



# THE BARN DANCE OPERA JOURNAL

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Barn Dance Website: [www.thebardance.ca](http://www.thebardance.ca)

## WHAT THE BARN DANCE MEANS TO ME

by Richard Holm

*Richard Holm is a pastor, but also an avid country fan (atic) who is on the board of directors for the Barn Dance Historical Society. Several weeks ago, Richard sent me an article he wrote about his country music background and reflected on the Barn Dance past and present. Richard tells it best. Here is his story.*

The sound of the radio was staple in our house and barn. Before I knew how to turn the knobs, I knew the call letters of CKNX, and CFRB. We listened to CKNX at noon for the farm news, then switched to CFRB, where Kate Aitken had a show, Maggie Muggins had Mr. McGarrity for a neighbour, and then it was time for "The Happy Gang," with Bert Pearl and Joe Niosi. As an aside, I met a Mr. Niosi in Ilderton not too many years ago, as he was loading sound equipment into his car, and discovered he was a cousin to that radio personality. Then the radio would be turned back to CKNX until the next noon.

So I soaked up the songs of country music, and Saturday nights were special. Chores lasted from 7 to 9, and I would try to hurry through the first hour of my responsibilities so that I had more time to spend near the radio for "The CKNX Saturday Night Barn Dance!" Once the chores were finished, I would wait for a good spot in the programming to quickly run up to the house so I wouldn't miss too much of the show.

What a thrill it was when I was old enough to stay up until 10 o'clock to listen right to the end of the show. And oh,



*CKNX Wingham Barn Dance, late 40s/early 50s era, from left to right, Lloyd Bank, Ward Allen, Jack Kingston, Earl Heywood, Mel Lavigne, and Bill Mankiss*

how special it was the night my parents finished the barn work real early and took me along to Neustadt to actually see the Barn Dance, and see the performers that I knew only by name - Johnny Brent, Cactus Mack, Geordie Jordan, and a host of others. I think I was only about 4 years old at the time. But that music had a hold on me.

When I was 8, I got my first guitar right out of the Eaton's catalogue, a Roy Rogers special, for \$14.98. What a special ride to the train station to pick it up! I tuned it Hawaiian-style, and discovered where to slide the steel to play along with songs.

One particularly vivid memory from that time was a new year's celebration at my grandparents home. I was sitting on the floor of the large country kitchen in front of the big old Deforest-Crosley floor-model radio with the green tuning eye, and hear the announcer say that Hank Williams had died, so it must have been 1953, and I was just 11 years old.

A few years later, I was taking lessons on the steel guitar. One of the other students was taking lessons spanish-style,

some guy by the name of Hugh Elder.

About the same time, I was trying to learn the hit songs of the time. One of my chores was mucking out calf pens every Saturday morning. I don't know if CKNX had any special programming from 9-12, but they seemed to play many of the current hits of the time, and the barn radio was always turned on full volume. It always took me all morning to finish that job, because it was frequently interrupted by a song I liked, and I would stop mucking, grab a scribbler and a pencil, and jot down a line or two of the song. Then I'd leave a few blank lines because I couldn't write fast enough, and then do another line or two. Sometimes it took months to fill in the blanks to complete a song.

Sometime during high school years, (the Mercey brothers also went to Hanover High), Larry Mercey was selling his KEIL amplifier, and I managed to scrape together enough to buy it and a microphone. I later added a pick-up for that old guitar

In my first year of university, a friend played spanish-style guitar, and showed

*Continued on Page 3*



## The Editor Speaks

by Grant Heywood

By now, we've all become quite exhausted from the current pandemic known as COVID 19. This isn't the first time we've seen a worldwide pandemic, as history shows there have been several others before this one. What makes this one different is not the scale of the pandemic, but living in the age of information has reduced common sense to it's lowest common denominator.

After over a year and a half of living with covid, it has taught me a lot about people in general. It seems that our ability to be able to access information on the internet, has turned some people into what we call 'I know more than you morons'. I believe everybody has the right to check out alternate beliefs or theories, but that doesn't mean that it's true.

In today's world, many of us are skeptical of scams, governments, authority, and even doctors and scientists. Fear leads to skepticism, as we have seen recently with the populist movement in governments over the last four years. If we look back on history, it is evident that had we not been inoculated against many diseases that were rampant, such as polio, for example, we would most certainly be a non-progressive society dying in greater numbers daily.

During Covid, I have seen reli-

gious leaders espouse personal rights and freedoms to be able to override the law of the land by exposing their congregation to the virus just to be able to worship in church. Common sense tells me that they could have had a 'drive in' church service and alleviated all the publicity and fines.

I have friends who have actually gotten covid 19, and I have other friends who denied that the disease even exists, or consider it's a worldwide conspiracy. The same goes for anti-maskers. We have rules and regulations to protect the vulnerable, that say we must wear a mask when gathering with other people or entering a store. What's the big deal here! Wearing a mask is the same as wearing a hard hat and safety boots on a job site, or wearing a helmet, when riding a motorcycle or bicycle. Kind of like, 'No shirt, no shoes ...no service'.

I have friends and family that work in emergency rooms, hospitals, and nursing homes, who have seen the results of Covid 19 first hand. Please don't tell me that it's not real or it's some concocted conspiracy. Almost two years of watching some of these people deal with real life situations, death, people losing their businesses, their homes, their jobs, turning their families upside down. Enough is enough. Now that we are starting to emerge from this pandemic, I am sure there will be lots of time to ask questions. But I will remember those who put others in harms way, just because they thought their rights and freedoms were being violated or that we were all being subjected to a

de-population experiment. I will remember those who put themselves first before thinking of others.

Our vaccination rate is climbing every day, and that means it won't be long before we'll be able to gather with friends again and enjoy the comfort of music. Hope to see you in 2022 when we hopefully anticipate all of our Barn Dance Shows to be in full swing. I can't wait.

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### 2021-22 COMING EVENTS

Date	Event Name	Place
May 2022	23rd Campout Jamboree	Blyth Arena and Campgrounds, Blyth, ON

*Continued on Page 1*

me a few chords. I found a round-top guitar at a pawn shop for \$7, and though the neck had come out of the body, I knew I could fix it. And I did! That became my go-to guitar for the next several years, because it had three advantages - I could play standing up instead of sitting, it had a narrower neck (easier to get my hand around), and a curved fret-board (easier to push down the strings).

Soon after, a local band leader needed a singer and rhythm player for his band, and I began doing Saturday night gigs with him (fiddler), plus a drummer and an accordion player. Mostly we played for wedding receptions and showers, which were then held a few weeks after the honeymoon.

During seminary years, folk music was coming on strong, and I was the guitar player for a trio we called "The Fiery Furnace Five." The other instruments were a ukelele and a washboard. It was also the era of anti-establishment and anti-authority, and The Fiery Furnace Five gathered a somewhat negative image for a group of would-be ministers. However, we all managed to graduate.

When I completed seminary, I served our church in Smiths Falls for a year, and that ended my time with Uncle Norm and his band. I did a few solo gigs of the folk type, and while there I bought my next guitar, an Emperador, which was a pretty good Japanese copy of the Gibson J3. I remember that it cost \$70 at the time.

My first parish was St. James New Dundee, and St. James, Mannheim. I arrived there in June of 1969. It wasn't long before different members of the congregation would invite me to their homes and to bring the guitar for a jam session. That fall I invited each of those musicians to my home for a jam session, and invited any who wanted to join me in the band to play for a dance for congregation members. It was a popular idea, and we were asked to make those dances a regular thing, which was about every two months or so. Of course, there was only one possible name for the band - St. James country. We were the first live band that ever played for a square dance event. It was held in Guelph, and Johnny Davidson was the caller. Until that time, all such events used a phonograph.

It didn't take long to realize that we had too many rhythm players and no bass players, so I bought a Raven bass guitar (again, \$70), and taught myself how to play the bass. Then one of the rhythm players lost the tip of his left index finger in an accident, and decided that he could

play the bass with using that finger, so I was back on rhythm and singing.

My next parish was in Oakville, and though I returned to New Dundee for a few more dances, St. James Country died away. During my ten years there, my only musical outlet was playing Sunday School songs for the children each week, and we developed a special songbook of perhaps 50 songs, and probably infringed on several copyright laws in the process.

When I moved to Woodstock, again my only music was in the church. But a few years later I discovered jammin'. My very first jam was at the Woodstock Fish and Game Club. Over the years I have gone to several events, some just annual weekend events, others that were weekly. My most regular jams in winter were in Ingersoll, and in summer at Casey's Park, just south of Ingersoll, although a few years I travelled to Thamesford, and occasionally to St. Williams, or Tillsonburg, and a few other venues.

Many times in those early years a jam would be without a lead instrument, and so I decided to learn to play the fiddle to help fill in. I had refinished an old family heirloom, and was beginning to learn, but decided a teacher would be very advantageous. I found one in Ingersoll, Gord Elson, who passed away last year, but Gord helped me become at least a passable fiddler. He also just happens to be Jim Swan's brother-in-law.

About the same time that I started jammin', and meeting other jammers, we also had a new church member move from Iowa, and he asked me to find some musicians to play with him in order to do some fundraisers for the youth in the area. Paul had written a few songs, although mostly we just did covers of well-known and popular classic country music. We probably did half a dozen of those fundraisers while Paul was with us.

One year I was asked to put together a band for a neighbouring church who wanted some entertainment at their corn roast celebrating a successful growing season for their FoodGrains project. I did, and when we were being introduced, they also asked for the name of the band. We had no name, but they persisted. I said that it was a mishap how I managed to get these other guys together, so just call us the Ole Country Mishaps. Which is how the band and its name were born. Although occasionally we get called the Misfits, which is also not entirely inaccurate.

All of us like to make music, usually do it for free, sometimes for gas money,

sometimes we pay to play, and I tried to find nursing home and senior residence venues for the band. At the time of the onset of the pandemic, the Mishaps had 3 or 4 regular gigs per month, I was running a Sunday afternoon jam once a month in Woodstock, playing bass at a weekly jam in Ingersoll, and playing fiddle with a different group on Monday evenings at a nursing home in Woodstock. The were "wheel-chair dances," and volunteers would wheel residents around the floor in their wheel chairs. A few who were still quite mobile would do "foot dances."

I got the band together last August for a jam of our own, and a few weeks later we did an outdoor concert "Under the Maples" as a fundraiser for our church's refugee family who fled Myanmar more than 20 years ago. That was the last time that we've been able to get together for the sake for the music.

During university days, I dropped in on Lynn Russwurm, and he gave me one of his songs, "Mountain Climber," and a children's song, written by his wife. Lynn grew up near my home, and his sister attended my church's youth group. Many years later he invited me to join the board of the Barn Dance Society. I put him off. "Maybe when I retire." Well, I retired in 2008, and at my very first meeting of the board, one of the members I met was Wayne Otterbein, a distant cousin I hadn't seen in 20 years, Sadly, Wayne passed away a year later.

While the board hasn't been able to meet in the past year, or to plan what was, and may still be, the final Barn Dance Jamboree, I have not regretted accepting Lynn's invitation to join the board. It has certainly been a great experience, trying to help carry out the board's plan for the jamboree weekend. At my first jamboree, one of my jobs was to help Ernie King sell "Share-the-wealth" tickets. We waited for people to walk by, and perhaps stop to buy their tickets. I'm no salesman, but I could see that we needed a different approach. The following year Ruth put me in charge of selling those tickets, so if you've attended any of our jamborees in the past 10 years, you know I've been in your face, inviting you to share the wealth.

It's been a great opportunity to meet so many different people, performers and fans of the music I grew up with and still enjoy making. And just maybe, we will soon be able to get together again, and keep the music rolling.

# WHO REMEMBERS THIS?

by Grant Heywood

Times have changed, and in today's world we are offered multiple choices when it comes to buying confectionery products. But that wasn't the case with gum. I can remember going to the corner store, and there was quite a variety of chewing gum back in the 50's and 60's.

As young kids, we'd buy packs of hockey cards just so we could inhale the smell of the gum as we un-wrapped the package. Dentyne was always an adult gum, as were Clorets. When you were a kid, you didn't really care about the oral benefits of gum. Even Wrigelys Spearmint, Double-mint, and Juicy Fruit were considered adult chewing gums.

Thrills gum was always a favourite. I think the fact that it was purple, kind of made you want to try it out. And when you did put a few in your mouth, it had the flavour of soap. Yuk! Chiclets were another favourite, and it was fun to shake the box or blow into an empty Chiclets box to make a razy sound. Today, Trident & Extra have kind of taken the place of some of these products.

But being a kid, it was always fun to put pennies into the gumball machine. I can remember trying to win a lucky rabbit's foot charm, by turning the handle of the machine, hoping to get a silver ball. When you turned in a silver ball, you'd be rewarded with a coloured, lucky rabbit's foot. (Not so lucky for the

rabbit) I have memories of a local teenager who used to try and get all the silver balls out of the gumball machine in front of the pool hall in Wingham. He'd even turn the machine upside down and shake the machine to try and get all the silver balls to gravitate towards the bottom of the machine where they were dispensed.

Then the gumball machines became 5 cent machines, and contained the whopper of all chewing gum.....the Jawbreaker. I remember having contests to see who could get the most Jawbreakers into their mouth. There was also a package of stick gum like Wrigely's, called Black Cat. It was a licorice black gum I think. There was a gum kind of like Black Cat gum, but only sold in novelty stores. When I was on the road with my first band, we bought some of this black gum as a prank. We gave it to our unsuspecting road manager and it turned his teeth black. That didn't go over so well.

Bubble gum was definitely the most popular with kids. Two brands that come to mind are, Dubble Bubble and Bazooka Joe, bubble gum. They were individually wrapped in a waxy paper, which included a short comic, and cost 1 or 2 cents for one. What a bargain. I lost a lot of tooth fillings chewing these particular brands of bubble gum. Then along came Hubba Bubba bubble gum to challenge

Dubble Bubble and Bazooka Joe. We kids would put at least two pieces of bubble gum in our mouth and try to see who could blow the biggest bubble, often times having the bubble break and cover our entire face. It was hard to get that stuff off.

Bubble gum isn't as popular as it once was, but the bubble gum flavour is a favourite, at ice cream stores. Nowadays, people are more liable to buy Tic Tacs, or Mentos. But you could always tell how popular gum was just by looking at all the patches of used gum stuck to the bottom of the seat at baseball parks and hockey arenas. At 5 or 10 cents a pack, gum was generally a pretty good deal. I think dentists got a lot of business filling teeth from kids chewing bubble gum. I should know, I'm one of them.



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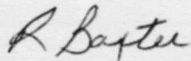
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**COVID-19 Announcement:**

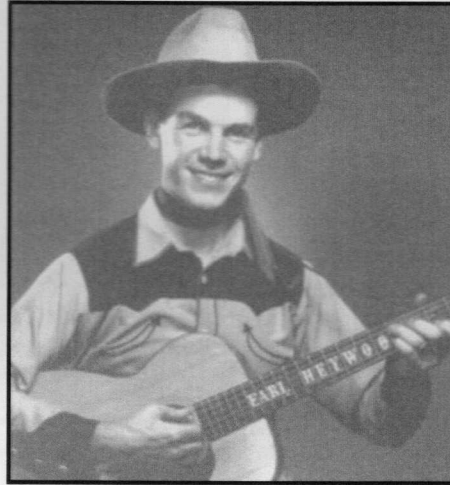
Dear Barn Dance Members,  
Friends and Campers;  
Due to the continuation of  
COVID-19 and the restrictions  
imposed by the government,  
local health unit and the  
municipality, we will not be  
able to hold our annual Barn  
Dance Jamboree and  
Campout again this year.  
Hopefully, we can reassess  
the situation early in 2022  
once people receive their  
vaccine and COVID-19  
subsidies. In the meantime,  
we wish you a safe and  
happy summer.



Ruth Baxter, President

## EARL HEYWOOD INDUCTED INTO THE LONDON MUSIC HALL OF FAMCE

by Grant Heywood



On June 8<sup>th</sup>, Earl Heywood was inducted into the London Music Hall of Fame. As the 'son of Earl', I had the honours of making an acceptance speech and I was glad to have Jim Swan, Larry Mercey, and Doug Dietrich, give a short speech at the induction ceremony, (which was done on video and a virtual broadcast).

My Dad would have been very pleased to be included with many others in the London Music Hall of Fame. Dad worked and performed in London early on in his career and lived not far from London, near Exeter, Ontario. The ceremony brought back a lot of memories for me, my sister, and our families. My mother is now 97, and resides in a nursing home, and I am sure she would have been pleased her husband was honoured posthumously. London deserves credit for initiating a London Music Hall of Fame, as there are many talented people from the London area who had their moment of fame. It might be a stepping stone for other smaller, and larger communities to recognize talent in such a way.

### BARN DANCE JOURNAL ADVERTISING PRICES

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## 23<sup>RD</sup> FINAL BLYTH BARN DANCE JAMBOREE CAMPOUT WEEKEND

Very soon, next May 2022, we hope to be celebrating our 23rd and final, Blyth Barn Dance Jamboree Campout Weekend. We will be letting you now the all-star lineup for the show, once details are finalized. Please stay tuned. It's going to be a humdinger of a weekend!



Rv's and trailers



Live Barn Dance stage

## 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.
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Souvenir 1997 Calendar	\$ 5.00 ea.
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Sizes S, M, L, XL, XXL	\$20.00 ea.
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Best of The Barn Dance CD	\$15.00 ea.

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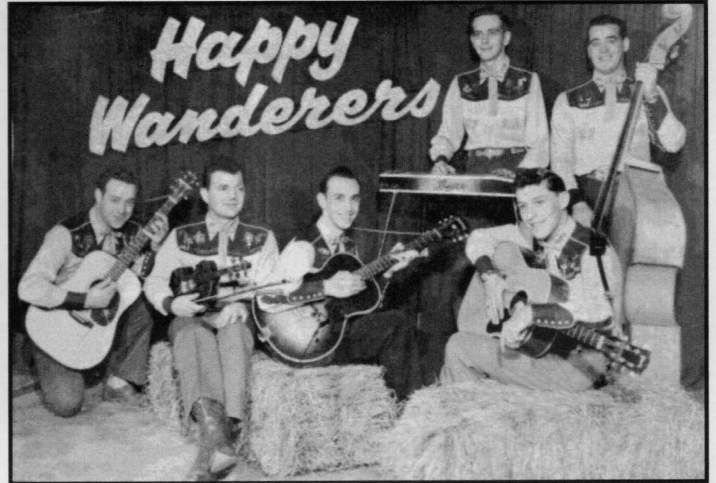
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# MUSIC & MEMORIES



*An older CKNX Ranch Boys picture. Left to right; CKNX Manager, Bud Cruickshank, Archie Mann/fiddle, Don Robertson/bass, Cactus Mac/singer, Ross Mann/fiddle. Front row; George Jordan/square dance caller, Pauline Swanson/singer and Sweetheart of the Barn Dance, Fred Templeman/banjo and mandolin, Johnny Brent Barn Dance MC.*



*CFRA Radio "Happy Wanderers" left to right sitting; Joe Brown, Ward Allen, Vince Lebeau, Bob King. Standing; Lynn Strauff, and Ken Reynolds.*



*The Singing Howard Sisters, with Barn Dance accordionist, Hap Swatridge (front), CKNX Radio engineer, Elmer Purdon, (right) CKNX Barn Dance singer, Earl Heywood.*



*Barn Dance Gospel host/singer Betty Beer with Michael T. Wall, legendary singing Newfoundlander, backstage at the Blyth Gospel Show.*



*Larry Mercey seen here at a Barn Dance Show, with Randy Satchell.*



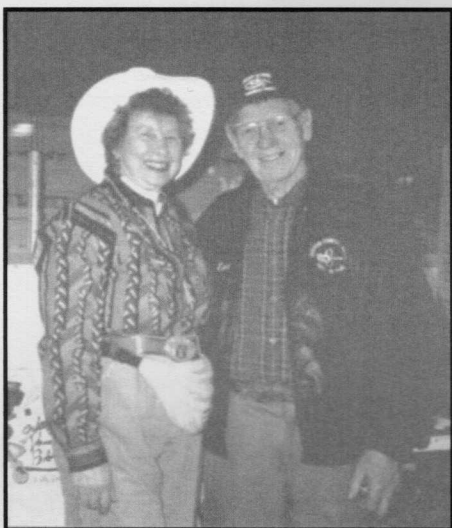
## Country Calendar

by Doreen Brown  
(Toronto and surrounding area)

Country Calendar updates have been postponed. May everyone stay healthy!

Country Cheers,

*Doreen Brown*



Doreen Brown with Canadian Cowboy singing legend, Earl Heywood.

# NEWS & NOTES

by Grant Heywood

♪ It was nice to hear from Johnny Woodlock, radio host of The Way-back Country Jamboree, on 101.9 FM radio, in Kingston, Ontario. I did an interview with Johnny about my Dad, Earl Heywood, and his career. The interview was broadcast appropriately, on Fathers Day.

♪ Al Widmeyer reports that Sirius Radio is considering a Stompin' Tom Day, to celebrate Tom's music & his career. Possible interviews with members of Tom's last touring band, including Al.

♪ The Barn Dance Museum on Josephine Street in Wingham, is currently closed. A new, (condensed) barn Dance Museum has been proposed, partnering with the North Huron Museum, at the north end of Josephine Street, in Wingham, in the refurbished Railway Station. Nothing has been finalized at this moment in time.

♪ Sad to say the Commercial Tavern in Maryhill is officially for sale. Country singer, Paul Weber, and his wife, Donna, knew it would be difficult to outlast the length of the pandemic. Paul has operated the Tavern for 25 years and is hoping whoever buys the property might still keep it alive with music. As Paul says, 'It's been a good run'. Paul will still be performing making guest appearances at events and country shows, including the Barn Dance.

♪ Steel guitarist/singer, Rusty Young, of the country rock band Poco, died of a heart attack, at age 75, in April.

Please check  
**[thebardance.ca](http://thebardance.ca)**  
for Barn Dance Shows  
& possible cancellations.



Australian Award winners, Legendary yodeler, Zeta Burns, with Country Music historian, Ian Hands.

♪ Michael T. Wall, The Singing Newfoundlander, has travelled extensively in his career. He has toured Australia many times and reports on the career of Queensland Australia's Yodelling Cowgirl, who celebrates 50 years as a country music legend, down under in Australia.

## THE BARN DANCE MUSEUM

The Barn Dance Museum at 273 Josephine St. Wingham, is **temporarily closed** until further notice. Sorry for the inconvenience.



*Ernie King*  
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## Booking the Barn Dance

If you are interested in more information about booking the Barn Dance Musical Production, please write to:  
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or call 519-530-8000  
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# BARN DANCE CORNER

by Peter Saros

Nothing even approximates in total decimation what the full closure of live performances has meant to musicians during the pandemic. Live musical performances in indoor spaces the life-blood of so many musicians, were canceled outright. Full stop.

Organizational staffing, independent artists, and professionals were decimated by these cancellations. Venues who had their doors ordered shut were unable to make it to the yet to arrive re-opening orders.

In Toronto, efforts at saving The Matador, a legendary century-old live music venue and after-hours club finally gave way to pressure from developers. The space will become another Toronto condo.

Hugh's Room, a cherished "listening room" venue, is without a home after the pandemic put its plans on hold, after being unable to keep it's address in the Junction, when ownership failed to negotiate a new lease.

The Dakota Tavern in Toronto's west end on Ossington Avenue is identified as being in a precarious position because it cannot find adequate insurance. The tavern is loved for its Sunday Bluegrass brunches and sup-

port of rootsy artists. Most recently I saw Tom Russell, an acolyte of Canada's Ian Tyson, perform there several years back. I drive past the closed Dakota everyday on the way to my landscaping shop/yard at DuPont and Ossington.

Locally, with no anesthetic, all Barn Dance events and activities have been canceled for the duration of 2021. This includes what was to be the send-off and grand finale of the Blyth Camp-out Jamboree.

This situation is truly unprecedented for live performances and the performers who perform them.

Oddly, a sort of inverse musical situation happened back in 1942 when union musicians were banned from making any new recordings. The ban was known as "The Petrillo Ban" after union president James Petrillo of the American Federation of Musicians began a strike against the major American record companies over disagreements about royalty payments on recorded music.

This was a boon to live performers because the strike did not affect musicians performing on live radio shows or live in concerts. Although too dense a history and

situation to explore in this article, the ban is generally considered to have benefited the commercial emergence of country music because small record companies – many which recorded hillbilly and race music at the time- negotiated contracts with Petrillo.

Historian Bill C. Malone wrote, Hillbilly records, began to circulate in areas where they formerly had been rare, and their success inspired the major companies to capitalize on the music's success."

The strike also sparked the creation of the Acuff-Rose publishing house which was centered in Nashville. This was a historic first step toward establishing Nashville as a dedicated country music centre.

I share this bit of history in the spirit of hopeful optimism. We can never see clearly through to the other side of a crisis when scared and alone in the dark.

Let's place our hope and faith in the good people who have always driven the Barn Dance to its greatest heights. There will be light.

## COME JOIN US!!

### **THE BARN DANCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY and ENTERTAINMENT MUSEUM**

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