

Maritimes Report



The Maritimes is an area too diverse and far-flung for the eyes and ears of this one writer. This report is based upon my own observations and participation, mostly in southern New Brunswick. For a fine description of activities in Newfoundland, I refer you to the comprehensive article by Charles Pennell of St. John's, in the Atlantic Report section of the final issue of *Canada Folk Bulletin*. (Ed. note: see also Neil Rosenberg's report in this issue). All in all, this report will take on a very optimistic tone.

Halifax: there have been bright new developments this year in this area, with the formation of the Harbour Folk Society, which has held its first general meeting 16 November 1980 to elect officers and to define goals. The aim of the Society is "to generate and encourage interest in folk culture, particularly music and stories, and to conserve these through performance in both casual and concert settings." Paid membership has already reached fifty, and a benefit concert and dance was held last June, with over two hundred people in attendance. The new club is also having a regular song circle at the Grafton St. Cafe. The Harbour Folk Society is hoping to start a monthly concert series as soon as it can find a suitable home. The Society can be contacted via Sandy Greenberg, P.O. Box 983, Armdale, Halifax, N.S. B3L 4K9, ph. 423-0786. To become a member, send \$5 to Dave Chapman, 257 Windmill Rd., Dartmouth, N.S. B3A 1G5. The other main development in Halifax was the opening of a new coffeehouse business, the Space, later renamed the Grafton St. Cafe (1579 Grafton St., Halifax, N.S. B3J 2C3). The Cafe features music ranging from bluegrass to jazz, and it is about the only place to catch folk music in Halifax, one or two nights a week. The Grafton issues a good newsletter, obtained free of charge at the above address.

Debra Meeks has done a number of lunchtime and evening presentations at the Grafton. She is currently collecting songs around Cape Breton and Halifax, having been funded by a Canada Council grant. She will need more funds in January 1981 in order to continue her work. Debra has appeared several times on the Radio Noon show from CBC Halifax.

While still in Nova Scotia, I wish to mention John O'Donnell's "Folk Music of Canada" course at St Francis Xavier University in Antigonish. He is also director of the Men of the Deeps, the well-known Cape Breton coal miner's chorus, and Past President of our Society.

Radio shows: with the demise of "Touch the Earth", folk performers have found air-time on other CBC radio shows in the region, notably "Music Maritimes" (contact Sandy Bernard, CBC Halifax, "New Brunswick Showcase" (contact Leon Cole, CBC Saint John) and "On Parlara de Nous" (contact Louise Soucy, CBC Moncton).

Saint John: another principal centre of folk music activity is the Saint John Folk Club, which appears to have stabilized into a very strong organization, despite the loss of their long-standing home, the Chapel Restaurant, now converted into a parking lot. In experimenting with various new locations, the club has successfully used the top floor of the Foundry, a local drinking establishment, and the Ganong Hall Theatre at UNBSJ. This year the SJFC celebrates its fifth anniversary. Club founder John Murphy reminisces over times spent at two hundred song circles and fifty monthly concerts in the latest issue of their *Rag*. The *Folk Club Rag*, under the editorship of Chris Lobban, has turned into a well-produced and entertaining bimonthly publication, available free of charge by writing Chris at 176 Germain St., Saint John, N.B. E2L 2G3. Five dollars also gets a year's membership to the Folk Club.

Fredericton is another active centre for folk music. The Folk Collective, hosts of the 1979 CFMS AGM, is also five years old this year. Its concerts, usually twice a month on Fridays, are held at Memorial Hall, UNB: contact Ron Lees, ph. 454-6378. Other places which have some traditional music are the Fredericton Public Library on Carleton St., and the National Exhibition Centre on Queen St (contact Linda Kelley). A second concert place, Kiva, has begun operations at the New Brunswick Craft School on Queen St. Concerts will be held every Friday, and they do not always

feature folk music. Featured there recently were Miramichi Festival singers Marie Hare and Wilmot McDonald. Contact Paul & Lutia Lauzon, c/o George Fry, the Director of the School.

On Labour Day weekends, the Lauzons have organized a small folk festival to complement the New Brunswick Provincial Handcrafts Festival. This Festival for the past few years has featured two days of folk music, performed by New Brunswickers on a small outdoor stage. This program is developing into what I believe is the province's first annual folk festival. The combined activities of the Provincial Handcrafts Festival attracted around 17,000 people this year.

Other New Brunswick performers: John Thompson of Woodstock is noted around southern NB for his performances, alone or in consort, on his historic collection of Celtic harps and his wind instruments.

Steve Peacock of Fredericton is now teaching music to French immersion students in that area's primary schools. He incorporates many French folk songs in his work, and it was encouraging to see about fifty of these children show up and sing at a recent performance of his. Both he and Marc Lulham perform whenever they can in the region. One collaboration was a Radio Canada show, on "Voix et Rythmes du



"Antique Ballads, sung to crowds of old,
Now cheaply bought at thrice their weight in gold."

Pays", featuring instrumentals and Acadian folk songs.

Marc Lulham of Cross Creek has been travelling around eastern Canada and New England, contributing with various other folk musicians on live and radio productions. He has been playing with Bill Lauf of Connecticut, who is one of the few tenor guitarists on the folk circuit. The theme of their performances is "Songs from Both Sides of the Border".

John Soderman of Cross Creek is quickly gaining prominence as a guitar builder. He has also written songs of social significance, such as one about a local dishonest sawmill operator, a farmer's lament about the onset of winter, and one haunting story, "The Lonesome Death of Andy Nowlan".

This year I finally managed a few days off from my Restigouche backwoods job to witness (and perform) at the Atlantic Folk (sic) Festival in Nova Scotia. Please read Bernie Houlahan's description of the Festival in the last issue of *Canada Folk Bulletin*. The quantity of folk performance probably increased this year with the addition of a "dry" concert area, but the Festival still caters mainly to the nighttime blues-rock concert crowd. I almost got my left foot run over by a motorcycle while listening to Pete Seeger sing Peggy Seeger's "Engineer" song.

To end on a cheery note, the Second Annual Beer and Peanuts Festival was held in Ellsworth, Maine, in midsummer. This near-traditional event (last year's was hosted in St. Andrew's, N.B. by the Saint John Folk Club) is an informal gathering of New Brunswick and New England traditionalists and their families, who take over a campground for a weekend-long song circle. This year's host was Gordon Bok, and we were also graced by the presence of the venerable harpist and singer Margaret MacArthur of Vermont. This reunion was another example of the closing ties between folk singers of the New Brunswick and New England areas.

- Marc Lulham

(Ed. note: our thanks to Debra Meeks for her information on the Harbour Folk Society which we have incorporated into the above report.)

