anna 519-461-0538 or go online at [www.purplehillcountryhall.com](http://www.purplehillcountryhall.com).

\* Oct. 19 - Stories and songs of Stompin Tom featuring Whiskey Jack as follows - Joshua

Bates performing at the Arts Centre, located at 1 Main St., Athens, ON. Starting at 8 pm. For tickets for JB Kelly in Brockville Athens Township office 613-924-2056. Oct. 27th Seneca Queen Theatre, 4624 Queen St, Niagara Falls, ON at 8 pm, For tickets call 905-253-9461, Oct 28th Milton Theatre for the Arts, Mattamy Theatre, 1010 Main St, Milton at 8 pm. Tickets are at First Ontario Arts Centre Milton or call 905-875-5399. Nov 4 - Lighthouse Theatre, 247 Main St, Port Dover, ON at 8 pm For tickets call 1-888-779-7703.

\* The following appearances are at the New Foundland Club. Located at Birchmount Rd and Kingston Rd in Scarborough or call for more information at 416-267-8406. Appearances are as follows: Oct 7 - Jason Martin. Oct 14 - Duel Exhaust. Oct 21 - Johnnie Wells. Oct 28 - Starlite. Nov 4 - Duel Exhaust. Nov 11 - Johnnie Wells. Nov 18 - Jason Martin. Nov 25 - Starlite. Dec 2 - Jason Martin. Dec 9 - Duel Exhaust. Dec 16 - Kevin Turner. Dec 23 - Johnnie Wells. Dec 30 - Starlite. Dec 31 - High Court Country.

As of the writing, I would like to share with my readers' the difficult time I am having as my husband is seriously ill. I had entertained the thought of not doing this Column, however, because Country Music is such a big part of my life and I care about all my readers', decided I would do the best I can at this time. With your prayers, I know I will persevere.

Thanking all readers, entertainers, fans for all your past and present support of the Barn Dance Historical Society. Also to wish you good health, happiness for a wonderful Christmas season and all the best in 2018!

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# BARN DANCE CORNER

by Peter Saros

In the coming editions of *The Barn Dance Opera Journal* I would like to dedicate the space allotted this column to explore the relationship between the emergence of commercial country music radio and the concept of traveling barn dances. It seems an appropriate topic, as well as a timely one, for a number of serendipitous reasons.

I guess the first nudge toward exploring this relationship came while reading Grant Heywood's retelling of the history of The Saturday Night Barn Dance in the 2017 summer edition of this publication, and how Canada's Largest Traveling Barn Dance came to be. In that piece, Heywood said, "I don't believe I'm unassuming when I say that Canada's largest Travelling Barn Dance has survived all these years, because it was the Grand Ole Opry of the north." I will contend the Barn Dance is something more than just the Opry of the north. It deserves to stand on its own merits and unique regional history outside the shadow of of Nashville's WSM *Grand Ole Opry*,

Chicago's WLS' *National Barn Dance*, or Shreveport's *Louisiana Hayride*. That the Barn Dance still exists and operates as a live show is noteworthy in-and-of-itself.

I stumbled upon two other pieces that seemed intent on driving me to explore this idea further. While week-end summer traveling through Williamsford, Ontario in Grey County I stopped at the *Great Books & Cafe* which operates out of an old grist mill dating back to 1850. The roots of the bookstore itself date back to 1977 when it operated on Jarvis Street near the CBC building in downtown Toronto. On its shelves I found Sandy Stewart's 1975 book "A Pictorial History of Radio in Canada." In it Stewart (a former CBC employee) details how both a lack of Canadian content – and government funding – led to circumstances demanding live and local talent in the emergent Canadian radio broadcasting industry. 'Doc' Cruikshank's original broadcasts from the CKNX studio in downtown Wingham are evidence of such dependence on live and local talent.

The story sounds familiar.

The second bit of reading that goosed me along this path of thinking. There was something particularly special about the history of Canada's Largest Travelling Barn Dance and it was an article from *The Journal of Country Music: The Magazine of the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum*. The article was titled "Barn Dance in a Tent: John Lair's Renfro Valley Tent shows 1942-1947 Part One" and was written by Kentucky-based historian Harry Rice. The piece "details the origins of impresario Lair's traveling variation of the *Renfro Valley Barn Dance* and its first year on the road, in 1942."

So with the "It's the Saturday Night Barn Dance" CD playing in the background, my mind turns toward the many wonderful rediscoveries I hope to make in reopening the history of Barn Dance in Ontario as a special, stand-alone tradition of significance. The stories, characters, and music are rich and plentiful. *Remember, the show must go on!*

## REAL COUNTRY MUSIC SONG TITLES

- ★ I Got In At 2 With a 10, And Woke Up At 10 With a 2.
- ★ I Don't Want Your Body If Your Heart's Not In It
- ★ I Changed Her Oil, She Changed My Life
- ★ Her Body Couldn't Keep You Off My Mind

