

Volume 3
Number 2

MONADNOCK FOLKLORE SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

February 1983

THE JOURNAL FOR FOLK CULTURE IN SOUTHWESTERN NEW HAMPSHIRE



The FOLKWAY

8 Years



Randy Miller

Lui Collins

The Folkway had been my home away from home ever since 1975 when I first started playing there. My earliest memories include hours of sitting around playing with other musicians, mostly after closing when we hard cores would stay up till the wee hours sharing songs. One night Gordon Peery said, "I've got a song you'll like" and I heard Dave Mallett's Garden Song for the first time. I pinned Gordon on the stage until I had learned the chords and all the words he knew, and later called up Aloutte Iselin to get another verse.* My result is definitely a Peterborough version, with both words and melody slightly and delightfully altered - the folk process at its best.

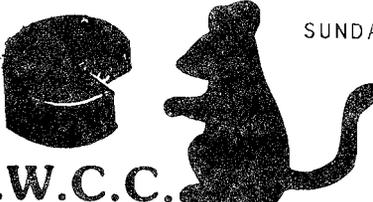
Some of my favorite memories of the Folkway are of birthday parties. I remember one which took place during a blizzard. Many avid Folkway lovers braved the storm, we all wore crazy hats, and the music and the partying was wonderful. After the official end of the evening, the die-hard musicians played on, and over the beautiful background of music could be heard the shouts and giggles and moans of Tom Dundee and his gang of fervent Cosmic Wimpout players. Ah yes, I must confess to being a member of this latter group.

And then there were the jams held on stage. Folkway audiences generally included musicians, good ones, many of them willing to be lured on stage to lend a hand. Jonathan Hall, early on, used to join me and we'd find a couple of sweet-harmony country songs to sing. And I've shared the stage with Moe Dixon, Dick Nevell, Ken LaRoche, and so many others. The Folkway just seems to be a favorite gathering place for musicians - to sing, to listen, to trade songs, and of course to eat - we musicians have great taste in food.

I brag about the Folkway, that in all of my years of playing there I have never been served a meal which was not outstanding, both to the eye and to the palate.

The consistent excellence of the food, the music, the craft shop, or any Folkway endeavor since its opening in February 1975 is remarkable. Where others might fear change, Widdie has embraced it, always keeping her eye on the high quality for which the Folkway is known. Folks travel from all over to sample the Folkway's musical and epicurean fare. And then come back again and again because the Folkway offers simply the finest evening of food, ambience, folk crafts and music in New England.

[Editors note-the Garden Song was first brought to Peterborough by Virginia folksinger Bob Zentz. It became a sort of theme song at the Folkway and was well known by all when songwriter Dave Mallett came to play his first evening there]



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From the Editor:

Over the past year I have found myself becoming increasingly absorbed in the publication of this newsletter. It is a project I enjoy, and the public response has been very supportive. We have had some fine contributions from established authors, and we can look forward to many more in the coming year.

I have also, since the beginning of the Monadnock Folklore Society, been privileged to serve as its chairperson. This position has involved various public-relations type of activities, as well as organizing concerts and other events.

As I look to the coming year, it is not realistic for me to continue with my responsibilities other than the Newsletter. While there are currently four other active members of the Board of Directors, they are all committed to whatever levels their individual lives will permit. Therefore it seems imperative that further person-power be forthcoming if we are to continue. I am hoping that our activities over the past several months, and the prospects for the future, will inspire at least one amongst you to come forth and participate with MFS on an administrative level.

Interested folks should write, or call me at 603/525-4904. Thanks.

Gordon Peery

Cape Breton Island is at the eastern end of Nova Scotia. The Island was settled by the victims of the Scottish Highland Clearances which took place at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries. These clearances (about which, curiously, little has been written in British history) caused entire communities of farmers, fishermen and craftsmen to flee across the ocean, bringing with them the only wealth they had; a cultural wealth of storytelling, games, dances, mouth music, pipe music and fiddle music.

The 18th Century saw the Golden Age of the arts in Scotland. Fiddle playing, which had become popular there in the 16th Century, had developed in a style which was quite clearly influenced by the bagpipes. It was at the end of this period that the forced migrations began. The Scottish clergy, seeing fiddle and pipe music as a tool of the devil, had combed the Highlands, confiscating fiddles, gathering them into great heaps and burning them. Perhaps that increased the importance of the fiddle in the lives of the Highlanders, who managed to include them among their few possessions which they brought with them to the New World.

The Highlanders settled heavily in Nova Scotia, and particularly on Cape Breton, where some of the villages became actual reconstructions of parts of the Old Country. The small villages were isolated from each other, and to this day there are characteristic similarities in the music between certain villages and their Scottish counterparts. In some cases the true Gaelic tradition was more accurately preserved in Cape Breton, for in the homeland there were many outside influences. Eventually the New World exerted an influence of its own, and there has evolved a definite Cape Breton flavor, which is perhaps even more distinct because of the relative isolation of Cape Breton from the more "melting pot" areas of North America. The French and Micmac villages in Cape Breton were attracted to the Highland style, so the Scottish influence prevailed.

(continued next page)

THE MONADNOCK FOLKLORE SOCIETY

- is a non-profit organization which sponsors concerts, lectures, workshops, etc. in the folk arts. Membership is \$10 per year, \$8.00 for students and senior citizens, \$14.00 - family. Benefits include subscription to this newsletter, a discount on concerts, and invitations to members gatherings.

To join, send your check to MFS, PO Box 43
Peterborough, NH 03458

LOCAL FOCUS

Alouette Iselin

You may remember a letter in the December issue of this newsletter, in which Devik Rich suggested that it would be nice if the members of the Society were to get together and do some singing.

What I am hoping is that any and all interested persons might gather regularly at each other's houses to play and sing and teach (and perhaps eat and drink), or perhaps just to listen.

I would really like to see some groups form out of this eventually. For instance, someone in Camden, Maine sent me a tape of several area musicians and small groups there who had gotten together to do a concert at the Camden Harbor Inn. The tape was very impressive, and made me realize how much three or four people can learn from each other, how much can be done with three or four voices.

Perhaps we could begin by getting together at my house, in Nelson, sometime in March. I'll announce the date in the next Newsletter. Meanwhile I would welcome any ideas and suggestions from you.



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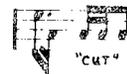
It is important to realize that, especially in this geographical region, the communities and families had to rely on themselves for entertainment. No Atari video games for these folks (how culturally deprived!). Nearly every family had at least one fiddle. Sunday afternoons were specifically reserved for music, and the fiddle would be passed round the table, old favorites played and new tunes exchanged. The music soothed these people from the sorrow of having left their homeland - and it also became the celebration for a new life; over the years the more melancholy airs and laments from the Scottish repertoire tended to be discarded, leaving the more lively strathspeys, jigs and reels.

The music became a part of the whole life, in the home and in the village. There were a few attempts to discourage the music; among the more notorious characters in Cape Breton history is Father Kenneth MacDonald (1865-94) who actually gathered fiddles from his parishioners and burned them. But for the most part the Cape Bretoners weren't bothered by the alleged connection between the devil and the fiddle. In fact it is part of the Cape Breton folklore that the fiddle is the only instrument that the devil cannot play, because placing the bow over the strings makes the shape of the cross. After Father MacDonald's attempts to silence the music had proven in vain, the Cape Breton clergy came to the conclusion that music and dance would be alright as long as it were to the benefit of the church. Thus began the fund raising Parish picnic, usually a two day affair consisting of feasting, sporting events, and the now sanctioned music and dance.

The style of courtship between the young men and women of these remote villages was obviously restricted by the general lack of public institutions. A teenage boy might make a social visit to the home of his sweetheart, but to do this more than a couple nights a week was not considered proper. However, it was quite permissible for the young lass to be escorted to and from a dance by her beau. It is easy to see then that the young men of the village spent considerable time and energy seeking the slightest pretext for a dance.

In the earlier days there was seldom an accompanying instrument for the fiddle. This factor contributed to the development of two characteristics of the Cape Breton style. One is the drone effect; making use of a higher or lower string to create additional sound. While this trait was originally inspired by emulating the pipes, and can be found in some native Scottish styles, it is much more evident in the Cape Breton style. And without a rhythmic accompaniment, the fiddler was compelled to provide a steady beat. This was often accomplished by using one stroke of the bow for each note (in contrast to the Irish style of playing several notes in one bow stroke). Equal emphasis was given to both the the up-stroke and down-stroke (as opposed to the usual accent on the up-stroke), a technique which further enhanced features already inherent in Scottish fiddling, the "Scotch snap" and the "cut".

"Scotch snap" (written )



Foot action was also an important aspect of the fiddling, though it may have resulted not so much from the fiddler's obligation to provide a beat for the dancers, as just not being able to keep the feet from moving. However the patterns are often more complicated than mere stomping.

As the twentieth century has taken its toll on so much of tradition, it began to eat away at the musical dimension of the lives of the Cape Bretoners. Radio, television, and the lure of a better life elsewhere began to disrupt the pastime of fiddling and dancing, and while there existed a number of fine fiddlers, the continuity of the music as an inherent part of the culture seemed in jeopardy.

In 1971 there was a CBC radio and television program called "The Vanishing Cape Breton Fiddler". If the tradition had been in danger of becoming extinct, the population was now sufficiently aroused to see to it that no such thing would happen. The Cape Breton Fiddler's Association was formed, and in 1973 the first Glendale Fiddling Festival was held. Many of the old timers got their fiddles out of the attic, and fiddling amongst the young people took on new prestige.

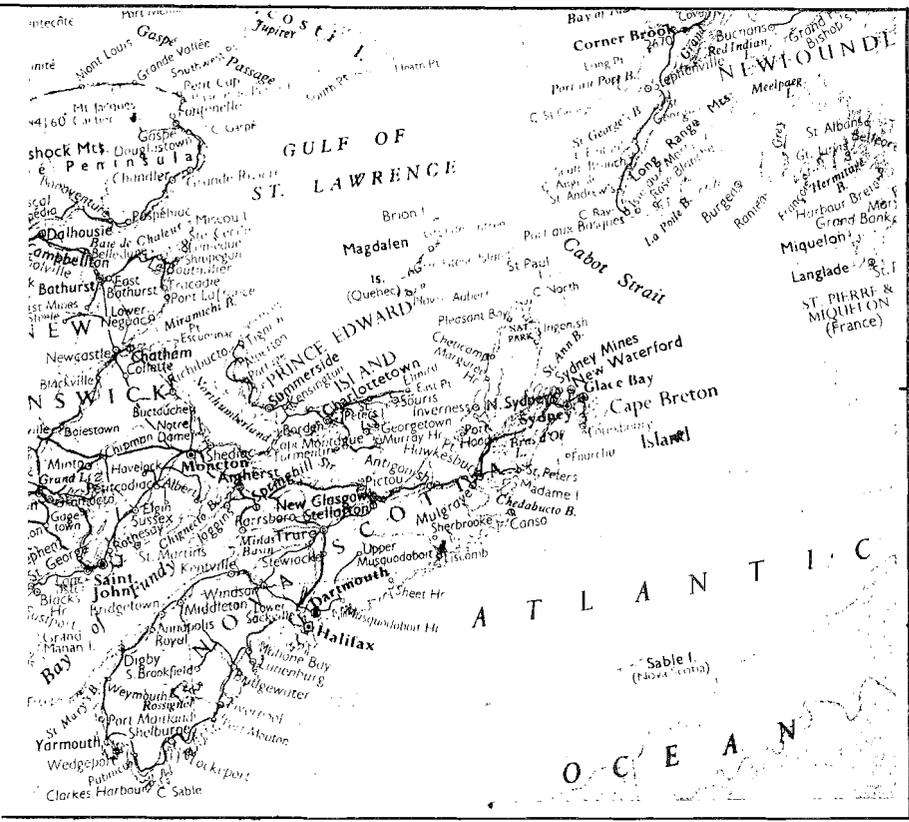
As with all music, there is no doubt that the Cape Breton style will continue to evolve, though perhaps not with the immunity that it once had from other cultural influences. But it is, and will remain, a style that is distinct, lively and joyful.

In our own Monadnock area we are fortunate to have a fine fiddler who, though not from Cape Breton, has embraced that style of music whole-heartedly. Harvey Tolman is a life-long resident of Nelson, where the tradition of contradancing has been kept alive since it first began there over two hundred years ago. Harvey's grandmother came down from New Brunswick preaching the gospel, and he notes with amusement that he now goes back to Canada playing the fiddle.

Harvey's musical career began somewhat dubiously in the backwoods of Nelson. There being "no women within fifteen miles" the local youth, which included Harvey's cousin Wren Tolman, would gather on the weekends in a tiny cabin. Wren would play tunes on the whistle and would get Harvey and others to play along on guitar. These were wild times, with plenty of beer, and the boys dancing about in the flames of the bonfire.

There's a bit of Nelson folklore that says that Quig (Albert Quigley, the Nelson dance fiddler who played for Ralph Pages dances) gave Harvey a fiddle so that he would stop playing the guitar. Sometime later Harvey went with Dudley Laufman down to the Scottish Games in Brookline, MA., where he heard his first Cape Breton fiddling. For Harvey there was simply no question about it - that was the style of music that he wanted to play. Years of practice and listening to other Cape Breton fiddlers has made Harvey one of the finest Cape Breton style players in New England. While Harvey frequently plays for dances in the Monadnock area, it is seldom that people get a chance to really sit and listen to his music. It is for this reason that the Monadnock Folklore Society has asked him to give a performance at the Common Room of the Fitzwilliam Inn, a gathering place for many of our musical events.

Harvey will be accompanied by guitar and mandolin player Jason Little. Jason studied guitar at Keene State College, where he received a B.M. in 1982. He has an album with the group Lily which is currently doing well in national sales, and he teaches music at Vermont Academy and at The Well School in Peterborough. Jason first met Harvey at the Nelson coffeehouse (one Sunday a month in the Old Nelson Schoolhouse, during the mid seventies), and has enjoyed playing with him ever since. His back-up playing fully complements the Cape Breton style.



HARVEY TOLMAN & JASON LITTLE

Cape Breton Music in the Common Room

Fitzwilliam Inn

Fitzwilliam, NH

Saturday, February 19

7:30 PM Admission \$3.50

John Campbell is among the more prominent figures in contemporary Cape Breton style music. He has written over 450 tunes, including the Cape Breton classic, "Sandy MacIntyre's Trip to Boston" Sandy MacIntyre is also a Cape Breton fiddler. From the tune, it must have been a great trip to Boston.

SANDY MacINTYRE'S TRIP TO BOSTON

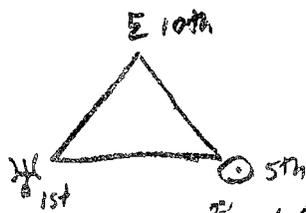
And

by John Campbell

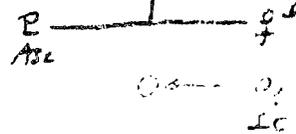


The Folkway
 1st Coffeehouse
 Feb 28 1975
 8 PM EST
 (1 AM GMT 3-1-75)
 6:45:03 Sidereal Time
 Peterborough NH
 Lat 42 N 53
 Long 71 W 57

Wide Grand Time in Waves

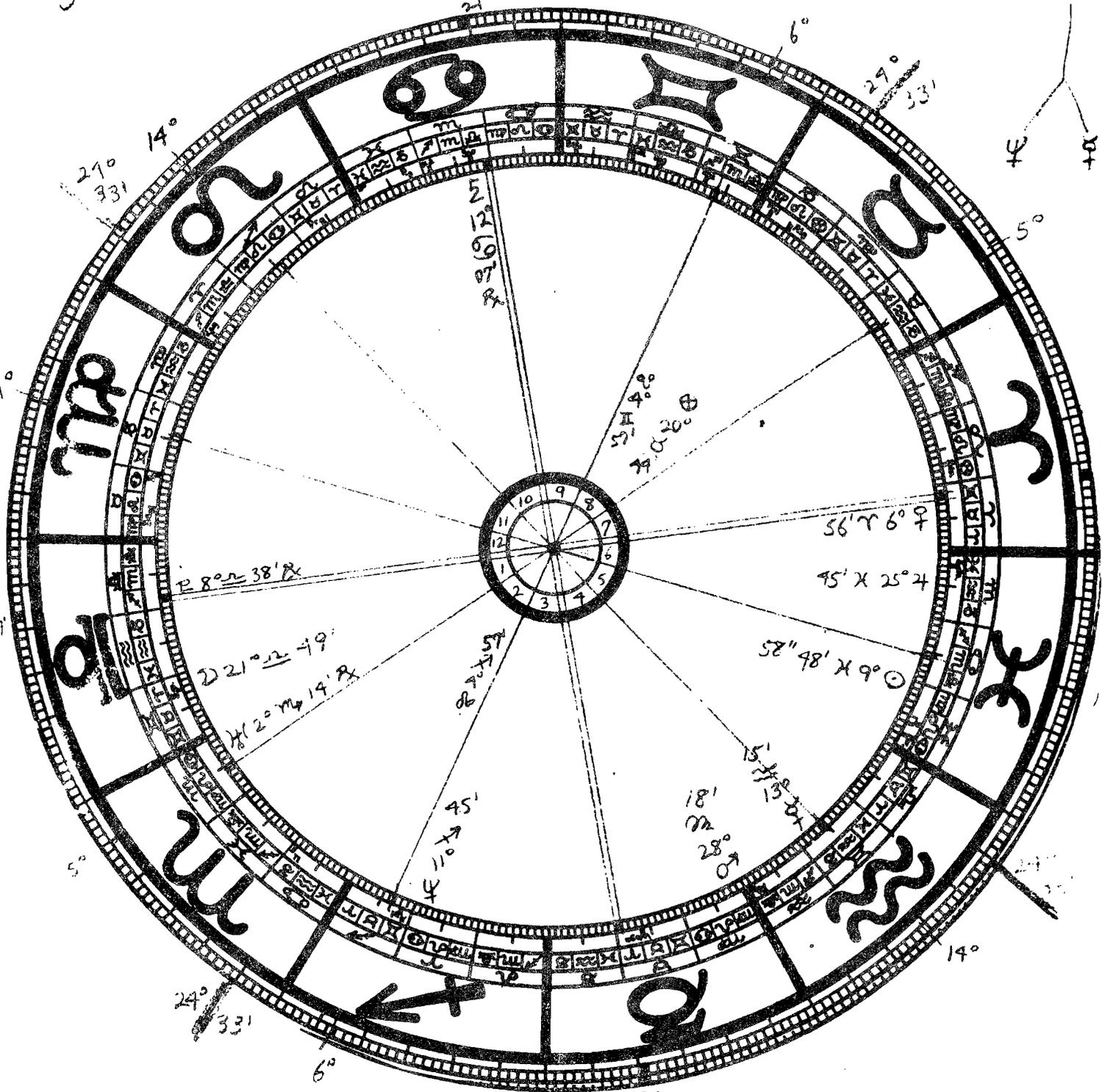


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Judy Harvey
 Astrologer

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FOLKWAY

Last night Widdie Hall and I sat down in her living room in Folkway South, across the driveway from the club. We opened a bottle of brandy, started the tape recorder and commenced an interview in which we hoped to uncover the history of the Folkway in 45 minutes. Fat chance! But we did have a terrific time trying and I wish we could share the whole interview with everyone, but naturally no one wanted to do all that transcribing. In any case here are some of the highlights of the discussion which we hope will enlighten those who wonder how it all got started.

It mostly got started in Jim and Libby Haddock's big living room at the Brush Farm in Dublin, because that's where Widdie and Jonathan first met, accidentally of course, while Jonathan, myself, and the late Barry Prouty rehearsed some songs we were planning on performing some day. We didn't see a lot of Jonathan and Widdie after the rehearsal, nor for about three weeks as a matter of fact. Then they got married and moved into that funny house that sits on the side of 101 just before you get to Kisluk's Greenhouse. Widdie says she and Jonathan used to play café a lot. She would be the waitress and Jonathan would be the musician and it was a good way to pass the time on a snowy day. Then Widdie used to imagine having some tables in the sideyard, so they found some big wooden spools that used to have 10,000 miles of telephone wire wrapped around them, fixed them up, and they had some tables. The trouble was that 101 was no place for a café, especially since the Dublin Town Barn was right there next to their house. But the fantasy stayed alive, and pretty soon they took the tables down to Grove St. in Peterborough, #85 to be exact. The year was 1975.

This is where the going gets tough. It gets tough because the history of the Folkway is people, hundreds of people who, in a million ways, have shaped what the Folkway is. These people brought their brains, muscles, love, tears, ideas, music, heartaches, weddings, recipes, craftsmanship, loans, animals, kids, grandmas, trucks, fiddles, cider etc.etc. and gave them to the Folkway. Here are a few examples:

Jonathan Hall brought his absolutely unique respect for individual expression and artistic excellence, the opportunity for musicians and everyone to be themselves in a relaxed and welcoming place. He also brought the engineering skill to reassemble the incredible granite steps in the garden, transported all the way from Milford. He also brought Scribology.

Gordon Peery brought joy to the kitchen through his zany menus and memos to the staff, not to mention inspiration for many an after hours party.

Pat DeLachapelle set the style for the craft shop and with her husband Dick, supported the place unfailingly year after year. Barbara Schweigart came as the baker and since then has held just about every job it's possible to hold at The Folkway.

Danny Thibeault brought consistent excellence to the kitchen and the menu.

Widdie brought the "stick-to-itiveness", a quality that really counts when the hired musician calls 20 minutes before showtime and says he's stuck in a blizzard, when the oil burner fails and it's -20 outside and dropping, when the gas runs out and 50 people are coming for dinner, and so on, ad infinitum.

Now this is where the going gets really tough. I'm not going to mention any more names and Widdie's going to read this and say: "But you can't leave out _____"!! I know Wid, and I feel bad too, so I'm going to make the suggestion: Come on down to the Folkway some night, dear reader, find Widdie - she's usually around somewhere- and say, "Come on, let's go sit around, drink some brandy and talk about all the people who ever had anything to do with this place."

Chances are, if the kids are in bed, the refrigerator isn't broken, and Jim Post or Tom Dundee isn't on stage, she'll take you up on it.

Now didn't I say I wasn't going to mention any more names?

Dick Nevell 1.27.83

I have been especially blessed by the many miracles between the first Folkway Coffeehouse in 1975 and, in the same rooms, the Queen of Hearts Café in 1982. My favorite holiday, coming this month, inspires a sentiment which expresses what I feel about those people who have shared the talents, their efforts, their essence, to make the Folkway.

♥ Widdie

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FOLKWEAR at the FOLKWAY

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UPCOMING MFS EVENTS

February 19th - Cape Breton Music
Harvey Tolman - Jason Little
Fitzwilliam Inn

March 9th - Alistair Anderson
Keene State College

April 1 - Robin Williamson
Nashua Arts & Science Center

April 9 - Jean Redpath
Keene State College

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THE SPIRIT OF THE FOLKWAY

by Gordon Peery

I had the privilege to work at the Folkway for the first three years of its existence. There are of course volumes to tell. Time is nothing but space, but we are limited with both here. For now, here are just a few feelings and recollections.

It was in the winter of 1974 when I met Jonathan Hall. He was offering guitar lessons, and I was an aspiring guitarist. I remember entering the cluttered room which served, among other things, as his studio. A Franklin stove just barely relieved the chill. We sat opposite each other, and I played a few bars of something to demonstrate the level of my playing. Jonathan watched me, with a look that was almost cynical, yet at the same time positive. His look was direct, but went beyond me - it was as though he saw some great amusement about what was going on, and his eyes twinkled with satisfaction.

I think that I knew that first evening that we weren't going to keep a student-teacher relationship for very long. This was in part because I was more interested in fooling around on the guitar than making a serious study of it - but more so it was because I knew that Jonathan and I were both too busy being intrigued with life to give proper discipline to lessons. We both had a passion for philosophical speculation on any subject, and we took great delight in exploring the absurd.

I had heard that Jonathan, and his wife Widdie, were planning to open some sort of restaurant that would also have to do with music. Later on when I met Widdie I engaged them both in conversation. I had spent a little time in the restaurant business and was interested in a job. I clearly remember my frustration that evening as neither Jonathan nor Widdie were able to define exactly what it was they intended to do. They had bought a big house on Grove Street in Peterborough, which contained a couple of apartments and had a barn in back, with a shed joining the structures. But really what they were planning seemed most obscure, motivated only by some inner impulse.

Eventually they decided that the barn would be made into the dining room of the restaurant, where there would be live folk music after dinner. I stopped by the house one day (after passing it several times while looking for something more resembling a potential restaurant) and went inside the barn. I met Thomas and Alex the Carpenters, and offered to lend a hand hauling materials, stepping on the bare ground between the floor joists.

The design that was being developed for the barn took on particular significance for me. The engineering was under the direction of Robert Pittman, who had been an instructor at High Mowing School in Wilton, where I had spent my last three years of High School. Bob had been a major figure in the history of the school, and when several of the old school buildings were destroyed by fire, he had directed the rebuilding project. I had worked closely with him during those important years of my life, and now his influence was felt in this new project. Bob and his wife Ruth gave tremendous support in those early, formative days of the Folkway. Bob died a couple of years ago, not yet fifty years old. As I look back on it, the two most important places in my life were nourished by his goodness. There are probably few people in the Folkway scene today who remember Bob Pittman, and even fewer who knew him as the inevitable father figure at High Mowing, but those of us who knew him loved him dearly and it is important that he be remembered in the history of the Folkway. Much of the peace that is so often felt there is a gift from him.

The renovations on the barn were extensive, and the work involved demanded every bit of attention that Jonathan and Widdie could afford. They had intended to move to the Grove St. house when the one of the apartments became vacant, but the pressures of the job eventually forced them to move on site. With their two children, three year old Sasha and 6 month old Isaac, they moved into the 10'x12' room which now serves as the dessert serving station.

On February 28th, 1975, The Folkway officially opened, with a coffeehouse in the small room which is now off the bar, in the northeast corner of the house. The performers were Vic Hyman, Eddie Mottau, and Jonathan Hall. The menu consisted of cheesecake, roast beef sandwiches, hot cider, tea and coffee, and the famous "Ukrainian coffee". For several months, every Friday night, this was the site of small, warm gatherings of friends. The front room, dimly lit, was the main listening room, and if people wanted to chat a bit (or, as was sometimes the case, there were more than twenty people) they sat in the room where the bar is now.

It was in the fall of 1975, when the barn section opened up into a full fledged restaurant, that my Folkway career began. About that I could go on endlessly, for I still have vivid memories of after-hours partying and fellowship amongst the staff and with many of the fine musicians who came to play. Many bottles of wine were uncorked well into the wee hours, and many the profound revelation came upon us as the philosophical bent of Jonathan Hall permeated the intellectual atmosphere. But these are stories for another time. I must point out however, that as a result of the intense fellowship of early staff and friends, there developed a sense of caring that became the core of the spirit of the Folkway as a public establishment.

In those early days it was seldom that we had more than a dozen or so people for dinner, and I would frequently serve up the entree and then go and join our guests. It was in this way that I got to know many new friends. Particularly active customers were the early staff members of Byte magazine (which began about the same time as the Folkway). The Byte people were always very friendly to us. The staff, feeling appreciated, was able to return the warmth - and so the restaurant grew.

But here I am straying from the point of this article. The Folkway is particularly important because it so enhanced folk music in Peterborough. Through the many and varied performers that come to the Folkway, the lives of people in the Monadnock area have been enriched. Without the Folkway these musicians would be, at best, distant voices on the radio. Because of the Folkway, they have become real people in our lives. Stan Rogers, Jim Post, Lui Collins, Bill Staines, Bob Zentz, Guy and Billy --- they have become our friends. In the warmth of low lights, under the hanging plants, with elbows resting on the spool tables, sipping wine or eating a "great big cookie", the Folkway becomes home for a while.

Eight years have passed. Jonathan Hall has moved to Vermont where he is a school teacher. The kids are growing up, and Widdie carries on. If you were to ask her what she's doing, her answer would probably be as vague as it was eight years ago. But if you were to ask her why she's doing it, she'd tell you it's because she cares. It is that caring that is the essence of the Folkway.

FEBRUARY - Performer Listing

- 4 - Bill Crofut - Folkway
- 4 - Ma Tante Alys - Welcome Table
- 5 - Sally Rogers - Folkway
- 5 - Pete Seeger - Greene Hall
Smith College, Northampton
- 5 - Lorre Wyatt - Sounding Board
- 6 - Pierre Bensusan - Iron Horse
- 11 - Feast or Famine - Welcome Table
- 11 - Patty Larkin - Folkway
- 11 - Leo Kretzner - Circle of the Sun
- 12 - Sally Rogers & Howie Bursen
Sounding Board
- 12 - Tom Callinan - Folkway
- 12 - Ma Tante Alys - Lowell House,
Harvard Univ. FSSGB - 617/326-0443
- 12 - Tom Juravich - Trinity Coffeehouse
- 18 - Billy Novik & Guy van Duser - Folkway
- 18 - Pete Seeger - Symphony Hall -
617/266-1492
- 19 - Ossian - First Congregational Church
Cambridge 617/492-8341
- 19 - Harvey Tolman & Jason Little
Cape Breton Music - Fitzwilliam Inn
MFS - 603/525-4904
- 19 - Dakota Dave Hull & Sean Blackburn -
Folkway
- 19 - Tony Trischa & Skyline - Sounding Board
- 19 - Brehan Seer - Champlain Folklore
802/849-6968
- 23 - Doc Watson - Sanders Theatre, Cambridge
617/876-0099
- 24 - Patty Larkin - Passim
- 25 - Joe Val and the New England Blue Grass
Boys / and the Linder Brothers
Welcome Table
- 26 - Pete Kairo - Sounding Board

The Monadnock Folklore Society - 603/525-4904

The Folkway - 85 Grove St. Peterborough, NH
603/924-7484

The Welcome Table - College St.
Congregational Church 802/425-3435

The Sounding Board - First Church of Christ
W. Hartford, CT 203/563-3263

Circle Round the Sun - Woodbury, CT
203/263-5524

Passim - 47 Palmer St. Cambridge, MA
617/492-7679

Trinity Coffeehouse - Branford, CT
203/488-7715 * 488-7189

Iron Horse Coffee House
20 Center St. Northampton, MA
413/584-0610

CONTRA DANCES - February

- 4 - Northampton, MA - Town Hall
- 12 - Frankestown - Town Hall
- 18 - Northampton, MA - Town Hall
- 20 - Dawn Dance - Shriner's Hall
Brattleboro
- 26 - Greenfield, NH - Meeting House

Dances usually run from 8:30 - midnight
Admission generally 2.50 or 3.00

- Weekly Dances
- Saturday - S. Amherst, MA - Munson Library
 - Sunday - Brattleboro - Green St. School
8:00 - 11:00 / 3.00
 - Monday - Nelson - Town Hall
8:00 - 10:30 / 1.50

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