



North American Traditions Series

TRADITIONAL *Fiddle Music* OF CAPE BRETON



VOLUME 3

Bras d'Or House

FR. FRANCIS CAMERON
CHARLIE MACCUSPIC
CARL MACKENZIE
MAYNARD MACKENZIE
GORDON MACLEAN
JOE PETER MACLEAN
BUSSY MACLEOD
KENNETH MACLEOD
THERESA MORRISON
WILFRED PROSPER
PAUL WUKITSCH

Rounder 7039



MacKay's Point

Band 1. **Theresa Morrison** w/ Gordon MacLean, piano: *O'er the Moor to Kitty*, *Lady Charlotte Primrose* (John Gow) - strathspeys; *Morgan MacQuarrie* (Theresa Morrison, SOCAN), *Michael Anthony MacLean's Favorite* (Theresa Morrison, SOCAN) - reels.

Band 2. **Joe Peter MacLean** w/ Gordon MacLean, parlor organ: *Sandy MacIntyre's March* (Donald Angus Beaton, SOCAN), *Kitchener's Army* (G.S. MacLellan) - marches, *The Hawthorn Tree of Cawdor*, *The Haughs of Cromdale* - strathspeys, *Father Francis Cameron's Reel* (John Campbell), *Miss Shepherd* (J. Scott Skinner) - reels.

Band 3. **Wilfred Prosper** w/ Gordon MacLean, piano: *Caledonia's Wails for Niel Gow* (Simon Fraser) - air, *Brisk Bob* - strathspey; *Traditional*, *The Musical Priest*, *Mo Chuachag Laghach Thu* (My Gentle Milk Maid) - reels.

Band 4. **Charlie MacCuspic** w/ Gordon MacLean, piano: *Bras d'Or House* (Piper Alex MacDonald), *General Longstreet* (Frank Livingstone), *Mabou Communications* (Doug MacDonald and Kinnon Beaton, SOCAN) - reels.

Band 5. **Carl MacKenzie** w/ Doug MacPhee, piano: *The Concert March* (Dan R MacDonald, SOCAN) - march; *The Connoisseur*, *The Marquis of Huntley*, *Neil R. MacDonald* (Dan R MacDonald, SOCAN) - strathspeys; *Atholian Hills* (Daniel Dow), *Tom Rae* (Dan R. MacDonald, SOCAN) - reels.

Band 6. **Theresa Morrison** w/ Gordon MacLean, piano: *Joe and Marguerite's Anniversary* (Theresa Morrison, SOCAN), *Jamie Gow* (Joseph Lowe) - jigs.

Band 7. **Bussy MacLeod and Maynard MacKenzie** w/ Christine MacLeod, piano, and Gordon MacLean, parlor organ: *Miss Susan Cooper* (Ronnie Cooper), *Rannie MacLellan's* (Brenda Stubbart, SOCAN) - reel.

Bras D'Or. House

REEL

Pipe Major A. MACDONALD



Band 8. **Paul Wukitsch** w/ Gordon MacLean, piano: *Beautiful Lake Ainslie* (Elmer Briand) - slow air, *John Roy Stewart* - strathspey, *Dan Galbey* - reel.

Band 9. **Father Francis Cameron** w/ Janet Cameron, piano: *Mrs. Major L. Stewart of the Island of Java* (Wm. Marshall) - slow air; *Long Bass* - strathspey; *An Old Mary Beaton Reel* - reel.

Band 10. **Gordon MacLean**, parlor organ: *McPhederan's*--strathspey; *Boys of Blue Hill* - hornpipe; *Traditional* - reel.

Band 11. **Charlie MacCuspic** w/ Gordon MacLean, piano: *The March of the Cameron Men*, *The Braes of Tullymet*--strathspey, *The Joys of Mabou Coal Mines* (Donald Angus Beaton, SOCAN), *The 'Thirty-Eight Ford* (Donald Angus Beaton, SOCAN).

Band 12. **Wilfred Prosper** w/ Gordon MacLean, piano: *Memories of Jim Smith* (Dan R. MacDonald, SOCAN) - march, *Miss Alexanderina MacDougall* (Gordon MacQuarrie), *The Musical Watchmaker* (Gordon MacQuarrie) - strathspeys, *Marry Me Now* - reel.

Band 13. **Theresa Morrison** w/ Doug MacPhee, piano: *Niel Gow's Lament for the Death of His Second Wife* (Niel Gow), *Braes of Dunvegan*, *Miss Stewart of Garth* (William Shepherd), *Miss Hope of Pinkie* (William Shepherd) / *Kate Dunlay's* (Theresa Morrison), *The Alexander II* (Theresa Morrison) - reels.

Band 14. **Kenneth MacLeod** w/ Marion MacLeod, piano: *Teviot Bridge*, *Rosewood* (J. Scott Skinner), *Judique* (Winston Fitzgerald) - jigs.

Band 15. **Joe Peter MacLean** w/ Janet Cameron, piano: *The Glencoe March* (Dan R. MacDonald, SOCAN), *The Boy's Lament for his Dragon* - marches, *Miss Jessie Smith*, *Lady Mary Ramsay* (Nathaniel Gow) - strathspeys, *Home-ward Bound*, *Jenny Dang the Weaver* - reels.

Musical Reminiscences from Washabuck

It was the 26th of June, 2006. I remember the date well. Unknown to anyone except my wife Charlotte, I was scheduled for bowel surgery the following morning. A last minute postponement however, was yet a distinct possibility. So here was Mark Wilson visiting from the University of Pittsburgh, again on my case as he had been a couple of years earlier, asking if I would consider writing a few notes outlining my memories of Cape Breton fiddle music in the Washabuck area from the mid 1940s to the mid 1960s. Mark is a producer of fiddle music for Rounder Records and he was now putting the final touches on the third of a series of four CD anthologies featuring Cape Breton Fiddlers. He was visiting next door with my father Michael Anthony MacLean and my brother Gus, along with long-time friends and musicians Morgan MacQuarrie, Gordon MacLean and our daughter Susan. "I'll let you know in a couple of weeks, Mark!" I deferred. At that moment, I was distracted by a more compelling concern. The surgery proved successful and so now, to appease Mark and to share with his legion of world wide fiddle groupies, here are a few of my scattered memories about those years in Washabuck, Cape Breton when we were all much younger and the fiddle was king.

"I'm going for a quick visit to Hector MacKenzie's. Would you like to come with me?" asked my fiddler uncle, Joe MacLean? Would I? I was about seven years old as this was, I think, 1951. My paternal grandmother had died in June of that year (both of my grandmothers as well as my future mother-in-law were fluent Gaelic



Hector MacKenzie

speakers and noted Gaelic singers). Electricians were now busy wiring the homes throughout the community for electricity that would be turned on later in October and Uncle Joe (or Joe W. as our family and close friends referred to him) was visiting us at the family home at MacKay's Point; he being on a few days vacation from his day job as a CN railroad conductor out of Sydney. Would I? Well yes! Yes! Prior to that time, the farthest I remembered been away from home was the old ram pasture on the back forty.

So away we went in Joe's car eight miles away to visit Hector at the 'Bridge', as the MacKenzie homestead was commonly referred to, because of it being located adjacent to the highway bridge spanning Washabuck River. Joe did the visiting and I remained in the car. Joe's mission was to ask Hector with his guitar down to the Point, for an evening of music. Although I remained in the car on that occasion little did I realize then, just how much of an influence that MacKenzie family and homestead would actually have on

the balance of my adult life as about a decade later, Hector's baby sister and I began hanging out together at square dances and bull meetings and taffy pulls and those sort of things, resulting in an eventual marriage. So I blame Joe W. for the whole fiasco!



Theresa Morrison

Well, Hector came along and later on, the evening racket was further enhanced with the arrival of long time neighbor, friend, and contemporary of my grandparents and lover of fiddle music, "Red" Rory MacLean. Dad and Joe played the fiddles, Hector accompanied upon his guitar and "Red" Rory danced. "Red" Rory could play a few tunes himself but he really shone when it came to step dancing. As soon as a fiddler struck up a strathspey he had to get on the floor. He just could not tolerate strathspeys and reels being played without dancing to them. He was a classy dancer, with a wonderful talent for neat footmanship that he thankfully handed on to his fiddler son Johnnie "Washabuck" and daughter Aggie MacLennan in the best of local tradition. That early evening stretched into a late night session, and in spite of my tender years, the occasion gratefully burned itself into an indelible crevice of those early archives.

Growing up during the late forties coincided with the fledging beginning of local radio stations. Certainly, CJFX in Antigonish inaugurated its on-air presence in March 1943, just a year prior to my own birth. So I grew up listening in particular, to Station Manager Clyde Nunn promoting his programme *Fun at Five*, with whatever recorded and live fiddle music was



Washabuck

available to him to air over those next two decades. Music from the likes of fiddlers as Colin J. Boyd, Hughie A. MacDonald, Angus Allan Gillis, Dan J. Campbell, Angus Chisholm, Winston Fitzgerald, Bill Lamey, Carl MacKenzie, and Joe MacLean, was always eagerly awaited for, keenly listened to and appreciated, in those early days of radio. And I think, I should add "Little" Jack MacDonald to that list as well. From over CJC Radio in Sydney, the Thursday evening *MacDonald Lassie Program* featured Winston Fitzgerald, accompanied by guitarist Estwood Davidson and pianist Beattie Wallace and their guests. That *Picnic Reel* theme tune reverberates still throughout my being. That was *my* "Hit Parade"! Television didn't make its

debut at home until around 1958, and, although it proved to be a fascinating new medium, *Leave It To Beaver* ran a distant second to fiddle music and square dancing, at least in my books.

Certainly, prior to the events outlined above, there were fund raising parish picnics and parish concerts which featured the best of available Cape Breton fiddlers, dancers, pipers and Gaelic singers. One of the last local outdoor parish concerts that I recall occurred I think in 1961 on the parish grounds in Iona. Performers included



Iona

singer Charlie MacKenzie with his distinguished baritone voice and his fiddler brother Carl. Charlie was a fine fiddle, guitar and piano player too. Another fiddler brother Hector (Yes, that same Hector!) emceed the whole affair and from that

occasion onwards he never looked back, championing a successful career emceeding Celtic concerts all over Cape Breton Island and beyond for an additional forty years. Brothers Bernie and Stanley Campbell from Iona, and sisters Joan MacDonald and Jean MacNeil were all nimble step dancers. Piper Francis MacKenzie performed superbly and Winston, Joe and “Big” Archie MacKenzie again displayed their fiddling talent to the appreciative crowd. Thereafter, the annual *Highland Village Day* concerts began in 1962 and for the past forty-five years they have demonstrated an adeptness of showcasing new Cape Breton Celtic performers to the world and, as a result, it holds a special place in the minds and hearts of not just our Cape Breton residents but those visiting relatives “home for the summer” as well as the inquiring and appreciative tourist.



Joe MacLean and Mark Wilson (1976)

Fiddle music at home was just an everyday occurrence. Dad usually played the fiddle several evenings a week for a bit and often on lazy Sunday afternoons and, of course, he played for endless numbers of house rackets (at home and elsewhere) and local dances. Fiddle music for us was simply an accepted part of our growing up. Just as for those people that are fortunate enough to grow up adjacent to a body of water, whether it's lake, an ocean or a river--it doesn't really matter--that body of water then somehow becomes an unwitting, yet

intrinsic part of one's psychic for the balance of one's life. So too I think, the same can be said about music. We grew up hearing and listening to and dancing to fiddle music and it was just an enjoyable facet of our youth. Who knows, there may have been a few mutated genes involved as well. Visitors often dropped by for a tune. Ma faithfully provided the tea. A party is not a party without fiddle music, plain and simple! Late night fiddle parties with Big Beach school teachers Dolly and Murdena MacNeil accompanied by their admiring chauffeurs Ray MacDonald and Simon MacKenzie and chaperon Joe (Red Rory) made for a few groggy headed students and teachers on more than a few school day mornings*, but the memories of the fiddle music, dancing, and laughter will live on as long as there remains a pulse.

As in most musical homes, other musicians dropped by, some more frequently than others. Neighbours Stephen MacLean and Johnnie "Washabuck" MacLean were fine fiddlers and frequent visitors, and they played together for local dances. Stephen's neighbouring uncle Rory (Stephen) and Johnnie's dad "Red" Rory, had been fiddlers in their own time. Later on when Stephen and Johnnie worked in Sydney, they were often featured playing over CJCB Radio, sometimes accompanied by John Willie Campbell another good fiddler, who made many safaris to Washabuck himself, visiting with the Murphy and the MacKenzie families and at our home as well. Johnnie "Washabuck"'s son John MacLean is now a world champion piper and a much sought after piping instructor.



*Michael Anthony MacLean
and Gordon MacLean*

A favorite side-kick of mine during my teen years was Lawrence MacDougall, who spent a lot of time with his grandfather Dan MacDougall, who was a next door neighbour to the musical MacKenzie family. Lawrence had a keen desire to learn to play the fiddle and that he did; and he became a fine fiddler with a light touch and with that old-time style flavor, before leaving home for a successful career with the RCMP. And now some forty years later he has returned to Washabuck in his retirement, to gratefully entertain us once more.

Gordon (Lighthouse) MacLean who grew up next door to us at Gillis Point learned to play on the organ at his home and became one of Cape Breton Island's finest pianists with his distinctive light accompanying touch and his popular and evocative fiddle compositions. There was always lots of music at Gordon's lighthouse home, as his uncles Hector, Mick John, and Aunt Veronica were fiddlers and other uncles Joe and Steve were banjo instrumentalists. His mother Helen was the eldest of that same MacKenzie family mentioned above. Gordon's younger sister

*The author taught for many years in the local schools.

Jacinta is today a fine fiddler. John Y. Gillis from MacKinnon Harbour made many a trip to Washabuck with his fiddle, entertaining everyone in typical John Y. fashion. An amusing John Y. visit could sometimes last for a week. Iona's John S. MacNeil, an accomplished singer, choirmaster and organist shared his musical skills willingly with all—many, many times in Washabuck, until his passing in 1960; while his niece Honey MacNeil of Iona continues to this day yet, in her uncle's fine organ and piano playing tradition. Dad always talked about the local fiddlers that influenced him and his horde of siblings as youths. Dan MacKinnon, John Francis Campbell, and John Alec "The Fiddler" MacNeil were three names frequently mentioned at home and the surrounding communities with an aura of awe. Unfortunately, I never had the privilege of meeting these local Magi or even hearing their music played, as they had passed-on before

my time. The impression distinctly left behind for us though, was that their names could, oh so easily, have been included among those others recited in the Litany, chasing the last decade of the evening Rosary.



Christmas Island

Another local dancer and fiddler that I recall that dropped by occasionally was Hector MacKinnon, the eldest of Dan MacKinnon's large family of musicians. Dad claimed that Hector, although a very good fiddler was perhaps not quite as good a square dance player as Hector's own father had been, but he was certainly a champion step dancer, displaying that same neat footwork for which the whole MacKinnon family was noted. I recall seeing Hector dance on several occasions. Like his brother Murdock, he was a veteran of both world wars and he was buried in Washabuck on his ninety-eighth birthday in 1995. Fiddlers Johnnie Brown and Wilfred Prosper would drop by from time-to-time. Brothers Angus and Hughie Campbell from nearby St. Columba played for dances in the local halls and Hughie was a long time member on the Cape Breton Fiddlers Association until his recent passing in 2003. Angus B. Gardiner was a local kitchen fiddler of fond memory, whom Hector MacKenzie immortalized in jig-time with his poignant composition, *Corporal A.B.*

Joe W. visited us quite often and he was usually accompanied with his brother-in-law Ronnie (Jim Hughie) MacNeil who was the DD of those times. Joe usually brought along a piano player for the day. Marie MacLellan and Mary Jessie MacDonald were a couple of everyone's favourites, as was Jean MacKenzie of

Washabuck when she was available. Bill Lamey dropped by occasionally, as did Johnnie Archie MacDonald and his daughter Barbara. Mary Jessie's mother Mary MacDonald from New Waterford was just such a wonderful fiddler to see arrive at the house and so was Queensville's Dan Hughie MacEachern who was sure to make at least an annual trek to Washabuck that usually resulted in several days of the sharing of the very best of traditional and new music. Tunes like *The Kennedy Street March*, *Hector MacKenzie's Jig*, *Jean MacKenzie's Jig*, and *The Pork Chop Reel* are four among Dan Hughie's many compositions that were induced and forged by Washabuck influences. Angus Allan Gillis along with his neighbours from Upper Margaree, the brothers Jack, Jimmy, and Ambrose Gillis, were always welcomed fiddlers to Washabuck--a welcome that continues to this day with their musical descendents.



Fr. Francis and Janet Cameron

Even Cape Breton's prolific composer Dan R. MacDonald included Washabuck as part of his itinerant travels, making sporadic visits particularly to the Murphy family residence. He also made an appearance-- if only a cameo one--at least one prominent Washabuck wedding. And speaking of Washabuck weddings, Theresa and Marie MacLellan played for another wonderful outdoor wedding at the Murphy residence in September 1964, when Rita Murphy the baby of the large Murphy family and Morris Campbell were married. Theresa and Marie's father "Big" Ronald MacLellan was himself, no stranger to Washabuck, having decades earlier been a most welcomed regular visitor to the noted Dan MacKinnon home.

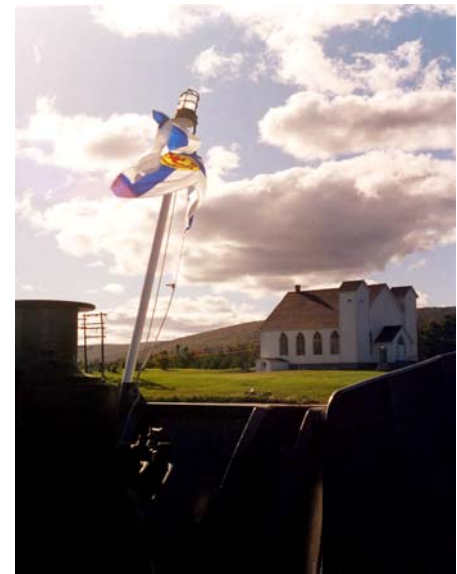
Another annual visitor was guitar player J.D. MacKenzie, a brother to fiddler "Big" Archie from Ottawa Brook, whose people were originally from Birch Point, a community that in pioneer days was part of Washabuck. J. D. would arrive home from Detroit where he was employed, usually in the middle of hay making season. His arrival at our house was the only event that I can recall that would bring the ever sacrosanct hay making to an immediate halt! As teens we were overjoyed to see him, as his arrival meant an unexpected break from that incessant hay making. But more important still, J. D. always had the car trunk full of reel-to-reel tapes of the best of fiddle music, recorded and collected by him along his exotic pilgrimage spanning the previous twelve months. Dad and all of our family truly looked forward with anticipation to J.D.'s musical excursions to Washabuck.

I began attending local square dances around 1958 at the old Legion hall in Iona. "Big" Archie MacKenzie was the fiddler and at that time he was usually accompanied on the piano by his sister-in-law Jemina MacNeil of Jamesville. For the next

four years that was how I spent my Saturday nights. The first couple of years I had no driver's license but our wonderful and witty next door neighbour Michael Dan (Red Rory) MacLean would kindly ask me to go along—a gesture for which I'll always be forever grateful. These were great dances. Archie was a dynamic square dance player, with two tempos--fast and full speed. That liveliness just seemed to entice the dancers even more as the floor was immediately full with five and six sets, dancing steadily from nine to one. It was a good dance hall with a great hardwood floor; its sole negative trait being that the far end of the building was lower than the stage end, an effect of encroaching old age, and you had to adjust your dancing accordingly or the six sets would eventually all end up on top of each other at the back end of the hall. Great music, great dances, and great memories!

In the years prior to 1958, Winston and Joe W. and Carl MacKenzie had each played at the same Legion hall to standing room only crowds. Jean MacKenzie accompanied Joe on the piano for one full summer at the Legion hall and accompanied Archie MacKenzie during a following summer season and chorded there with her brother Carl for yet another season. Carl played for his first dance at the Iona Legion when he was fifteen. Prior to his years playing at Iona, Winston played at the Whycocomagh Legion hall on Thursday nights after he, Beattie Wallace, and Estwood would finish the live *MacDonald Lassie* CJC Radio program from Sydney. I remember Dad, my older brother Raymond and another of the fiddling MacKenzie family, Simon, faithfully making that weekly excursion to Whycocomagh for the Winston dances. Simon, in addition to his fiddling abilities, had perfected the making of home brew to which Winston was apparently particularly partial and so he always looked forward to the arrival of the Washabuck dancers with a keen anticipation.

As for myself, I remember attending just one of Winston's dances and that was in the Sydney Ashby Legion in the early '60s and also a house party with him at Sonny and Margie Murray's home at East Bay, about the same time. St. F.X. beckoned me in 1962 and John Allen Cameron arrived there at the same time. Carl had graduated from TUNS in '59 and was now residing in Port Hawkesbury, employed as an engineer with the local pulp mill. John Allan teamed up with Carl for the next couple of summer seasons and together with John Allen's piano playing sister, Jessie Ann, they entertained royally at weekly square dances that included the South West Margaree, Port Hood, Creignish, Lower River Inhabitants, and West Bay Road communities. The future Godfather of Cape Breton Celtic had arrived on the scene and the next forty years of Cape Breton fiddle music was about to spectacularly unfold into a wholly new dimension. So this is the



Little Narrows

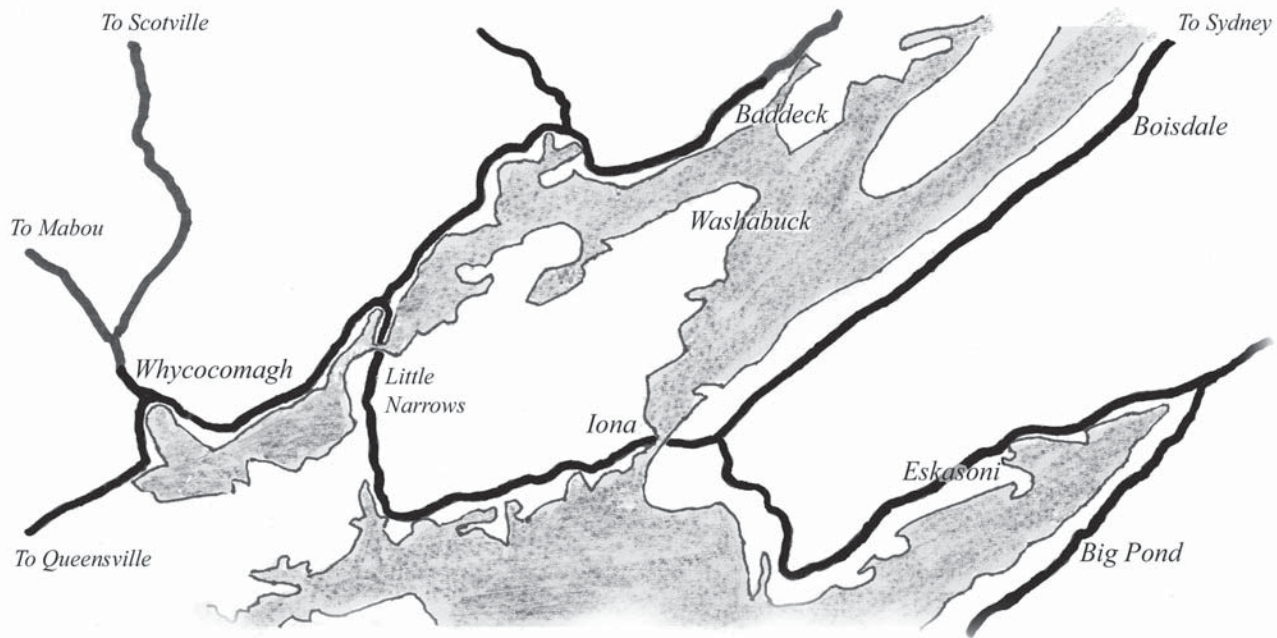
*Big Brook*

essence of my musical memories from Washabuck dating from the mid-forties to the mid-sixties. The following forty years would include a bevy of other excellent fiddlers some of whom spent a lot of time in the Washabuck area. Fiddlers, some of whom are included on this anthology, included Wilfred Prosper, Charlie MacCuspic, Carl Hamm, “Bussy” MacLeod, Maynard MacKenzie, Ray Ellis, Hugh Campbell, Lee Cremo, Paul Wukitsch, Joe Peter MacLean, Stan Chapman, and pianists Alex MacLean and Janet Cameron and Janet’s fiddling brother, Father Francis Cameron.

Certainly, a legacy of very fine Celtic music has been left for future generations by those musicians with Washabuck roots, including Alex MacLean of Iona with his two pianos releases. Joe MacLean composed some ten compositions of his own, unfortunately only two to which he ever put names (*Peter MacKay’s Hornpipe* for his long-time friend, the Scotsville mail-driver, and *Grace MacKenzie*, a strathspey he named for Jean MacKenzie, because of his fond impressions of her step dancing abilities). Joe released a number of 78s and LPs. Carl MacKenzie has composed probably something like fifty compositions with at least ten releases and has participated with guest appearances and fiddle workshops worldwide. Theresa Morrison, Joe and Dad’s baby sister, decided to wait to record until she had it all right, releasing two wonderful CDs only after she had reached her eightieth birthday. Jean MacKenzie went on to marry Columba MacNeil of nearby Grass Cove, settled in Sydney Mines and they have marketed six offspring known collectively as the band members of *The Barra MacNeils* and *Slainte Mhath*, two of the most highly respected musical bands and proponents of Cape Breton music that today perform on the Celtic world stage. What more needs to be said? I’ve been privileged. It’s been a blast!

--*Vince MacLean*

14 August, 2006 Washabuck, C.B.
v.mac@seaside.ns.ca



Introductory remarks

With the belated release of this CD and the companion volume 4 (*MacKinnon's Brook*, Rouder 7040), Morgan MacQuarrie and I complete our survey of "old style" Cape Breton fiddle music as it could be found on the island at the beginning of the twenty-first century. We do not pretend that our sampling provides a complete accounting of such music. First of all, there were a number of important performers with whom, due to sickness or a reluctance to record, a session could not be arranged. Secondly, there are undoubtedly many others of whom we were simply unaware (our best contacts lay within Morgan's home turf in the upper Inverness County region). The results are the best we could achieve while working with limited resources and operating from home bases (Detroit and Pittsburgh) far away from Cape Breton. Many logistical difficulties made it difficult to complete these final volumes in a timely fashion and I apologize to the artists gathered here for the long delays. We are greatly saddened by the fact that a number of musicians included here have since passed away: Charlie MacCuspic, Wilfred Prosper, John L. MacDonald, Mary Maggie Varnier, Johnnie MacLeod, and Donald and Marie MacLellan. Although they were all able to hear their selections before they died, it is very regrettable that they did not live to see the completed project. Unfortunately, a dramatically declining market for CDs has made it financially impossible to print booklets as before and our notes now only appear in the PDF format.

Our original intention was to let each volume focus upon the one of the different regional styles that once predominated in Cape Breton, but this goal proved less feasible than anticipated. In particular, we had hoped that the present CD might

document the distinctive music of the Washabuck region, but, as matters have turned out, only Theresa Morrison, Carl MacKenzie, and Gordon MacLean truly qualify as representatives of that area. Instead, we sample musicians drawn from a wider arena, much of it within Victoria County, including a group from the Baddeck/Middle River region (Charlie MacCuspic, Bussy MacLeod and Maynard MacKenzie) that lies directly across the big Bras d'Or Lake from Washabuck and a second group from the Boisdale region along the eastern side of the same lake (Joe Peter MacLean, Janet and Fr. Francis Cameron, Paul Wukitsch). Wilfred Prosper was from slightly further eastward, living on the large Native American Reserve at Eskasoni. Overall, the music presented here displays a somewhat lighter lilt than is characteristic of the Inverness County region to the west, but these distinctions represent as much the product of individual personality as any genuine regional characteris-

tic. Our concluding volume four proves even more miscellaneous in its stylistic scope, presenting many performers from Inverness County that we simply had not recorded when volumes 1 and 2 were issued (indeed, Kenneth and Marion MacLeod are included on the present disc largely because we had room for them here--they actually hail from Windsor, Ontario and perform in a somewhat more contemporary, pan-Cape Breton style).



Boisdale

Even within a single family--the musical sons and daughters of Vincent MacLean of MacKay's Point that are chronicled by his grandson Vince in the opening essay--the range of stylistic variation can be very wide, as is easily discerned when Theresa Morrison's playing is compared with that of her brothers Joe and Michael Anthony. Although I had no unissued cuts to utilize here, a full CD of Joe's music from 1977 is available from Rounder (Rounder 7024) and his many classic 78 recordings for Celtic, Rodeo, and other labels should be sought out as well. Michael Anthony (who passed away in 2007) was too shy and perfectionist to tolerate recording for us, although we heard much delightful playing from him on the several occasions when he and Vince hosted some of the music sessions heard here (the family possesses many home recordings of his music and I hope that someday they will become publically available). All three children shared a firm sense of proper step dance timing that was instilled within them by their father, who would demand that

they match the exact rhythms that his skilled step dancing required. In later years, however, each developed their music in somewhat different directions. Carl MacKenzie's brother Hector often played with Michael Anthony and approached a fiddle tune in a somewhat allied manner. We had hoped to include Hector on this set but a sequence of mild strokes impaired his capacities before we managed to do this. As Vince has described, there had been a musical clan of MacKinnons resident in the Washabuck area, but, to the best of our knowledge, there are none now playing.



MacKay's Point

Johnny "Washabuck" MacLean was a well regarded fiddler who emigrated to Toronto, but he died young back in the 1970's (his son, John, is a well-known piper today).

Accordingly, this volume covers a wider geographical area that could normally be identified with a true "local style." However, perhaps some genuine musical commonality is revealed here, regardless. Although the driving distance between Baddeck and Washabuck is

substantial, in the old days it was often easier for a Maynard MacKenzie growing up in Middle River to hear the Washabuck MacLeans than fiddlers lying geographically closer in Inverness County, simply because in the summer boats would carry one back and forth across the lake and, in the winter, one could drive a buggy across the ice. Climbing the mountains to Mabou or Scotsville over upon bad roads, in contrast, was arduous and less commonly attempted. Perhaps the gentler cadences prevailing on this CD correlate with this wider topographic basin, even though none of the historical restrictions impede travel within Cape Breton today.

Amongst the large crew of Cape Bretoners who have helped us put these CDs together, Morgan and I would like to particularly thank Vince MacLean for his opening essay and for the hospitality that the entire MacLean clan has extended to us. For these reasons, we would like to dedicate this particular CD to Michael Anthony's memory.

---Mark Wilson

The tunes and their performers:

Band 1. **Theresa Morrison** w/ Gordon MacLean, piano: *O'er the Moor to Kitty, Lady Charlotte Primrose* (John Gow) - strathspeys; *Morgan MacQuarrie* (Theresa Morrison, SOCAN), *Michael Anthony MacLean's Favorite* (Theresa Morrison, SOCAN) - reels (MW; Sydney, NS, 7/27/00).

Of all the musicians on this CD, Theresa's performances best illustrate the local Washabuck style we had hoped to document more thoroughly. In the notes above, her nephew Vince MacLean has provided a vivid portrait of musical life within this isolated little corner of Cape Breton.

Bussy MacLeod tells me that, in the old days, folks on his side of the lake looked to the great musical clans of the Washabuck region for musical inspiration and Maynard MacKenzie still remembers how thrilling Theresa and her brother Joe were when they performed together as a team (Doug MacPhee recalls his mother telling him exactly the same). Theresa



Theresa Morrison

married Peter Morrison in the early 'Fifties. Peter, who came from Piper's Cove, was a celebrated highland piper who made a number of records and helped popularize pìobaireachd within Cape Breton. After her marriage, Theresa rarely performed in public (although she was a long-time member of Lila Hashem's "Scottish Strings" ensemble), but she kept up a very active musical life nonetheless, for the Morrison household hosted intense weekend parties devoted to bagpipe music and all matters Scottish. She would regularly prepare short programs for these get-togethers and, along the way, developed one of the keenest eyes for the rare and exquisite Scottish melody, as can be readily discerned from the evocative selections she has chosen here. In more recent years, Theresa has begun composing tunes of her own, many of which must surely qualify as among the best to have come out of modern Cape Breton. Indeed, the two first class reels in this present set are hers, written in honor of her brother Michael Anthony and of our own Morgan MacQuarrie.

Theresa has issued two complete CDs on Rounder (CD 7026 and CD 7053) which will greatly augment the listener's appreciation of this remarkable woman (I

regard persuading Theresa to record as one of my prime contributions to folklore.) As David Greenberg explains in the musical remarks he supplied for her second CD, Theresa is one of the last masters of the full gamut of traditional Cape Breton bowing techniques, including the frequent use of bow lifts and bounces to achieve the evocative and sharply punctuated phrasing characteristic of the best old-style players. From her husband, she learned the proper timing for a wide range of Scottish materials and her musical range is, accordingly, much wider than that of the typical Cape Breton player. Yet no one alive today can punch out an old-fashioned square set with the same drive and lift--this is the sound that most unites her playing stylistically with that of her brothers. Beyond all that, Theresa is one of the nicest and intellectually incisive people I've met within music and her constant kindness and discernment have aided Morgan and myself immeasurably in our Cape Breton work.

Band 2. Joe Peter MacLean w/ Gordon MacLean, parlor organ: *Sandy MacIntyre's March* (Donald Angus Beaton, SOCAN), *Kitchener's Army* (G.S. MacLellan) - marches, *The Hawthorn Tree of Cawdor*, *The Haughs of Cromdale* - strathspeys, *Father Francis Cameron's Reel* (John Campbell), *Miss Shepherd* (J. Scott Skinner) - reels (MW, Sugar Camp, NS 5/19/02).

About sixty years old, Joe Peter has one of the most unusual biographies of the younger "old style" players (although Joe Peter characteristically describes his life "as mostly dull, mainly"). Raised in an isolated back country region near MacAdam's Lake, Joe Peter is one the last Cape Bretoners whose childhood was immersed in the Gaelic language. Although he did not fancy that his father Charlie was "any great shakes as a fiddler," he learned a number of tunes from his dad that are rather different from current Cape Breton fare (most of these are included on Joe Peter's full Rounder CD 7060, *Back of Boisdale*). A number of commentators, including Doug MacPhee, believe that such tunes derive from the vanished (and nearly unrecorded) repertory of the folk dance piper, MacAdams' Lake having represented one of the last redoubts for this kind of music (*vide* the writings of John Gibson and Barry Shears). Pipe music remains popular in Cape Breton, but in modern times it has been predominantly influenced by professionalized army piping.

In older days, there seems to have been less fiddling on Joe Peter's side of the Bras d'Or Lake, with the exception of the pockets of Catholic Gaelic culture clustered around Washabuck and within Joe Peter's own back country region. Better communications and better roads have altered this former regionalism considerably, for, beginning in the late 'Forties, the automobile allowed performers like Winston Fitzgerald and Joe MacLean to play virtually everywhere on the island with some regularity. In more recent times, the prominence and media availability of popular figures such as Jerry Holland and Natalie MacMaster have led most younger players to adopt what might be regarded as a sleeker, "pan-Cape Breton" style."

Joe often performs with Janet Cameron and Paul Wukitsch as "The Boisdale



Joe Peter MacLean

Trio” and a number of selections from the full group are available on Joe Peter’s full CD. When we first met Joe Peter at Gordon MacLean’s house, we realized that, besides his beautiful and highly prized Heinzman piano, Gordon had maintained the old parlor organ from his family’s home in good working trim and played it often. So we encouraged Gordon to accompany Joe Peter on the organ for a few numbers, for that was actually the accompaniment manner that prevailed until pianos became more widely available after World War II (Gordon and Marie MacLellan first learned to chord for a fiddle on the organ rather than the piano). The combination is truly stirring on a set of venerable pipe marches such as these.

Band 3. Wilfred Prosper w/ Gordon MacLean, piano: *Caledonia’s Wails for Niel Gow* (Simon Fraser) - air, *Brisk Bob* - strathspey, *Traditional*, *The Musical Priest*, *Mo Chuachag Laghach Thu* (My Gentle Milk Maid) - reels (MW & MM, Eskasoni, NS, 5/13/03)

One of the intriguing aspects of Cape Breton culture is that the island was settled by a number of diverse communities that, until recently, kept their identities fairly distinct yet joined together in a mutual affection for old-fashioned Scottish music. Wilfred, who passed away on March 26, 2005, was an excellent illustration in point. A proud and respected community leader within the Mi’kmaq tribe, he also performed Scottish music with depth and delicacy, as the two selections included here vividly illustrate. Wilfred was as nice a man as Morgan and I have encountered and was warmly loved all over the island. Not too many months before his death, Wilfred provided this account of his background and how he came to be interested in

Scottish fiddling:

I was born April 27, 1927 on Chapel Island in Richmond County. We lived down by the shore, the next cove over from the big church there. The post office was at Barra Head, which was a white settlement where we used to get our mail. My father's name was Peter Prosper and my mother's was Clara Young. She was from Antigonish Landing, they call it. I don't know if there was an Indian Reserve there or what, for there weren't too many families down there: maybe they were the only ones. My father was from Guysborough, which was off the road to Canso on the mainland. Back in those days they lived on dried moose meat and things like that. In those days my father used to fish for swordfish with Lee Cremo's grandfather. I once asked my uncle, "How did you folks live in such a rough place as that?" and he answered, "My God, we lived better than you guys. We worked for the farmers there and we eeled and fished and planted gardens." You look at that same place now and you'd swear there was never a garden there, but there was back a hundred years ago. And they were big strapping men, for they worked awfully hard, I think.

I don't know why my family moved to Barra Head, but my dad bought a piece of land there and built a house there in 1937. And he cleared it all by hand with his brothers and son-in-law. Today they'll use a bulldozer to do the same thing, but that spoils the land. That's what happened here in Eskasoni: they destroyed the land with bulldozers. They made a fence out of the top soil and left nothing but clay on the ground, so I was never able to farm here in Eskasoni. I tried it but even the potatoes wouldn't come up. Down in Barra Head, my dad had farmed a lot--he had a knack for doing stuff like that and so we always had produce: potatoes and stuff like that.. We always kept a horse and colt, a cow and usually a calf or bull and pigs--if we didn't have one, he'd buy it in the spring.. In those days the cows could roam all over the open area. So they'd fatten up through the summer and then we'd kill them in the fall. And so we had lots of salt meat--everything was salty in them days, although that's taboo today! But back then you damn well burned it off the very next day because you walked or rode a horse to whatever you were doing.

But, anyway, we survived here in Eskasoni. Oh, I worked at everything in my life: carpentry, plumbing, painting, pit timber, logs, pulp, and a whole lot of other stuff, wherever there was a dollar in it. You had to work to survive in them days, I tell you! But we had a boat and so life wasn't too hard, for us anyway.

I had gone to school down there at Barra Head, though I didn't get much schooling, I can tell you that. But schooling didn't mean much in those days, you know, and we couldn't afford the university or anything like that anyway. So you went to school until you were sixteen or you quit earlier, it

didn't matter too much. I went to a one room school until I was thirteen, but then my family went up to Whycocomagh. My dad thought we were going to make a fortune in the woods but, of course, we came out with nothing. Then the war started in 1939 and there was nobody left at home but old people and the kids. So when I was fifteen, I got my registration card and went to Halifax. I worked there for two or three years, first in the shipyards and then over at Atlantic Boilers and Scalers. When the war was over, I came home, back to Barra Head.

In 1947 a truck came to the door to pick us up and the same thing happened to my wife and her family. The government wanted to centralize the native people and break up the Reserves and make two big settlements, one in Shunacadie and one in Eskasoni. But they didn't entirely succeed, because a lot of the people didn't want to leave their homes and stayed put. So that's how we came to leave the home that my father built on Chapel Island. They said we were going to get a better deal here in Eskasoni. Well, as I said, we never starved up here, but it wasn't a better deal. Anyway, my father and mother both died here and I've been here ever since. They built a bunch of new houses here out of green lumber



Wilfred Prosper

and so that's the kind of house I'm living in now. I wouldn't trade what I've now got for one of the newer ones, because back then a two by four was actually a two by four and one inch lumber was an inch across, not three quarters like today.

When we moved here, I was about twenty. I joined the choir and that's where I learned to read music: from the sisters who taught the choir. And they would point out some of the finer points in the music and I got interested in that, too. But I wouldn't recommend to anybody that they learn music the way I did: it's taken me forty years and I'm still learning! It's better to have a teacher or tutor, I think. Back in Barra Head, the guitar had been my first love but a cousin of mine had a fiddle and I used to play a few tunes on it. I guess my mother and my father thought I had some potential on it because one day

they came home with a fiddle from a trip away selling baskets. A thirty-six dollar fiddle--it was pretty nice. I played a few tunes on it but I didn't really become interested in the violin until I came to Eskasoni and met a buddy of mine, Joe Googoo. We used to play every night: he'd play the guitar for awhile and then we'd switch around. So that got me going, along with the help of the sisters.

The first person I listened to on the radio down in Barra Head was Don Messer on CFCY. It's funny, but I've never be able to get that station since I moved here, but down there the signal came in clear over the water. And in the beginning, I used to play some Don Messer stuff. But there was also a Scottish program that came from P.E.I. as well: Collie and MacInnis--they weren't bad. And then the Antigonish radio station started up in 1943: I guess the first musician I heard there was John Y. Gillis. And then there was also Colin J. Boyd and Hugh A. MacDonald and a whole slew of them over there, for Antigonish County was full of fiddlers in those days. Oh, I wouldn't miss those shows for the world back then! I miss them now, though: it's a real shame that they stopped having so much live music on the radio.

But then I began listening to the Cape Breton fiddlers as well. Tena Campbell--by God, she was good--, Winston Fitzgerald, Bill Lamey, and Joe Cormier. I used to hear Joe over the radio quite a bit: he was good as any of them, I guess. And Angus Chisholm on records, mainly. And there was a whole bunch of local fiddlers to be heard, all over the place, and, by God almighty, a lot of them were good. And they all played in the old style that you can't beat, I don't think: oh, the cuts and all that you would hear in the old Scottish music.

There were dances all around when I was young: St. Peter's, Barra Head, and Soldier's Cove. In fact, Winston played at Soldier's Cove for awhile. And there were also picnics at Johnstown and early on there I heard a fellow down there who was very good, tho' I don't know who it was to this day. And we used to have some dandy square dances here in Eskasoni in the late 'Forties and 'Fifties: Archie MacKenzie used to play for them. But they started to die out in the 'Sixties; it's been forty years since we had a good square dance here, unlike Mabou, which still has them everywhere. I kind of blame this Presley guy for that, for when the rock and roll came to the fore, the kids started having dances with records and DJs and that was the end of the square dances around here. The last dance here had Winston to play at it around 1962 or so and the people who came didn't even remember how to dance to his music: they just sat there tapping their toes or something like that. I don't know why: maybe his music was just too good!

Oh, Winston could play with the best of them and I was flabbergasted by

his playing: he was my favorite, by all means. I'd just get roary-eyed looking at him, as the Scottish people say. He had the nice light touch on the bow and perfect timing. And Dan Joe MacInnis also used to play down here about that time as well. I didn't play for dances very much myself. That was more Theresa MacLellan's and Lee Cremo's territory. Lee used to play all over Nova Scotia, which is why he played so many Messer tunes and things like that. In that period I worked a lot and didn't have too much time to practice or anything like that. I did play one season in Big Pond, but the dances always ended up in a fight and so they put an end to them.

So it's after I moved here that my ears opened up all the way. I got sold on Scottish music, because it's so difficult, you know, with all the cuts and the runs and God knows what else that's in it. It's awfully hard to learn, I'll tell you that! Here in Eskasoni Lee Cremo used to live a quarter mile away and so we'd get together a lot. Two relatives of mine, Joe and Frank Googoo, also played Scottish

music around here. As I explained, when we first came here, Joe used to be over here every day: either playing hockey or playing the fiddle. And I've also gotten quite a few Scottish tune books: from



St Ann's

Antigonish and Halifax

and wherever else I could find them. Danny Fraser is a great booster of the old music and he'll send me copies of music sometimes. And Dan Joe MacInnis used to loan me books.

I used to hang around Sydney a lot and Dan Joe got to be a good friend of mine. God almighty, he was good. He had that real Scottish touch I like: that "feather bowing" or whatever you might call it. Just a light touch: he didn't press too hard on the bow. But he could really put the cuts in there: my God, they sounded nice. It's funny, but his brother Sandy played an altogether different kind of music--he played Don Messer style. And they had a brother that they claimed was better than either of them, but he got burned in a car fire somewhere. Their family originally came from Skye Mountain above Wycocogmagh.

Paddy LeBlanc was another fiddler in Sydney that I used to know. He

was a barber but I don't know if he ever cut much hair because he had some kind of hole at the back of his barbershop where he'd play with his buddies. I never played in Paddy's shop but I played with him at the Legion and different other places around Sydney. Paddy had pretty good timing and a slower style something like Dan Joe's.

There wasn't much Indian music around here: maybe a ditty or two that might resemble a fiddle tune, but not too much of it. But, of course, the Indians never had a violin until the settlers came. I don't know who brought the violin here first. Maybe it was the French, because they were here first outside of the Indians. In fact, Lee Cremo's father, Simon, played French style a little bit as did Nuel Johnson. But old Frank Paul and John Baddish played a lot of Scottish music and they were the same age as Simon. So I guess it was the same with them as with myself: they heard the Scottish music and fell in love with it.

The Lee Cremo Wilfred mentions was, up to his demise in 1999, one of the best known fiddlers in the Maritimes, performing with his ensemble, The Eastern Variation. None of the several records he released seem to be currently in print, although a few selections by Lee can be heard on several Smithsonian-Folkways collections of Native American music. As Wilfred mentions, Lee favored a more conglomerate form of downeast music in his performances, largely because that was what his mainland audiences expected of him. Indeed, although quite a large number of Scottish or Cape Breton tunes have become incorporated into the wider Canadian repertory, they have generally become accelerated in tempo and have shed their grace notes and cuts in the process. Indeed, dancers on the mainland generally found Cape Breton music too sluggish for square dancing and preferred Don Messer's characteristic brisker tempos. As a result, Cape Bretoners emigrant to locales like Toronto or Timons were often forced to shift performance styles if they hoped to reach any kind of audience (to the degree that the great Jimmie MacLellan was forced to relearn Cape Breton style all over again when he returned to Scottish music in his later years). Although the fact is sometimes forgotten today, in the late 1950's and '60's the popularity of Messer-style performances in urban centers such as Sydney ran the risk of eclipsing the stricter forms of Scottish music in Cape Breton even during the glory days of Winston Fitzgerald's greatest performances. This is one of the reasons why aficionados of the older style, such as the late Father John Angus Rankin and the Cape Breton Fiddlers Association, perceived a crisis of preservation in the early 1970's and actively promoted a rekindling of interest in the Scottish repertory.

In contrast to Lee's different trajectory, the encouragement of Wilfred's own musical circles led him to acquire a taste for Scottish music of the greatest purity and deep-felt intensity. As in the case of Theresa Morrison's tune choices, Wilfred's medleys strike me as wonderful illustrations of the subtle art of assembling complementary tunes into evocative assemblies. Indeed, in his melodic choices, Wilfred's

selections remind me of those of his friend, the late Dan Joe MacInnis, whose three out-of-print LPs are also filled with lovely tunes artfully laced together (including another wonderful treatment of *Caledonia's Wails*). The unjustly neglected Paddy LeBlanc shared a similar aesthetic as well.

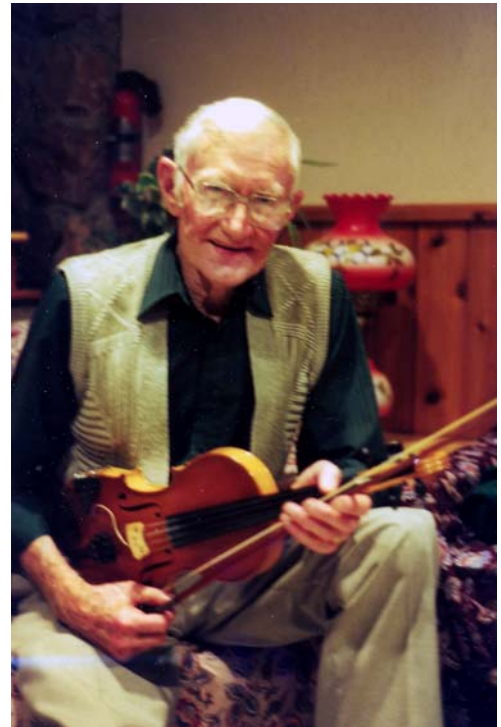
Returning briefly to Lee Cremo, his father, Simon, was once a well beloved figure in eastern Cape Breton, for he traveled widely through the countryside, offering either to cut your hair or play the fiddle for a few dollars.

An excellent profile of Wilfred by Paul MacDonald can be found in a special edition of Fiddler Magazine published in 2000. Allister MacGillivray's invaluable The Cape Breton Fiddler contains a shorter profile of Wilfred, as well as sketches of many of the other musicians mentioned in these notes.

Band 4. Charlie MacCuspic w/ Gordon MacLean, piano: *Bras d'Or House* (Piper Alex MacDonald), *General Longstreet* (Frank Livingstone), *Mabou Communications* (Dougie MacDonald and Kinnon Beaton, SOCAN) - reels (MW & MM, Washabuck, NS, 7/27/00).

Charlie was born on October 21, 1931 on Hunter's Mountain south of Baddeck and mainly raised there, although he spent some of his early childhood in Grand River. His father played the fiddle a little, although Charlie mainly learned by listening to other people. Charlie's widow, Florence, describes the family as being *of good old Presbyterian stock--you couldn't hardly smile on a Sunday. It was amazing that any of them ever learned to play the fiddle, for it was always work, work, work and nobody ever told you that you were good because that might make you conceited. So Charlie's mother would never let him play the fiddle on a Sunday, but, after she was gone, the first thing you'd hear every Sunday morning was a big blast on the fiddle from Charlie--it's no wonder that our kids never cared too much for it!*

Partially because of such puritanical attitudes, there seem to have been fewer fiddlers in this region of Victoria County than in the Washabuck area, which represented a predominately Catholic community. Accordingly, Charlie relied mainly upon Joe MacLean, Winston Fitzgerald, Buddy MacMaster, and Carl MacKenzie as his musical influences, both on record and in person--"it was amazing how far you'd drive to go to a dance," Florence observed. Once upon a time Charlie attempted to read music, but "he wouldn't do his homework" and relied instead



Charlie MacCuspic

upon a finely adjusted musical ear, supplemented by visits to a pianist friend to check out the fine details: "Charlie was always very fussy about getting a tune right," Florence observed. He was deeply involved in the Cape Breton Fiddlers Association that, as indicated above, played a crucial role in revitalizing local musical interests in the 1970's: "Charlie just loved to see the young ones play the fiddle and would help them in any way he could." He was serving as president of that group when they once sponsored a raffle for a fine fiddle. Charlie drew the winning ticket himself and his friends kidded him afterward for "what was evidently a rigged job." Worse yet. at the very next raffle, the MC called out a winner once again, "It's Charlie ..." and Charlie said to himself, "Uh oh, now they'll really blame me" but, fortunately for his ethical reputation, it turned out to be some other "Charlie" this time around.

Charlie made one LP and a few privately issued cassette tapes. Until a failed knee forced his retirement, he mainly drove a truck and worked as a carpenter. Shortly after our single recording session at Vince MacLean's house in MacKay's Point, Charlie contracted cancer and went into a swift decline, passing away on October 11, 2001.

Band 5. Carl MacKenzie w/ Doug MacPhee, piano: *The Concert March* (Dan R MacDonald, SOCAN) - march; *The Connoisseur*, *The Marquis of Huntley*, *Neil R. MacDonald* (Dan R MacDonald, SOCAN) - strathspeys; *Atholian Hills* (Daniel Dow), *Tom Rae* (Dan R MacDonald, SOCAN) - reels (MW, New Waterford, NS, 6/12/76).

Carl is from another musical family within the Washabuck region described by Vince MacLean in the opening notes (in fact, Carl is Gordon MacLean's uncle and Vince's MacLean's brother-in-law). Carl studied civil engineering in college and taught that subject for many years at the College of Cape Breton in Sydney. Over the years, he has become one of Cape Breton's most traveled musical ambassadors, having carried his violin to fiddle festivals around the world. He has made many recordings on LP and CD, many of which are currently available from Cranford Publications and allied internet outlets (Carl's newest issue, as of this writing, is the excellent *Highland Classic*). He has always been fascinated by the technical aspects of Scottish composition and many of his recent recordings display a rare virtuosity on truly difficult pieces. For our purposes in this survey, we have drawn upon an unissued take from his first recording session for Rounder (Rounder 7005), when the characteristically propulsive "Washabuck" dance rhythms were more evident in his playing. Carl was initially reluctant to let us use this cut (although it was only through an engineer's mistake that it was left off the original LP), feeling that he could play these tunes more capably now. However, Vince MacLean convinced him of its illustrative merits and, whatever its youthful imperfections, it does vividly display the style that has made his home region famous across Cape Breton.



Carl MacKenzie, 1976

Band 6. **Theresa Morrison** w/ Gordon MacLean, piano: *Joe and Marguerite's Anniversary* (Theresa Morrison, SOCAN), *Jamie Gow* (Joseph Lowe) - jigs (MW; Sydney, NS, 7/27/00).

Theresa plays jigs with the most exquisite delicacy possible, as with this fine tribute to her brother Joe and his wife. A transcription appears, along with several further pieces by Theresa, in an excellent new collection from Paul Cranford, *The Cape Breton Fiddler's Collection*, which is drawn from the large pool of recent compositions authored by various members of the Cape Breton Fiddlers' Association.

Band 7. **Bussy MacLeod and Maynard MacKenzie** w/ Christine MacLeod, piano, and Gordon MacLean, parlor organ: *Miss Susan Cooper* (Ronnie Cooper), *Rannie MacLellan's* (Brenda Stubbert, SOCAN) - reel (MW, Sugar Camp, NS, 5/11/03).

Bussy was born on March 18, 1935 in Bucklaw, a little village in Victoria County located between Baddeck and Whycomagh. When he was ten, an uncle bought him a fiddle and taught him a few tunes, the first of which was "I Am Too Young to Marry Yet." One of the best of the local fiddlers was Willie Danny MacDonald, who was the father of Bill MacDonald who later ran dances with John L. MacDonald and Sandy MacIntyre in Toronto (Bussy himself lived in Toronto for thirteen years and saw much of Bill then). Other players that Bussy heard in those

early days were one A.A. Gillis (*not* Angus Allan Gillis, apparently) and John Y. Gillis, although the best known players that he heard came from the Washabuck region such as Joe MacLean (in those days the mountains isolated Bussy's region from the fiddlers of upper Inverness County and so, of all the great musicians from that county, he would regularly see only those players like Theresa MacLellan who were headquartered further south). Although Bussy often played at house parties while living in Toronto, he felt cut off from the tunes there and took up the fiddle with greater enthusiasm when he moved back home. He used to play a lot with Charlie MacCuspic and, after Charlie died, he and Maynard have formed a team, recently traveling to Scotland in a group of fifty fiddlers under the auspices of the



Cape Breton Fiddler's Association.

Maynard MacKenzie was born September 1, 1929 on the Yankee Line Road in Middle River. His father played a bit and a sister inspired him to attempt to play when he was about eight years old. His sister advanced swiftly enough, but Maynard made little progress until he saw an ad for "How to Read Music" in the Eaton's mail

order catalog. It cost 35¢, which Maynard just happened to have. With help from some others, Maynard became a good reader and has developed an extensive repertoire. Besides the Willie Danny MacDonald that Bussy mentioned, Maynard also remembers Willie Provert as an excellent local player. From further afield, Maynard would often hear Dan Hughey MacEachern, Michael Anthony MacLean and Joe and Theresa in the days when they still played dances together. Maynard worked as a pipe fitter and was forever traveling across all of Canada, although he always maintained his home in Victoria County. Like Bussy, he was a good friend of Charlie MacCuspic and a regular in the Cape Breton Fiddlers Association. In fact, it was Maynard who first suggested to Paul Cranford the idea that a collection of the group's best tunes would make a nice volume.

Band 8. **Paul Wukitsch** w/ Gordon MacLean, piano: *Beautiful Lake Ainslie* (Elmer Briand) - slow air, *John Roy Stewart* - strathspey, *Dan Galbey* - reel (MW & MM, Kenloch, NS, 5/29/01).

A substantial number of Americans have become entranced by Cape Breton's unique musical culture and have moved north. Paul Wukitsch was one of the first of these musically drawn immigrants. Raised in Schenectady, New York, he first heard Scottish music from New England's George Wilson and eventually turned his attention north. Marrying a Canadian girl, he moved to the Boisdale region in the early 1980's to work as a social worker. As indicated above, Paul soon began playing with Janet Beaton and Joe Peter MacLean as "The Boisdale Trio." Paul also became good friends with the late Johnny Wilmot and became adept in the old "Northside Irish" style that Johnny had perfected (a touch of this manner can be discerned in Paul's approach to the reel in this medley). Johnny's driving polyglot of Scottish and Irish styles was a true glory to hear and readers should be on the lookout for any of Johnny's out of print recordings (Brenda Stubbert and Jerry Holland often reveal strong "Northside" influences in their approaches as well). With the limited space available, we have decided to highlight this present meditative medley which nicely evokes memories of another important musician to the south, Elmer Briand, late of Arichat Island, who recorded two fine LPs for Celtic and composed a number of exceptional melodies. Elmer was of French heritage and a good friend to Wilfred, Paul, and the other musicians within the southeastern corner of the island (he tragically died before he could become better known within Cape Breton as a whole). Paul's sweet performance of Elmer's beautiful tune helps fill out our portrait of fiddle styles within our target region. Lake Ainslie lies in Inverness County, right in front of Morgan MacQuarrie's family home.



Paul Wukitsch

Band 9. Father Francis Cameron w/ Janet Cameron, piano: *Mrs. Major L. Stewart of the Island of Java* (Wm. Marshall) - slow air; *Long Bass* - strathspey; *An Old Mary Beaton Reel* - reel (MW & Bill Nowlin, Boisdale, NS, 11/03/03).

Fr. Francis was born April 18, 1934 in SW Mabou, although the family soon moved to North Sydney and eventually to Boisdale. From the very beginning, the young Camerons were fascinated with music:

Even as an infant, I always stayed around the house whenever my dad decided to play the old records, for I always interested in the music. Our father didn't

play the fiddle himself, but he hummed and jigged the tunes to himself and played them on the mouth organ. Back then it was all Gaelic in those communities: our parents spoke it amongst themselves and we prayed every night in Gaelic. When they'd have a house party, Janet and I were supposed to go to bed early but we just stayed at the top of the stairs listening to everything. And there'd be lots of Gaelic singing, story telling and talking about characters they used to know mixed in with the fiddling, for everyone was encouraged to share whatever they knew with the others. Each one just helped the others along. After I took up the violin at age twelve or so, the older people would always call upon me to play a tune or two. If someone like Winston Fitzgerald came to the house, inevitably in the course of the visit, he'd encourage me to get out the fiddle and listen to me very intently when I did so. And he did that with everyone, for he was very respectful of the old people as well.

Wherever I went, I always had my fiddle in my luggage, first in college and then in my first parish work in New Waterford, which is where I heard a lot of Mary Beaton MacDonald and Duncan MacQuarrie. After that, I was stationed in Guysborough County on the mainland for several years and the fiddle proved my lifeline there. In the 1970s, I became a priest in Mabou and six of us used to gather regularly at the Glebe House to play the old music that we never got tired of: Willie Kennedy, Sandy Cameron, Kenneth Joseph MacDonald, Flora MacLellan, Gregory Campbell, and myself, with Danny MacEachern or Joey Beaton on piano. And the same has happened everywhere else I've worked.



Fr. Francis Cameron

Indeed, Fr. Francis is legendary throughout Cape Breton for the gentle manner in which he has endeavored to keep the fiddle music integrated with a wider sense of community (elsewhere in these notes I've commented upon the vital role that the Catholic Church has played in the preservation of local culture within Cape Breton). He is also widely respected for his impressive knowledge of the older tunes.

Janet, who is a few years older than Fr. Francis, took up the piano in a somewhat allied manner. Their father had become intently involved in parish life in Boisdale, which was still struggling to recover from the Depression. To raise community funds, her father began importing some of the great musicians he knew from Inverness County (*e.g.* Angus Allan Gillis, Dan. J. Campbell, Sandy MacLean) for benefit dances. By this date, such musicians usually worked with piano accompanists in the dance halls (which Janet was too young to attend) and in 1944 her father saw the social advisability of getting a piano in their own home as well, although Janet had not been accustomed to hear-

ing a piano behind the fiddle before that. Although there were few music lessons available in the local high school, Janet did learn the rudiments of chording from Charlie MacKenzie. Soon thereafter, a young curate named John Angus Rankin



Iona

moved to the area and provided Janet with her first strong start on the instrument, teaching her to mark out a crisp rhythm by raising her hands high above the piano between strokes. Meeting at the Cameron household, Fr. Rankin also became great friends with Joe MacLean and Bill Lamey who would often visit from Sydney. In later years, Fr. Rankin played a well documented role in promoting the fiddle revival within Cape Breton and even accompanied Bill Lamey on a few of his classic 78s. Joe MacLean hired Janet to play for him for a few summer seasons in Iona and, in 1960 or so, whisked her away from Antigonish (where she was then teaching) for a hurried recording session in Halifax for Celtic Records. Janet wound up teaching in a number of far flung places, including Edmonton and Toronto: "I think that wandering must have been within us Camerons a bit, for it seems like we all wanted to leave for awhile" (to this day, in their retirement years, brother and sister travel a lot and I was able to contact them for this interview only at the very last moment). Wherever Janet has ventured, she speaks warmly of the great musicians she has known and the joy that they have brought her.

The last two tunes in this medley qualify as examples of what are sometimes

dubbed “Cape Breton traditionals,” indicating local tunes or arrangements without evident antecedents in the classic tune collections. I have employed the titles that Fr. Francis provided me; Paul Cranford indicates that the alternatives “Joe Confiant’s Strathspey” and “Mary’s Fancy” have become more or less canonical for these melodies in recent years, as CDs and tune books have gradually settled upon arbitrarily allocated designations. The late Mary MacDonald (née Beaton) of New Waterford knew a large number of these “traditional arrangements” and old house party tapes of her are avidly cultivated by Cape Breton’s best players (the only published examples of Mary’s playing, made at the very end of her life, can be found on an old Topic LP). Doug MacPhee discusses Mary’s playing further in the notes to volume four. Joe Confiant was another well regarded player of the time, who traveled in the same musical circles as Mary MacDonald (Joe’s basic style was “Northside Irish”-flavored whereas Mary’s reflected the old “coal mines” style of her native Inverness County). A nice CD of home recordings of Joe Confiant has been recently released by Cranford Publications.

Band 10. Gordon MacLean, parlor organ: *McPhederan’s*--strathspey; *Boys of Blue Hill, Traditional*--reels (MW, Sugar Camp, NS, 11/04/03).

Anyone with the slightest acquaintance with our NAT recordings of Cape Breton music will already know of Gordon MacLean’s fine piano work, for he is the “first choice” as accompanist for many of the island’s finest old-style players. Gordon has provided a gracious exemplar of his piano solo work on volume two of this series (Rounder 7038) and an additional selection can be found on Rounder 7041. Once we “discovered” Gordon’s parlor organ, we demanded another selection. Gordon says that this medley was inspired by Joe MacLean, but he picked up the last reel from Carl MacKenzie.

In his opening essay, Vince MacLean describes Gordon’s family as “the Lighthouse MacLeans” because they maintained the little light at Gillis Point (Gordon’s organ came from the



Gordon MacLean



Charlie MacCuspic and Michael Anthony MacLean

family home). Gordon reports that his branch of MacLeans is not closely related to the Washabuck MacLeans (nor to Joe Peter, for that matter), although marriages in recent years have bound them closely together.

Band 11. Charlie MacCuspic w/ Gordon MacLean, piano: *The March of the Cameron Men*, *The Braes of Tullymet--strathspey*, *The Joys of Mabou Coal Mines* (Donald Angus Beaton, SOCAN), *The 'Thirty-Eight Ford* (Donald Angus Beaton, SOCAN) (MW & MM, Washabuck, 7/27/00).

“The March of The Cameron Men” is an old chestnut that has recorded in recent years by artists as varied as Natalie MacMaster and Theresa Morrison. Charlie follows with several traditional style reels composed by the late Donald Angus Beaton. Many of Donald Angus’ pieces (including these tunes) have been published in *The Beaton Collection* and Rounder hopes to soon rerelease upon a download-only basis the old LP (*The Beatons of Mabou*) where Donald Angus plays them both with his son Kinnon.

Band 12. Wilfred Prosper w/ Gordon MacLean, piano: *Memories of Jim Smith* (Dan R. MacDonald, SOCAN) - march, *Miss Alexanderina MacDougall* (Gordon MacQuarrie), *The Musical Watchmaker* (Gordon MacQuarrie) - strathspeys, *Marry Me Now* - reel (MW & MM, Eskasoni, NS, 5/13/03).

Wilfred spontaneously offered this beautiful selection containing several rarely played selections by the late Gordon MacQuarrie from the *Cape Breton Collection* of

1940, without realizing that “Miss Alexanderina MacDougall” honors Morgan’s mother Zena in the days before she married Jack MacQuarrie (Gordon MacQuarrie had been a good friend of both families). Morgan had never heard the piece played before and was utterly thrilled to hear it executed in Wilfred’s delicate style. He also captures the pathos within Dan R. MacDonald’s “Memories of Jim Smith” beautifully as well.

Scotch Reels and Strathspeys 3

Miss Alexanderina MacDougall

VIOLIN

STRATHSPEY

By GORDON F. MACQUARRIE

Band 13. **Theresa Morrison** w/ Doug MacPhee, piano: *Niel Gow's Lament for the Death of His Second Wife* (Niel Gow), *Braes of Dunvegan*, *Miss Stewart of Garth* (William Shepherd), *Miss Hope of Pinkie* (William Shepherd) / *Kate Dunlay's* (Theresa Morrison), *The Alexander II* (Theresa Morrison) - reels (MW & Bill Nowlin, Sydney, NS, 11/02/03).

This recording was made at a little celebration party that Theresa hosted for our crew, after Bill Nowlin and I had finished up final recording on Joe Peter MacLean's CD. Theresa was reluctant to let us publish this medley, because it was executed imperfectly on an off-the-cuff basis, but I successfully argued that the selection displays the special thrill and excitement that can only come in a spontaneous setting. Of this kind of playing, Doug MacPhee once remarked to me, "One of the things I most admired about the great session players of the past was the way in which the good musicians would build their medleys. One good tune would come after another and just about when you thought, 'Oh, they can never top this,' they'd pull out some fresh tune from out of their hat with a little different lilt to it that would kick the

music into a higher gear. It would make my hair stand on end to hear it.” As Theresa beautifully demonstrates, this continual “building of a medley” is not achieved through blunt acceleration, as many younger players employ, but through a subtle



*Theresa Morrison, Gordon MacLean,
and Morgan MacQuarrie*

matching of contrastive melodic types, so that each succeeding tune choice appears to comment, in essentially a classical theme-and-variation manner, upon the strains that have come before. I find that fiddle musics that attempt to extent their contours beyond standard sixteen bar limitations through improvisations or arranged variations upon a core theme often grow tedious, whereas the traditional Cape Breton method of selecting tunes that internally echo one another supplies a more gracious manner of achieving longer form.

This set also illustrates, as ably as anything she has recorded, that Theresa can still knock out a stirring set of dance strathspeys and reels with the best of them, utilizing the timing and “lift” that her father taught her. Morgan and I were eager to include a cut

with Doug MacPhee and Theresa on this collection, to illustrate how differently the same fiddler can sound with different accompanists (Doug accompanies Theresa on Rounder 7053 while Gordon performs the honor on 7026). Biographical data on Doug appears in volume four, where he contributes a virtuoso solo performance.

Band 14. Kenneth MacLeod w/ Marion MacLeod, piano: *Teviot Bridge*, *Rosewood* (J. Scott Skinner), *Judique* (Winston Fitzgerald) - jigs (MW & MM, Windsor, Ont, 11/18/00).

Kenneth and his sister Marion are the children of the well-known novelist Alistair MacLeod and his wife Anita, who is a well-known authority on Gaelic song.

Until his recent retirement, Alistair taught literature at the University of Windsor but was originally from Glencoe in the upper corner of Inverness County where the family maintained a summer residency (Marion has recently moved to the region to teach school). His children gained a love of the music from these holiday trips back home and Kenneth often performs Cape Breton music within the Windsor/Detroit region.

Windsor and Detroit were formerly great magnets for Cape Bretoners seeking employment, generally in trades related to the automobile industry, and a large number of well-known musicians moved there from the 1920s through the 1980s--so many, in fact, that the Detroit musical entrepreneur Johnny

MacDonald was able to field enough Cape Breton musicians with the "MacDonald" surname to record on several occasions as "The Five MacDonalds" (in addition, the noted fiddler Little Jack MacDonald lived in the region for a long period). For many years, "Cape Breton Clubs" kept a full schedule of downeast dances and concerts active, often bringing in noted fiddlers from Cape Breton for the occasion. With the decline of the auto industry and a tightening of immigration laws, musical activity within the region has subsided considerably, although good musicians like Kenneth MacLeod, Morgan MacQuarrie, and Bobbie MacLeod continue to live there (Theresa Morrison's brother John MacLean lives in Detroit, but no longer plays the violin actively).

Here Kenneth and Marion execute a brace of popular Cape Breton jigs in a straightforward manner. As Burt Feintuch and Paul Cranford write in their notes to Rounder 7052, "The Judique Jig" is generally credited to Winston Fitzgerald but it



Marion and Kenneth MacLeod

seems to derive from the older, complex set that Buddy MacMaster performs on that CD.

Band 15. Joe Peter MacLean
w/ Janet Cameron, piano: *The Glencoe March* (Dan R. MacDonald, SOCAN), *The Boy's Lament for his Dragon* - marches, *Miss Jessie Smith*, *Lady Mary Ramsay* (Nathaniel Gow) - strathspeys, *Homeward Bound*, *Jenny Dang the Weaver* - reels. (MW & Bill Nowlin, Boisdale, NS, 11/02/03).

Janet and Joe Peter end our CD with the most emblematic of modern Cape Breton tunes, Dan R. MacDonald's "Glencoe March" (Glencoe, where the Alister MacLeods headquarter, for many years hosted important music festival). The pipe march "The Boy's Lament for his Dragon" is sometimes called "The 72nd's Farewell to Aberdeen," although "Dragon" seems to have been its original title (I once presumed that this strange denomination traces to some association with



Joe Peter MacLean

Kenneth Graham's *Dream Days* but "dragon" apparently designates some kind of kite). Gordon MacQuarrie's *Cape Breton Collection* credits the widely performed "Homeward Bound" to Rory MacDonald, but Paul Cranford regards it as a Cape Breton recasting of the book tune "Gem of Ireland."

In this last regard, Morgan and I again thank Paul for his tireless assistance in researching tune titles for these last two volumes of our *Traditional Fiddle* releases (Kate Dunlay did the honors the first time around). Be sure to visit Paul's fine online music shop at <http://www.cranfordpub.com>..

-----Mark Wilson



Wilfred Prosper and Gordon MacLean

Credits:

Produced by Morgan MacQuarrie and Mark Wilson

Remastered by Paul MacDonald

Notes by Vince MacLean and Mark Wilson

Tune identifications by Paul Cranford

Photography and design by Mark Wilson

Dedicated to the memory of Michael Anthony MacLean.

Produced by Morgan MacQuarrie and Mark Wilson

This CD belongs to the North American Traditions Series,

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