

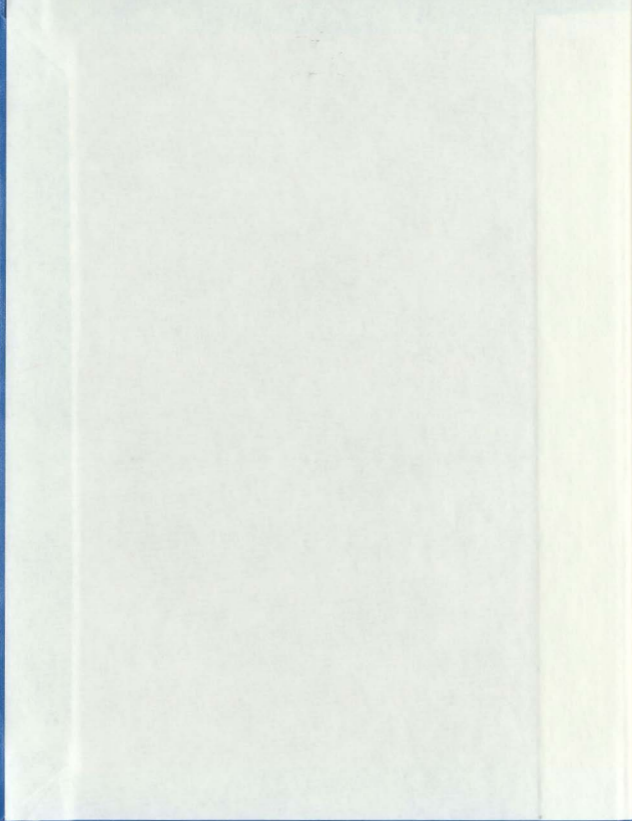
DAN R. MacDONALD:
INDIVIDUAL CREATIVITY IN THE CAPE BRETON
FIDDLE TRADITION

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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JOSEPH CLIFFORD McGANN



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Dan R. MacDonald:

Individual creativity in the Cape Breton fiddle tradition

BY

© Joseph Clifford McGann

**A thesis submitted to the School of
Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment of
the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts**

**Department of Folklore
Memorial University of Newfoundland
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St. John's

Newfoundland



Dan R. MacDonald circa 1970's

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of the life of Cape Breton, Nova Scotia born composer Dan Rory MacDonald (1911-1976). The focus is on his life story, using it as a jumping off point for examining the evolution of the Cape Breton tradition over the last one hundred years. The introduction sets the stage for this examination by outlining the motivational factors behind my interest in Dan R. MacDonald and also outlines my efforts to uncover source material for this thesis.

Chapter one examines the evolution of folklore collecting within the Cape Breton idiom, focusing on the historical lack of attention paid to instrumental traditions. Chapter two defines the Cape Breton fiddling tradition within which Dan R. was active, first by probing the roots of the tradition in Scotland then following its evolution within a New World context.

The main body of the thesis, chapters three through seven, consists of detailed examinations of each distinct period of Dan R's life. This material chronicles his formative years as a fiddler and follows him as he makes his initial compositional contributions to the idiom. After four and a half years in Scotland during World War II, subsequent to his return to Cape Breton in the 1960s, the setting shifts to Dan R's time in "The Boston States" and Ontario. Finally, I chronicle his rise to a position of note within the tradition following his return to Cape Breton after years employed as an Ontario autoworker. Two constants run through each distinct period in Dan R's life, his passion for his native Island's traditional fiddle music and his obsession for composing within that tradition.

Chapter 8 shifts focus from a detailed overview of Dan R's life to concentrate on understanding his passion for composing. I also place Dan R's compositional output into the context of his life via a descriptive and analytic examination detailing how he re-combined the building blocks of tradition into new compositions. The thesis concludes by discussing Dan R.'s role within the wider umbrella of the "traveling musician" and attempts to identify the reasons for the popularity of his compositions beyond the fact that they are simply good tunes.

Appendices A and B play an important role in further establishing Dan R's significance to the tradition. Appendix A is a thirty-nine page tune listing of all known Dan R. MacDonald compositions at the time of submission. In the notes associated with each composition I have attempted to provide the extra-musical association for the title Dan R. gave his composition.

Appendix B is the first extensive discography compiled of recordings upon which a Dan R. composition has been recorded. The discography is meant to give the reader further insight into just how integral Dan R. MacDonald's compositions have become within the Cape Breton tradition and also establish the distances his tunes have traveled since his 1976 death.

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Introduction

There is a good deal of ethnomusicological work that laments change, tries to ignore it, to preserve what appears to have changed least or not at all. But the most sophisticated thinkers have all along been aware that ethnomusicologists must take change into account because it is always there. Indeed, if there is anything really stable in the musics of the world, it is the constant existence of change. The one thing that perhaps unites all musicological endeavor – and possibly all humanistic and social disciplines – is the need to understand this constant of humanity (Nettl The Study of Ethnomusicology 174).

To be perfectly honest, I had no intention of delving into change as a “constant of humanity” when I began researching the life of Cape Breton composer Dan Rory MacDonald. I, like those Nettl criticizes, entered into this study lamenting change intent on preserving that which I thought had changed least. Realizing change is an inevitable part of any living musical tradition, I began looking at individual creativity as a vehicle for telling the story of change within the Cape Breton Highland Scottish fiddle tradition since its arrival in the New World.

Despite longstanding knowledge that individual creativity plays a significant part in the process of change within instrumental folk tradition, few studies exist detailing how that change has occurred. Dr. Michael Moloney, in his thesis *Irish Music in America: Continuity and Change*, observed this deficiency within an Irish-American context.

Surveying the literature on Irish folksong and folk music to date, one finds little research on the bearers of tradition, and even less on the creators of tunes and songs whose compositions have been learned and performed by other musicians and players (365).

This same scarcity of attention being paid to the act of generation within fiddling traditions of the Southern United States prompted Middle Tennessee State University professor Charles Wolfe to ask, "Folklorists are forever collecting and studying the texts of vocal songs: when are we going to get the same treatment for instrumental tunes?" (183).

Dance Ethnologist Colin Quigley would note one reason behind the historic lack of scholarly treatment in *Music from the Heart*, his study of Newfoundland composer Emile Benoit. According to Quigley, "scholars of folk and traditional music have generally been more concerned with processes of transmission and variation than with generation" (65-66). Quigley would note that because of this neglect, "the nature of the process by which musicians manipulate their musical materials has remained largely a matter of speculation" (66). In his book *The Study of Ethnomusicology*, Bruno Nettl's line of thought parallels Quigley. According to Nettl, "the approaches of ethnomusicologists to history, largely because of the lack of data but also because of the nomothetic tendencies of the social sciences, concern the processes of change more than the content of change" (173).

Quigley and Nettl's supposition that early scholars neglected the act of generation is substantiated in the biases of the early documenters of Cape Breton culture discussed in chapter one. Though part of the blame deserves to be leveled at the single mindedness of early researchers, the inherently difficult nature of collecting and identifying tunes within a purely instrumental context remains the main factor behind the neglect.

Dr. Earl Spielman, in his comparative analysis of the Cape Breton and Texas fiddle traditions, echoes Quigley and Nettl's thoughts with regards to the lack of study of instrumental folk tradition. He also further illustrates the difficulties one encounters when choosing to work within such a tradition due to this historic lack of analysis.

Definitive comparative studies of style and practice are unfortunately far from possible at the present time due to the infancy of the analytical procedures and the dearth of primary data. In this respect the study of instrumental musical style is years behind the correlative studies of linguistics, of myths and folk tales, and even songs and ballads (48).

Donegal fiddling scholar Caoimhín MacAoidh further illustrates the reasons behind this widespread historic dearth of primary data. According to MacAoidh, "a tune did not have to be strictly associated with any one title. In fact very many tunes are found associated with different names, composers and circumstances and origin" (54-55). Within a Cape Breton context, Dan R's close friend Willie Kennedy demonstrates how quickly tunes could become part of this 'traditional canon' losing connection to its composer. When I asked if he plays any of Dan R's compositions Kennedy replied, "People tell me I do."

The fate of the instrumental composer's identity within an Irish context mirrors Cape Breton. According to *The Companion to Irish Traditional Music*, "the individual composers of the great body of tunes handed down from the last century via oral transmission, early sound recordings, and published manuscript collections such as Roche and O'Neil, are now lost to history" (Valley 80).

With the advent of the commercial sound recording little changed regarding the relative anonymity in which the folk composer operated and actually helped push

composers further into anonymity. According to Martin Dowling, “the gap between the tune and its origins is widened further by the circulation of commercial recordings with limited textual information (sometimes inaccurate or poorly researched) about the tunes recorded” (Dowling 81).

The folk composer’s pre-destined path towards obscurity began to end in the 1950s when consumer-recording devices allowed non-musically literate composers to begin systematically recording their compositions. In some traditions key composers would unfortunately not begin to record their compositions until much later. Emile Benoit, widely regarded as one of Newfoundland’s finest folk composers, only ‘systematically’ began recording his compositions after being given a portable cassette recorder by his children in 1984. Prior to 1984, Benoit’s compositional output amounted only to what he could actively remember (Quigley 94).

In most cases, within the confines of musical illiteracy, the memory alone wasn’t large enough to store all of a composer’s extant compositions. Regarding Benoit’s pre tape recording days, “if not called up from memory at least occasionally tunes were eventually forgotten, their musical components decomposing to rejoin the fertile soil of musical possibilities from which new compositions might spring” (Quigley 67). Musical literacy would become an integral part of the Cape Breton tradition earlier than in many other regional folk fiddling traditions. Because of this, fewer musical components “rejoined the fertile soil of musical possibilities.”

Johnny “MacVarish” MacDonald, born circa 1850 at Broad Cove Marsh, “became an avid note reader, which was somewhat of a rarity at the time” (MacGillivray

TCBF 41). By the 1890s, a handful of other Cape Breton fiddlers had learned to note read from correspondence courses. By Dan R's generation, the vast majority of Cape Breton fiddlers would at a minimum learn the basics of reading and writing music from the critical mass of literate fiddlers who had emerged since the late 1890s. Though Dan R's generation was able to read music, they used it as a skeleton as the vast majority still used aural methods to pick up the more subtle nuances in a tune.

Our knowledge of the folk composer in Cape Breton prior to the 1900s, during which time it was a primarily an aural tradition, is minimal. A century later composing remains an omnipresent part of the idiom, yet our knowledge of tune making in Cape Breton remains insignificant. Within the wider fields of folklore and ethnomusicology our collective knowledge of folk composition and its effect upon tradition remains in an equally needy state. Most traditions have noted composers whose tunes are widely played yet we know little more than the fact that they existed and that their tune is part of the tradition. We still know relatively little about how the composer created those tunes or the process by which his tunes entered and were accepted into the tradition.

With studies of instrumental folk composition limited, I used the work of University of Maine folklorist Dr. Edward Ives as a guide to contextually frame the life of Dan R. MacDonald. Ives books on Prince Edward Island songwriters Larry Gorman and Lawrence Doyle had originally drawn me to the discipline of Folklore. Ives' third book, *Joe Scott: The Woodsman-Songmaker*, truly opened my eyes to what one could accomplish through the study of an individual tradition bearer.

Pauleena MacDougall, Associate Director of the Maine Folklife Center, echoes my thoughts on Joe Scott's significance in the evolution of Ives' work. MacDougall writes,

While the Gorman and Doyle books gave Ives an opportunity to dive into the folksong making tradition he loved, Joe Scott departed from song making somewhat because he set out to discover the man and to some extent discover himself in the man. He wanted to understand what songs meant to Joe, thus placing the songs in the context of the man's life (MacDougall 3).

Ives, with *Joe Scott*, showed me how easily I could place the by-product of Dan R. MacDonald's form of musical expression 'in the context of the man's life' as he had done with the songs of Scott.

Reading *Joe Scott* also instilled within me a respect for Ives more personal style of writing. Ives felt by giving the reader a chance to, "see how I went about my work", that it put the reader in a better position to form his or her own judgments about the material. Ives wrote that he "often felt cheated" when other folklorists didn't include themselves in their work. So I guess the question that bears asking is what was the road that brought me to Dan R.?

A trip to Ireland, following my 1992 graduation from St. Francis Xavier University, enhanced my already growing interest in Cape Breton fiddle music and planted the seeds that grew into this thesis. Organized by Irish fiddler Liz Doherty, the *Eigse na Laoi Music Festival* held at Cork University in 1993 featured a dozen leading Cape Breton musicians chosen specifically by Doherty. The handpicked group included

Buddy and Natalie MacMaster, John Morris Rankin, Dougie MacDonald, Jeff MacDonald, Hilda Chaisson, Dave MacIsaac, Jamie MacInnis, Paul MacNeil, and Jerry Holland. It was a magical week of music including some astounding backstage musical meetings between an eclectic gathering of Irish and Cape Breton traditional musicians.¹

At the Cork Youth Hostel the late night sessions, which always spilled into the wee hours of the next morning, were not agreeing with hostel security staff. Paul MacNeil's highland piping within the confines of a small dorm room early one morning caused hostel security to bellow, "You can play those things in the Highlands of Scotland but you can't play them here." As is generally the case with Cape Bretoners and their music, music won out and we were given a meeting room away from the main part of the hostel. Tunes were a constant, as were the highly comedic rants of Cape Breton fiddler Howie MacDonald. During a break in one of these late night sessions, John Morris Rankin told me a couple anecdotes about his friend Dan R. MacDonald.

John Morris, a member of the Canadian recording group The Rankin Family, knew Dan R. MacDonald as a neighbor having grown up a short distance from him in his hometown of Mabou. I would later learn that Dan R, as he was affectionately known by most who knew him, exerted tremendous influence over a young John Morris. Dan R. was also quite the character, a trait that came across in John Morris's anecdotes as clearly as the respect and admiration he had for the man.

¹ At one point Belfast fiddler Sean Maguire, De Dannan fiddler Frankie Gavin along with Buddy MacMaster and Carl MacKenzie were having an out of the way little session in the back of concert hall in Cork. Liam Clancy of the famed Clancy Brothers was also in attendance for part of the festival.

John Morris's narratives continued to resonate when I returned to Nova Scotia the following year to engage in postgraduate study in St. Francis Xavier University's Celtic Studies Department. During that year, I spent a considerable time listening to archival recordings and immersed myself in one of North America's finest 'Celtic' special collections. As I devoured as much of the literature I could find with regards to Cape Breton's musical traditions, the name Dan R. MacDonald appeared with remarkable frequency. Despite his repeated mention, I found little detailed information regarding his life or role within the tradition.

Near the end of my postgraduate year I began focusing my energy towards gaining a deeper understanding of the fiddle tradition, as it was the most culturally vibrant and easily accessible element of the tradition at the time. I made frequent trips to dances in Cape Breton and visited some of the island's older Gaelic-speaking fiddlers. I also found Daniel Graham's bio of Dan R. in the first posthumously published collection of his compositions. This bio made we want to find out more about Dan R. MacDonald's life.

Early on two Cape Breton musicians helped fuel my keen interest in the fiddle tradition. I first crossed paths with producer/ethnomusicologist Paul MacDonald during my aforementioned trip to Ireland and, in turn, he introduced me to fiddler/publisher Paul Cranford. Both have vocations that were, and remain, strongly aligned towards documenting the island's fiddling traditions. They were also intimately familiar with Dan R's music, having crisscrossed Cape Breton in 1989 recording twenty-one different fiddlers playing his compositions. This recording was made to try and boost sales of the

book when Cranford took over the distribution of the first published collection of Dan R's compositions, 1985's *The Heather Hill Collection*.

Later, when I decided to focus on Dan R. as the topic for this thesis, Cranford and MacDonald's appreciation for the paths I was about to go down and the questions I was preparing to ask proved invaluable. Their insights would provide me with a deeper and more holistic understanding of the cultural context of Cape Breton fiddling. Cranford provided me with out of print commercial recordings of the fiddlers from Dan R's generation while MacDonald provided me with amateur home recordings made during the era. These materials were essential in helping me form the proper musical and cultural framework within which to portray Dan R's life when I began fieldwork in early 1996.

During February and March of 1996 I conducted more than a dozen interviews with individuals I felt could provide insight into Dan R's life. Buddy MacMaster, Dan R's second cousin, proved an invaluable source of material as did Dan R's friend and frequent piano accompanist Marie MacLellan. Halifax fiddler Jarvis Benoit, who worked in the lumber woods with Dan R., shed light on his early years as did Dan R's cousin Catherine MacKenzie.

My wife and I also spent a weekend in Ontario at the home of Dan R's nephew Cyril Cameron. Cyril, along with his brother Alex Dan who also now resides in Ontario, lived with Dan R. in Mabou during the last years of his life. Alex Dan, a fine pianist, also regularly accompanied his uncle. Cyril and Alec Dan told story after story about their uncle, both clearly remembering a man they deeply respected and enjoyed spending

time with. They also arranged for an interview with John Chisholm, a roommate of Dan R's during his years living in Windsor, Ontario.

As I discovered during my fieldwork, though never married, Dan R. had a large extended family throughout eastern Nova Scotia who still fondly remember him. Being a relative outsider, documenting a well-respected local character still widely remembered in the tradition, presented a challenge. Though I feel I have represented Dan R. as accurately as possible, I also realize that I will now be partly responsible for how people will perceive him in the future.

I began this pursuit with no pre-conceived notions about Dan R. MacDonald, other than my sense that he played an important role in the tradition. The materials in the chapters that follow present a solid foundation for assessing his significant role in shaping the Cape Breton fiddling tradition. I have attempted to present his contributions without sacrificing the true character of Dan R. The material includes many small vignettes from Dan R's life - some good, some not so flattering, and of course a few embarrassing yet amusing ones - each helping to paint a fully illuminated portrait of this man's life and his contributions to the Cape Breton fiddling tradition.

Chapter one examines the historic lack of scholarly attention paid to individual creativity within instrumental folk music traditions. Chapter two provides a historic overview of the Cape Breton fiddling tradition helping frame the later discussion regarding Dan R's contributions to the idiom. Chapters three through seven focus on the composer's life story, following his familial roots in Scotland to his early years as a fiddler in Cape Breton. The scene then returns to MacDonald's ancestral homeland in the

Scottish Highlands, where Dan R. spent four years in the Canadian Forestry Corps during WW II.

Back in Canada following WW II the story shifts to Dan R's forty-year career as an industrial worker, always remaining intently focused on playing the fiddle and composing. Chapter eight focuses specifically on his compositions with regards to style, tune titling conventions, and influence. Chapter nine discusses Cape Breton Island as Dan R's patron, detailing the personal impact that this symbiotic relationship had on a generation of Cape Breton fiddlers and their repertoire.

CHAPTER 1
Survey of Folklore Scholarship regarding
Instrumental Folk Music Traditions

Academic discourse regarding the Cape Breton fiddle tradition remains in its infancy. Though early folklore scholars did collect on the island, some recognizing the vibrancy of the fiddle tradition in their writings, few chose to make it the focus of their collecting or publishing. At the onset of the 21st Century only a scant number of academic theses and a handful of privately published books focus on the Cape Breton fiddle tradition. The lack of scholarship regarding instrumental folk tradition certainly hasn't been isolated to the Cape Breton tradition.

In Samuel Bayard's important early examination of instrumental folk music traditions, *Hill Country Tunes: Instrumental Folk Music in Southwestern Pennsylvania*, he wrote, "instrumental music may perhaps be termed the most tenaciously preserved and most consistently neglected of the folk arts" (xi-xii). Despite Bayard's declaration of neglect, the study of instrumental folk music traditions remained in such a state for nearly thirty years following his 1944 study.

Linda Burman-Hall's 1973 dissertation, *Southern American Folk Fiddling: Context and Style*, initiated the first real wave of scholarly studies on the topic of folk fiddling. While extremely important in delineating stylistic and contextual differences, this wave of scholarly studies neglected to examine "the individual's dynamic role in

bringing influences together in the framework of their own values, experiences, and aspirations” (Quigley Music From the Heart 252).

While early academic studies of instrumental folk tradition paid limited attention to the roles played by individual tradition bearers, they have provided a solid framework for further exploration. This chapter explores the earliest efforts at documenting Cape Breton’s musical traditions in order to establish this framework. By establishing the context under which early academic research began, one can more readily appreciate the heightened efforts to document Cape Breton fiddling occurring in the 1980s and 1990s.

Some of the common technological shortcomings in the early years of folk music collecting plagued early collectors, while others appeared to have little actual appreciation for the Cape Breton “cultural milieu” within which they were delving. Technological limitations in conjunction with this lack of a holistic understanding of the tradition helped contribute to the relatively undocumented state of Cape Breton instrumental traditions well into the 1970s.

Cape Breton’s lack of an active cohesive body such as the Irish Folklore Commission, regularly documenting its traditions, plays an integral role not only in the scarcity of documented materials but also in the poorly archived nature of existing materials.¹ While referring to folktale research, John Shaw identifies a common factor behind the lack of early documented source material for most of Cape Breton’s Gaelic based traditions. According to Shaw,

¹ No equivalent to the Irish Folklore Commission or Irish Traditional Music archive exists in eastern Nova Scotia. Though sporadic collecting and documenting has occurred in eastern Nova Scotia by scholars at institutions like University College of Cape Breton and St. Francis Xavier University, it hasn’t been on the same level as the Irish Folklore Commission despite a similar need.

Because of the island's isolation and lack of convenient internal transport well into the twentieth century, Gaelic folktale research in Cape Breton, compared to that of Scotland, was begun at a late stage in the life of the culture and enjoyed at best sporadic progress, mostly through the efforts of outsiders. (*Tales* xvii).

The coupling of geographical isolation with the linguistic isolation of an island that, at the turn of the century, consisted predominantly of monoglot Gaelic, French and Mi'kmaw speakers, played a significant part in the historical neglect that Cape Breton instrumental traditions have received.

During the early to mid 20th century, sweeping cultural changes in Cape Breton brought linguistic isolation to the island within one generation. The oldest generation spoke Gaelic fluently while the next barely spoke any. It effectively made it a necessity to rely on outsiders to document Cape Breton's older Gaelic based traditions which were already disappearing at an alarming rate.

Cape Breton had developed a noticeable cultural gap, driven by a language one-generation possessed and the other barely understood. According to Harvard Celtic scholar Charles Dunn,

Amateur sociologists among the Gaels point out that the young people who grew up in pioneering communities unwittingly tended to associate the Gaelic language with the incessant toil, hardship and scarcity peculiar to primitive conditions. When they went to the city, the universal language was English, while Gaelic was unknown; and the standard of living there was inconceivably superior to what they had known. Hence Gaelic came to be considered the language of poverty and ignorance and was therefore despised, while English was regarded as the language of refinement and culture and therefore cherished (134).

Within one generation, one of the main social and cultural underpinnings of rural Cape Breton society ceased to be passed to an entire generation. While some cite out-migration and economics as reasons behind the decline of the Gaelic language in Cape Breton, critics of language decline, more often than not, focus their attention on the educational policies of the day.

While many critics blame educational institutions for the decline of Gaelic language in Cape Breton, sociologist Elizabeth Mertz believes the cause can't be boiled down to the effect of just one institution. According to Mertz what essentially occurred was that a widespread stigma was placed on the language the outcome of which she calls a "bilingual deficit" (48). Essentially one generation is bilingual while the next speaks only the language without the stigma attached. Mertz's stigma indirectly affected Cape Breton folklore scholarship, as very few native Cape Bretoners were able to bridge the gap between generations by obtaining an education and still maintain ties to the older traditions through a fluency in the Gaelic language.²

As interest in "folk tradition" took hold within a variety of academic settings, the effects of this "bilingual deficit" put Cape Breton at a distinct disadvantage. Scotland for instance experienced a slower, less sweeping, albeit equally devastating decline within its Gaelic communities. This more moderately paced decline in Scotland allowed time for educated bilingual individuals like Calum MacLean³ to help firmly establish folklore scholarship in that country.

² Margaret MacDonell, a Harvard educated scholar from Judique, Cape Breton, is one notable exception.

³ Noted Scottish Folklorist and brother of Gaelic poet Sorley MacLean.

In Cape Breton the strong language stigma made the probability of finding an individual like MacLean unlikely. As the language gap in Cape Breton widened, outsiders typically fluent in the Gaelic language began to document its traditions. From the mid 1930s to the late 1940s, Cape Breton experienced infrequent visits from several of these academically inclined “outsiders”.

Unfortunately, for those interested in Cape Breton’s instrumental traditions, these individuals focused almost entirely upon documenting the island’s Gaelic song traditions. More often than not, fiddling and piping traditions, if recorded at all, were done so as an afterthought. Those who did document the instrumental tradition did so as an afterthought showing they lacked both an understanding of, and an appreciation for, the values, experiences, and aspirations of the local artists; all attributes UCLA dance ethnologist Colin Quigley deemed essential in helping him frame the life of the Newfoundland folk composer Emile Benoit (252).

One of the more active early folksong collectors in Cape Breton was folklorist Helen Creighton, who made numerous trips to the island between 1933 and 1956. Creighton deserves credit for recording a vast amount of Gaelic songs despite never understanding the language. Others early collectors who ventured to Cape Breton included Scotsman John Lorne Campbell and wife Margaret Fay Shaw, who made their first organized trip specifically to collect Gaelic folklore in 1937. Once again though, the focus of Campbell and Shaw’s early Cape Breton work was decidedly oriented towards folksong. Following Campbell’s 1937 visit, Cape Breton began receiving a steadier

trickle of visits from academically inclined researchers including Harvard University's Charles Dunn.

The arrival of the first commercial recordings of Cape Breton fiddling coincided with the arrival of the earliest folksong collectors. The first 78s of Cape Breton fiddlers were released on American based Decca Records as well as the newly formed Antigonish, Nova Scotia based Celtic Records. Started by Antigonish native Bernie MacIsaac in 1935, Celtic Records would become an extremely important early player in the commercial recording of fiddling in eastern Nova Scotia.

By the 1950s a new breed of folksong collector had emerged and began making their way to Cape Breton. While they have left us with some valuable material, these individuals had minimal impact on documenting any of the island's instrumental music traditions. The interest of this new breed of collector in Cape Breton music arose out of New York's "urban bohemian folk scene" (Rosenberg 9) where the music of American folksong such as Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger and Burl Ives fueled their folk music interests. These folksong seekers were part of a movement with distinct political undertones. They arrived in Cape Breton seeking "authentic folksongs" which according to the common rhetoric of the day had to "emanate from rural folk of modest means" (Rosenberg 11).

The earliest individual to arrive seeking 'rural folk of modest means' was Diane Hamilton of New York's famed Gugenheim family. Her interest in traditional music brought Hamilton to Cape Breton in the early 1950s. Her initial trips became the springboard for those who followed, including Ralph Rinzler. The notes documenting

one of Rinzler's trips clearly indicate that, prior to leaving the United States for Canada, he consulted the collection of Dianne Hamilton with a specific interest in her Cape Breton informants. Rinzler's notes from his subsequent collecting trip show that he proceeded to visit many of the same informants.

Like Hamilton, Ralph Rinzler represented a new breed of middle class folksong enthusiast turned folksong collector. Rinzler was a member of The Greenbriar Boys, leading exponents of an urban bluegrass movement begun in the late 1950s. Eventually, he became the founding director of the annual Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington, DC. Rinzler's Cape Breton trips in the early 1960s were indicative of the low hierarchical level of importance that instrumental folk music traditions held in the collective mindset of most early collectors. According to Paul MacDonald, early folklorists like Rinzler, "seemed almost oblivious to the rich and abundant fiddle and pipe music surrounding them during their visits" (Lamey Liner Notes).

While it is overly simplistic to say that these urban folksong seekers came to Cape Breton seeking sea shanties and Child ballads, what is unmistakable is that they encountered a musical tradition which baffled them. The language issue represented an obvious barrier, but the overall lack of a holistic understanding and/or interest in the broader cultural milieu into which they were delving is clearly evident. In Rinzler and Hamilton's defense, it is unlikely that they could have succeeded in documenting the island's instrumental traditions no matter how many trips they made. The few extant recordings of Cape Breton instrumental traditions made by these individuals, clearly

illustrates this supposition.⁴ Regarding these recordings ethnomusicologists Kate Dunlay and David Greenberg note, “a few token recordings made in the 1940s and 1950s seem atypical of the fiddle tradition, as if the researcher were totally unfamiliar with what would provide a good sample”(1).

Although phonograph recordings of Cape Breton fiddling first appeared in 1934, their limitations didn't capture the true nature of Cape Breton fiddle music. According to Paul MacDonald,

The average length of a 78-rpm disc recording was only three and one half minutes. This was a good duration for popular and short jazz selections of the day, but for Cape Breton fiddle music the duration was less than adequate. Unable to play their usual strings (medleys) of tunes, fiddlers would have to condense their setting into a three-minute setting of maybe two or three tunes. Usually at home or at a dance, a Cape Breton fiddler would play for five or ten minutes straight through, performing several tunes in an extended medley." (Lamey Liner Notes)

The famed Cape Breton Island house party offered the atmosphere where many Cape Breton fiddlers were most comfortable. This environment allowed the fiddler to perform extended tune medleys without time limitations.⁵

The ability to record the dynamics of the house party atmosphere arrived in the early 1950s with the introduction of the Webcor consumer reel-to-reel recorder. This piece of equipment created an atmosphere in which, “there emerged a group of amateur

⁴ During one Rinzler session it is clearly evident that the fiddler/informant isn't happy with having to continuously start and stop to suit the recorder's whim.

⁵ Not all fiddlers played extended sets, and for some island fiddlers the time limitations of the 78 were more than adequate and the performances on them quite good. Winston Fitzgerald was a believer in playing fewer tunes and playing them well, something clearly illustrated on his early 78s.

engineers and collectors from within the circle of Cape Breton fiddlers (Lamey Liner Notes). This new recording technology removed a major barrier in contextually capturing instrumental folk traditions, and the individuals who embraced this new technology initiated a revolution in the documentation of Cape Breton fiddle traditions.

The arrival of this affordable technology allowed amateur engineers to capture the music they loved in a familiar cultural context. What these amateur engineers lacked in formal training as folklorists and recording engineers, they easily made up for as insiders with the ability to be in the right place at the right time capturing the Cape Breton fiddling tradition in its most vibrant cultural context.

By the late 1950s the reel-to-reel recorder was becoming commonplace within the tradition. An active tape making and trading community, which remains vibrant to this day, grew to meet the needs of these amateur enthusiasts. Like wildfire the music recorded at informal house parties spread from Cape Breton Island to Halifax, Boston, Detroit. It wouldn't take long before certain individuals amassed major collections of these home recordings. Several fiddlers, including Halifax's Dave MacIsaac, are renowned for possessing museum quality collections of these home recordings.

The release of *Bill Lamey Full Circle: From Cape Breton to Boston and Back: Classic House Recordings of Cape Breton Music* is a testament to the role played by amateur enthusiasts in documenting the Cape Breton fiddle tradition. The entire CD, released in the year 2000 by Rounder Records, contains cuts of Lamey recorded by fiddle enthusiasts Herbie MacLeod and Doug MacMaster at their Boston area homes between 1956 and 1977. The work of these amateur enthusiasts also provided valuable material

for review and analysis when accelerated academic efforts to document Cape Breton Island's instrumental traditions began in the 1980s.

While many individuals made contributions, the efforts of several dedicated individuals represent the essential ingredients that accelerated such efforts and helped establish a baseline of material within the tradition. These key people included Ron Caplan of *Cape Breton's Magazine*, recording engineer Paul MacDonald, musician Alistair MacGillivray, Highland piper Barry Shears and individual faculty at the University College of Cape Breton and St. Francis Xavier University.

Figure 1 - Bill Lamey Full Circle

©2000 Rounder Records



Despite the increasing amount of raw data and wider interest in the tradition, at the onset of the 21st century only a handful of scholarly studies exist which focus upon the Cape Breton fiddle tradition. Virginia Garrison (1985) examined the social aspects of

fiddling in Cape Breton, with specific emphasis on its traditional and non-traditional teaching methods. Ian MacKinnon (1989) contributed an exhaustive discography and tune listing, culled from Cape Breton commercial recordings, while examining the effect of the commercial recording industry on the tradition.⁶ James Hornby (1983) examined the close connection and influence of Cape Breton fiddling on the revival within the Prince Edward Island fiddling tradition.

Since these studies set out to examine topics other than the specific role played by the individual tradition bearer, the absence of focus upon the individual in these studies should come as no surprise. In relationship to my examination these studies help lay a solid contextual foundation enabling me to explore Cape Breton music via the life of one of its most colorful characters.

Also of significance in framing the life of Dan R is Earl Spielman's University of Wisconsin PhD thesis *Traditional North American Fiddling: A Methodology for the Historical and Comparative Analytical Study of Instrumental Music Tradition*. Spielman's 1969 interviews with Dan R. MacDonald, during fieldwork for his PhD, represent one of the earliest extant interviews with the composer.⁷

In order to effectively continue the story of Dan R. MacDonald, I believe it is important to try and answer a fundamental question: What is Cape Breton fiddling? To answer this question I have relied on the individuals previously noted within this chapter as major influencers of, and contributors to, our present understanding of the tradition.

⁶ Jackie Dunn's undergraduate thesis entitled *Tha Blas Na Giaghlig air a h-Uile Fidhleir* (The Sound of the Gaelic is in the Fiddler's Music) is another interesting resource focusing on the fiddle tradition.

⁷ Spielman also interviewed Buddy MacMaster during this trip to Cape Breton.

By virtue of their early delving into island instrumental traditions, these individuals have taken a major step forward towards more accurately documenting Cape Breton's instrumental history, traditions, and associated contributors.

So what constitutes the foundation of Cape Breton fiddling? What has been built upon that foundation as the tradition has morphed and changed within its new world context? Chapter 2 focuses specifically on this question by exploring the difficulties associated with establishing this foundation, and in the process developing a wider understanding of the Cape Breton fiddling tradition. Expanding from this macro view of the tradition, chapters three thru eight examine Cape Breton fiddling on a micro level via the life history of one of its more seminal characters.

Chapter 2 - Defining the Cape Breton Fiddling Tradition

For those who appreciate and enjoy Cape Breton fiddle music, attempts at examining the tradition in an analytical manner represents a daunting task. A typical response in Cape Breton when one inquires about what exactly defines the tradition is, “You’ll know it when you hear it!” To gain a deeper contextual understanding of the tradition and Dan R. MacDonald’s role within it, one needs to begin by defining what Cape Breton fiddling is.

The difficulty in defining the tradition extends beyond just the casual aficionado, affecting academics and scholars who have attempted to make inroads into more clearly defining Cape Breton fiddling. Prior to beginning their assessment of performance practices within the tradition, ethnomusicologists Kate Dunlay and David Greenberg expressed their appreciation for the difficult task at hand asking readers to, “please excuse some use of generalizations and realize that there are regional and individual variations in style within Cape Breton but the Cape Breton fiddler can generally be recognized as such”(9).

Different regional variations of the folk fiddler exist throughout North America, yet one can make certain universal stylistic generalizations regarding him/her. According to ethnomusicologist Paul MacDonald,

Although fiddlers may speak or play with different accents, there is a common thread related to fiddling that exists throughout all the styles. We call it fiddle technique. Cross-tunings, octave doubling (with two fiddlers), fingering techniques, grace notes, and various bowing techniques are

common to all fiddle traditions. This is also true to some extent of the repertoires, as we know of so many traditional tunes that exist in one form or another within the various traditions. It is really the "accent" that makes the traditions different. It's just like speaking a language (Jean Carignan n.p.).

The remainder of this chapter examines the Cape Breton fiddle tradition's evolution since its new world arrival in hopes of defining its "accent". A holistic overview of the milieu within which Dan R. was active, and within which his compositions remain a core component, helps frame the later discussion regarding the popularity of those compositions.

The modern Cape Breton fiddling style had its genesis in the Scottish Highlands during the 1600s, a period when the fiddle attained a high level of social acceptance. In the 18th century, a distinct style emerged embodied by fiddlers Niel Gow (1727-1807), Nathaniel Gow (1763-1831), William Marshall (1748-1833) and Captain Simon Fraser (1773-1852). Reaching its peak in Scotland during the late 18th and early 19th century, this style's heyday coincided with Scotland's infamous Highland Clearances. The clearances would decimate Scotland's highland style of fiddling while creating a unique stronghold of Scot's fiddling in the new world. According to ethnomusicologist Kate Dunlay, "the highland style of Scottish fiddling by no means became extinct in the nineteenth century, however, but was transferred to Cape Breton by thousands of highland settlers" (Celtic Languages 178).

The September 15, 1773 arrival of the Dutch cargo ship *The Hector*, carrying human cargo from Scotland to Pictou, Nova Scotia, signaled the beginning of a radical

change in the cultural makeup of Cape Breton. At the time Cape Breton was, according to historical geographer Stephen Hornsby, “a thinly settled, extensively forested, and relatively undeveloped colony of Great Britain” (3). The population at the time numbered less than three thousand and was spread out amongst a handful of settlements situated along the coastline near the ocean supporting them. Sydney, the island’s economic center, boasted a population of about eight hundred; Main-à-Dieu, Louisburg and Gabarus a combined population of two hundred; and seven hundred and fifty each in Arichat and along the west coast in the French speaking community of Cheticamp (Brown 421).

In the sixty years following The Hector’s 1773 arrival, Gaelic speaking Scottish immigrants became the largest ethnic group in Nova Scotia. They settled in Pictou and Antigonish counties first, though due to Cape Breton’s sparse population and available land most new immigrants eventually re-located there. Entire communities emigrated together from Scotland, re-settling in Cape Breton with their population intact.¹

The community pattern of migration represents a unique aspect of the large-scale migration from Scotland to Cape Breton. Hornsby clearly illustrates the familial and community nature of the immigration pattern,

When a landlord cleared the population from a township and paid for their passage overseas, families and extended kin groups usually embarked together. For example in the summer of 1828, the Leith registered St. Lawrence carried 208 passengers from Rhum-the last inhabitants removed from that island-to Port Hawkesbury. Of the 13 surnames

¹ Occasionally the size even increased as several recorded instances of children being born aboard immigrant ships occurred. Death aboard immigrant ships was also noted.

listed on the passenger list, 4 (McKinnon, McLean, McKay, and McMillan) accounted for 170 people, 81 percent of the total (45-46).

Virtually unpopulated at the turn of the 19th century, Cape Breton offered the Scottish immigrant family unique circumstances. Instead of finding themselves in a cultural melting pot as the Irish would in Boston and New York, the dispossessed Highlander found relative isolation which offered unique opportunities for cultural preservation.

Though derived from a similar Gaelic accent, the fiddle traditions of Scotland and Cape Breton took distinctly divergent paths as they evolved following the de-population of the Scottish Highlands. Classical music would exert a strong influence over Scotland's rural fiddle styles, while the connection between fiddling and step dancing was slowly being lost. In the Highlands and Western Isles of Scotland the once prominent style of Gaelic fiddling experienced a steady decline following the Highland Clearances.

While musical traditions in Cape Breton evolved in their new world context, they maintained a more direct link to their Gaelic roots than the tradition would in Scotland. Lamey, Shaw and Rankin, in the liner notes from volume two of Topic Records' *Music of Cape Breton* series maintain,

The Gaelic folk culture, which includes storytelling, songs, games, dances, mouth music (Gael. port-a-beul), pipe music and fiddle music survived the sea-change and the settlers initial struggle with an inhospitable environment and flourished in the farming communities that sprang up throughout the island (1).

Well into 20th century Gaelic speaking fiddlers and vibrant regional variation were commonplace within the Highland Scottish style of fiddling brought to Cape Breton.

According to John Shaw, the folk culture thrived because,

Cape Breton is the most recent and far flung outpost of the Scottish Gàidhealtachd (Gaelic Speaking Region), and it is well documented that archaic survivals of social and cultural institutions are most likely to be found at the periphery of a given cultural area (Tales xix).

Irish fiddler Liz Doherty echoed Shaw's sentiment when she wrote, "Cape Breton thus existed as a 'marginal survival', maintaining the tradition which had disappeared from the original centre in a distant geographic location" (Liner Notes 1). In its distant geographical location a remarkably vibrant musical culture evolved to the point that even those within the tradition who didn't play a particular musical instrument possessed a remarkable level of musicality.

In a reversal of what Scotland would experience, the relationship between fiddling and dance become stronger in Cape Breton. Alistair MacGillivray would note that by the 1820s Allan "the Dancer" MacMillan of Judique was holding regular dance classes in both Judique and Creignish (A Cape Breton Ceilidh 24). Communities along the island's east coast had full time dance instructors, some locales more than one. Other parts of the island had itinerant dance instructors who would stay in a particular community teaching until eventually moving on to the next locale, repeating the process as long as the tradition could support it.

In her thesis, *Traditional and Non-Traditional Teaching and Learning Practices in Folk Music*, Virginia Garrison noted that during this period in Cape Breton's musical

history attempts at learning the fiddle were marked by “listening, observing and experimenting” (280). Few fiddlers read music so almost all new material entered the tradition solely via aural means. A good ear was the only method for exchanging tunes between fiddlers. Gaelic singers often utilized the techniques of port-a-beul (i.e., “mouth music”) and “jigging” (da-dum dum da diddle) to demonstrate and pass down traditional fiddle tunes to fiddlers.

Of the thirty-nine fiddlers listed as deceased in Alistair MacGillivray’s 1981 book *The Cape Breton Fiddler*, thirty-two were known Gaelic speakers. Even fiddlers who were of Irish, Mi’kmaq or French heritage played Scottish music and more often than not learned aurally from Gaelic speaking fiddlers. Cape Breton was so vibrant a musical culture the idiom was absorbed rather than learned in a schooled manner. One might best describe what occurred as learning through osmosis, “a gradual, often unconscious process of assimilation or absorption.”²

Every island home was a classroom, teaching all the fundamentals needed for the musical and storytelling idioms of Cape Breton to survive and thrive. With the Gaelic language as the foundation for oral transmission of the traditions, fiddlers reflected the specific dialect, intonation, and rhythmic cadence of their local Gaelic dialect. Even today within Cape Breton fiddling circles when someone refers to a player having the Gaelic in his/her music it represents one of the highest compliments.

Historically, the various music traditions - Highland bagpipe, fiddle, dance and Gaelic song - in the predominantly Scottish areas of Cape Breton Island, were

² Merriam-Webster, 2001.

inseparable. Each tradition, though independent, exerted some influence over the other. Certain families were well known as “fiddling families” or “piping families” but they were all known to each other and passed tunes and technique to each other freely. The fiddlers tried to imitate the pipers, while players of both instruments often learned new tunes from the Gaelic singer. As an example of the cross pollination of instruments and styles, many fiddlers in Cape Breton retune their instruments from standard tuning (g, d’, a’, e”) to a, e’, a’, e’ commonly known as ‘high bass’ or ‘raised bass’ tuning. According to Dunlay and Greenberg, “the ringing strings and the potential for the use of more open string drones make for a sound reminiscent of the bagpipe (11). The use of the “high bass” tuning is still a practice common amongst Cape Breton fiddlers today.

One of the primary functions of both the fiddle and bagpipes in the early years of the Cape Breton tradition was to provide music for social and solo dancing which took place during local ceilidhs. Poles apart from its present day connotation within the tradition, the Gaelic word ceilidh [pronounced kay-lee] historically meant a visit. Local community members, in search of music and storytelling, would go ‘air a ceilidh’ (on a visit) to the local ‘taigh-ceilidh’ (visiting house) where a ‘ceilidh’ (visit) would take place. According to Virginia Garrison, “the Cape Breton ceilidh where songs are sung, stories are told and music and dance prevail, was the major social gathering for pure entertainment purposes in the early days” (82). The ceilidh, and the home it took place in, represented the preferred context for repertoire diffusion and solidification.³

³ House and barn dances remained common in the Mabou area well into 1950’s as Dan R’s nephews John Donald and John Allan began playing their part in those traditions. The dance hall didn’t begin playing as big of a role in the tradition as it does today until the late 1960s and early 1970s.

In early Gaelic Cape Breton one could generally count on two certainties at the local house party (taigh-ceilidh). The fiddler would be male and, more often than not, highly regarded within the locale for his central role within the island's instrumental tradition.

The fiddler was certainly the central character in the square dance institution and was placed on a pedestal all of his own. The corner where he had to sit to fiddle was perhaps a small one but it was the best in the house and it was inviolate. Through all the arguments, fights and brawls, the fiddler was never touched. Even the most drunken bully had the basic instinct to see that molesting the fiddler would be an act of gross-aggression against the community itself (Sam Cormier n.p.).

Along with the fiddler, other solo unaccompanied artists like Gaelic singers, pipers and storytellers played equal and vibrant roles within Cape Breton's thriving Gaelic tradition.

At the beginning of the 19th century, fiddler Little Simon Fraser's family was typical of rural Cape Breton. According to Allister MacGillivray's *Cape Breton Fiddler*, "There were thirteen children (eight boys and five girls), and all the boys except one played the fiddle" (23). The fact that all the boys in the Fraser family but one played the fiddle is as telling as the fact that none of the girls are mentioned as playing. Essentially a solo male tradition with little accompaniment and few women players, things would begin to change as the music moved from the home into the schools and island dance halls.

The 20th century ushered in a period of intense change and evolution within the Cape Breton fiddling tradition. Dance halls became a new performance venue, while more frequent interaction between once isolated communities allowed for increased

repertoire and style sharing. New instruments like the piano, mandolin and harmonica also took their place alongside the fiddle and bagpipes. The move from the home to the dance hall, in combination with the introduction of the piano, marked the beginnings of a fundamental transition in the Highland Scottish Style of fiddling brought to the island.

Fiddling, until the beginning of the 20th century essentially a solo art, began to be accompanied first by the drone of the pump organ and eventually the upright piano. Many of the older generation of piano accompanists in Cape Breton remember the pump organ being their first instrument (MacGillivray A Cape Breton Ceilidh 172, 188, 189). As the pump organ gave way to the piano, what began as a rudimentary accompaniment style similar to the drones of the bagpipes rapidly evolved and began impacting fiddle styles. According to Paul Cranford,

A basic chordal accompaniment gradually became more busy and complex so that the style today involves the entire range of the keyboard, much syncopation in the right hand, octave movement in the left hand, chromatic runs and glissandos. Subsequently, the fiddle style became less involved, using fewer drones and embellishments in favor of a clearer tone, eliminating modal inflections to bring the tuning in line with the piano (Cape Breton Fiddling 52).

According to ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl this change occurs because, “A musical system may seek some kind of equilibrium in which the close interrelationship of the components plays a major role. Change in one parameter is likely to require or encourage changes in others” (The Study of Ethnomusicology 182).

The addition of the piano, besides affecting island fiddling styles, also brought women into the instrumental performance context first as accompanists and eventually as

fiddlers. The first noted female Cape Breton fiddlers, Tena Campbell of Sydney and Mary Hughie MacDonald of MacKinnon's Brook, were both born at the tail end of the 1800s and wouldn't begin to play the fiddle until the early part of the 20th Century. Despite their late entrance into the tradition, many consider Campbell and MacDonald two of the finer players the tradition has produced.

By the early part of the 20th century, Cape Breton was as rich a musical environment as one could likely find in North America. Fiddlers, pipers and Gaelic singers were still an integral part of the tradition, as was the itinerant musician. While Scottish roots remained at its foundation, the tradition would begin to morph as outside influences seeped in. Change occurred in many North American fiddling traditions during this period as the influence of industrialization worked its way from the center to the periphery. In Cape Breton the Gaelic fiddling style, which had until that time remained mostly within the insulated Scottish communities, began to spread and influence, and become influenced by, other Cape Breton ethnic groups.

Like most North American fiddle traditions, change in Cape Breton fiddling resulted from what Athapaskan Fiddling scholar Craig Mishler identified as "a dynamic convergence and reconvergence of indigenous and exotic forms" (6). According to Mishler,

Culture after all is said and done, is both inherited and created, and virtually all traditional Athapaskan forms in circulation today, whether they be verbal, material, mimetic or music are products of accretion, modification and loss over time. They are evolving forms that owe every bit as

much to fad and fancy and to chance and circumstance as to conscious selection (7).

As the Cape Breton fiddling tradition evolved, converging and reconverging, mixing equal parts fad, fancy and circumstance as Mishler describes, it remained true to its Highland Scottish roots but becomes influenced by a host of internal and external musical influences. An understanding of the early history of Cape Breton sets the stage for the 20th century blending of cultural influences which would affect the islands various musical idioms including fiddling.

The Highland Gaels were by no means the first settlers to put down roots in eastern Nova Scotia. For many years, what is now Nova Scotia was aligned with, and controlled by, several world super powers. From the 16th to the 18th centuries Great Britain, France, and Spain competed for power, land, vital resources and commodities throughout North America. As power shifted, settlers from these diverse ethnic groups remained on the island. Once the Gael came with fiddles in abundance, the instrument eventually began to spread from once insulated communities to other ethnic groups. The influence of the Gael became so omnipresent that fiddlers of Acadian and Mi'kmaq heritage began playing the fiddle in a distinctly Scottish style.

In spite of evidence of Acadian, Irish and Mi'kmaq fiddlers playing in the "Highland Scottish" style for at least eighty years, a strong desire has existed to keep the essentially Scottish identity intact. According to Ian MacKinnon, "In the case of Cape Breton Irish-Acadian Scottish style fiddler Paddy Leblanc, Taylor (Celtic Records owner George Taylor) went so far as to assign him the nickname "Scotty" Leblanc in an effort

to sell more records” (82). Of mixed Irish-French extraction Winston Fitzgerald, who remains one of the tradition’s most revered and influential fiddlers, was also given the ‘Scotty’ moniker. Elmer Briand, “born into a French Acadian home in which the father was a piper and the mother a Gaelic speaker” (The Cape Breton Fiddler 84), became typical of the changing face of the Cape Breton “Scottish” style of fiddling.

In recent memory, change within the Cape Breton fiddling tradition has been epitomized by Ashley MacIsaac. His major label debut, *HI HOW ARE YOU TODAY?*, was a cause for consternation amongst a segment of the Cape Breton fiddling community due to its mainstream pop leanings. MacIsaac responded to critics by releasing his 1998 follow up, *Fine Thank You Very Much*. *Fine Thank You Very Much* appeared as an open letter to critics with MacIsaac brilliantly mimicking some of the greatest recording era fiddlers right down to the accompaniment and recording nuances of the original recording.⁴

MacIsaac silenced his critics by illustrating just how well he understood the tradition they accused him of abandoning. The criticism MacIsaac experienced was the continuation of a trend that has likely been occurring since time immemorial within living musical traditions. The youngest generation of tradition bearer chooses elements of the tradition to incorporate into their style while the older generation laments the loss of those elements the younger generation decides to leave behind and decries that which they add.

⁴ Ethnomusicologist Kate Dunlay has compiled a detailed breakdown of the influences present on this recording which can be found at: <http://www.geocities.com/Nashville/7088/ashley.html>

Despite longstanding knowledge of the unceasing presence of change in regional folk fiddling traditions, our understanding of exactly how that change occurs is limited. Ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl would note that our understanding is further limited by the fact that, “a great many publications in ethnomusicology contrast elements of continuity in culture with elements of change” (*The Study of Ethnomusicology* 177). The life of Dan R. MacDonald provides us with a unique opportunity to examine change in the Cape Breton fiddle repertoire not in contrast to continuity, but as part of it.

The repertoire of the modern Cape Breton fiddler is a synthesis of the last 300 years. The oldest tunes in the tradition, those that made up the vast majority of the repertoire until the 1930s, stem from Gaelic sources.⁵ Paul Cranford notes that these early tunes were “borrowed from the piping or puit-a-beul or mouth music traditions” (*Cape Breton Fiddling* 2). These tunes would remain the meat and potatoes of the repertoire until the 1930s when a composing renaissance, or at the very least the first time individual composers began being recognized for their acts of generation, swept the tradition.

One can trace a sizeable percentage of the island’s current repertoire to a handful of modern Cape Breton composers including Dan R. MacDonald, Dan Hughie MacEachern and Gordon MacQuarrie. The Irish tradition, beginning with the release of the first commercial recordings in the 1930s, also began noticeably affecting Cape Breton’s repertoire.⁶

⁵ The earliest documented Scottish pipe tune dates back to the fifteenth century.

⁶ Cape Breton composer Jerry Holland estimates that over 30% of Cape Breton’s jigs emanate from Irish sources.

During the 1930s the Cape Breton fiddling tradition evolved at a more rapid rate than any prior time in its history. As the tradition became more open to outside influences, e.g., Irish, modern Scottish, American, noticeable change in style and repertoire occurred.

Regarding Winston Fitzgerald, fiddler Joe Cormier would write in the liner notes to his *Dances Down Home* CD,

When I first heard Winston, it was a very coarse style that he played. But the next time I heard him was about four years later and he had already gotten a lot smoother. Then he played a lot of country western with Hank Snow and took some correspondence courses in violin through the army and all those things smoothed out his style more and more -- things evolve like that.

My personal experience with old wire recordings of Buddy MacMaster, made in Detroit when he was in his late teens or early twenties, is also indicative of the evolution that has occurred within the tradition. These outside influences coupled with the important role played by one of the tradition's seminal recording era fiddlers', Winston Scotty Fitzgerald, marked a distinct period of change within the Cape Breton tradition. It would be a time of significant change within many North American regional fiddling styles as similar stylistic and repertoire evolutions were being played out.

One need only look to the southern United States and the Quebec tradition to find examples similar to what transpired in Cape Breton. Joyce Cauthen in her book *With Fiddle and Well-Rosined Bow: Old-Time Fiddling in Alabama*, examined "the effects of events, inventions, ethnic groups, and individuals upon fiddlers' styles and repertoires" in Alabama. Cauthen's book notes the linkage of early Alabama fiddling tunes to the British

Isles, the Scotch-Irish of Ireland's northern counties, and the Highland bagpipe. In looking back at the 1920s, Cauthen highlights the impact of records and the hand cranked Edison record player on the tradition.

...not only did the phonograph provide a new source of tunes for the country fiddler, it also gave him an opportunity to learn new styles. He could break away from the predominant fiddle style of his community or incorporate new techniques into that style. For instance, some fiddlers who played in the "shuffle bow" style became intrigued by the longer, smoother bow strokes they heard on some recordings and attempted to play that style (21).

Many Alabama fiddlers who would learn to play during the 1920s cited Clayton McMichen, one of the southern United States' most influential regional fiddlers, as a major stylistic influence. His "playing represented a more modern, smoother sound than they were accustomed to hearing" (21).

Cauthen's work also draws a parallel to Cape Breton with regards to the urbanization of Alabama's "farmers and hillbillies" and the impact it would have on community fiddling traditions.

While old time fiddling had thrived during the Great Depression, it barely survived the economic prosperity of the 1950s. Prior to that era, the lives of Alabamians centered on their own communities ... After World War II, however, such communities gradually became less isolated, less self-sufficient... it was not long before 'northern Alabama farmers and hillbillies would move to the cities, learn new skills, and begin new lives as industrial and clerical workers.' Soldiers returning from World War II often found they had to move to the city to make a living. These moves disrupted family musical traditions (37-38).

In contrast to what happened in Nova Scotia, Cauthen notes that these Alabamians could not reestablish these musical communities in the cities and “put their instruments away, thus raising their children in musical environments very different from those of their own childhood” (38).

In terms of the impact of urbanization within Québécois fiddling, Lisa Ornstein would note,

The years from 1900 to 1940 mark a period of intense sociocultural change in Québec. The single most important contributing factor is the development and gradual primacy of the urban-industrial society within the province. During this period, traditional dance and dance music undergo the same processes which have affected traditional agrarian societies throughout the Western world over the last century. Dancers and musicians disperse, old recreations give way to modern entertainments, and the values and activities formerly associated with instrumental folk music survive only among the families and communities who preserve the old ways of living.⁷

While the tradition entered a period of decline in Cape Breton following the “gradual primacy of the urban-industrial society”, within its new industrial settings Cape Breton music continued to thrive. A critical mass of Cape Bretoners in cities like Boston, Windsor and Detroit would continue to keep the tradition vibrant. Back in Cape Breton it was still a vibrant enough tradition to keep a fiddler like Dan R., who possessed a huge appetite for music, satiated well into the 1970s.

⁷ Lisa Ornstein, *Instrumental Folk Music of Quebec* (Ottawa: Canadian Folk Music Journal 10.1, 1982) n.p.

How did the continuance of the tradition in other places benefit and influence the tradition back in Cape Breton? The experience of the Cape Breton fiddler in Boston is indicative of the influence that the periphery would have on the supposed centre. Despite appearing to be geographically isolated, the reality was that Cape Breton was a musical crossroads as many Maritimers regularly made trips to 'The Boston States'. Cape Breton fiddlers, like Johnny Wilmot, would play with Irish musicians in the Boston area and then return to Cape Breton with new tunes. Though Ireland's famed fiddling mecca of County Sligo and the Cape Breton fiddling tradition would seem worlds apart, it didn't take long for a tune to travel from the bow of Boston area Sligo fiddler Paddy Cronin into Wilmot's ear and eventually into the repertoires of Cape Breton Fiddlers who had never left their native island.⁸

This influx of fiddlers, brought to the larger cities by urban industrialization, would take once regionally isolated styles and repertoire and begin a process of exchange and assimilation. In Nova Scotia, fiddlers from disparate parts of the Canadian Maritimes began to meet in the urban centers of Halifax and Sydney exchanging tunes and styles. Urban industrialization would affect the vast majority of North American fiddling traditions to one extent or another.

So with this change, do the threads that began in the Scottish Highlands and have now survived in a new world context for well over two hundred years still represent a

⁸ Cape Breton fiddle enthusiasts have remarked about the Irish influence on the repertoire of Cape Breton fiddlers since the recordings of Coleman, Morrison and Killoran became popular. Prior to the 1950's, in the most Scottish areas of the island, the Irish influence was mostly with regards to repertoire and not a stylistic one. It wouldn't be until Cape Breton music became more popular and new interaction occurs between Island players and Irish musicians on tour and through more easily accessible recordings that a stylistic influence begins to occur.

major part of the fabric of modern Cape Breton fiddling? If they do exist, what threads run through the modern day Cape Breton fiddling tradition and how have the changes brought about by industrialization affected the tradition during the last 30 years? The work of Kate Dunlay and David Greenberg, plus others, shed considerable light on these questions.

In the summer of 1996 ethnomusicologists Dunlay and Greenberg presented a lecture in Mabou, Cape Breton entitled *Cape Breton Fiddle Signatures*. As noted in a post lecture newspaper article written by Frances MacEachern about the event, "those who attended the presentation by Kate Dunlay and David Greenberg at the *Am Braighe* office in Mabou last July would probably agree with the late Lauchie MacLellan who said about Cape Breton fiddle music: "(Tha) barrachd ann 's tha sinn an dùil" "There's more to it than we imagine" (9).

Within the lecture, Dunlay and Greenberg affirmed the depth of the tradition, discussed characteristics they associated with it, and played tunes to support their key points. MacEachern's article noted key points about the tradition,

There are general rules you must follow to fit into the tradition but everyone has their own style. She gave four characteristics of Cape Breton fiddle music: 1. This is dance music. 2. This is a solo tradition, usually one fiddler plays with one piano player. Listeners are intensely interested in individual styles. 3. Repertoire and aspects of bowing are shared with Scottish fiddling, although the two traditions are distinct. 4. Lots of ornaments on individual notes (9).

Dunlay hit the nail on the head regarding the fact that in Cape Breton today the fiddle is primarily a dance instrument, but I feel as if a more defined line existed at one time

between “dance music” and “listening music.” Though you’ll rarely hear a slow strathspey, pastoral air, polka or march at a Cape Breton dance, they were once an integral part of the tradition and remain so in repertoires of many island fiddlers like John Donald Cameron and Carl MacKenzie.

Dunlay and Greenberg would continue their insightful evaluation of the tradition noting,

While each fiddler adds his/her own flavor to a tune, there are mysterious boundaries for what is accepted in the tradition, decided by those who are part of this tradition. Fiddlers know they can only go so far with a tune. Because of its close connection with step-dancing, there is a strong accent on the beat.⁹

In addition to the strong accent on the beat, one can identify modern Cape Breton fiddling by its often lengthy tune medleys.¹⁰ Generally in Cape Breton, until quite recently, tune medleys were grouped together based upon the tonic note of the first tune in the medley. According to Dunlay and Greenberg,

Grouping tunes by their tonic note has the added advantage of serving as a system of organizing the tunes in a players mind. This practice aids the fiddler in maintaining a repertoire and instant recall of hundreds of tunes, and in being able to play in long spontaneous medleys (10).

As previously noted by Paul MacDonald, Cape Breton fiddling consists of many different styles of playing under one basic stylistic umbrella. Alistair MacGillivray

⁹ Qtd. In Frances MacEachern, *Cape Breton Fiddlers Signatures* (Mabou: Am Braighe, Autumn 1996) 9.

¹⁰ The lengthy duration of tune medleys in Cape Breton fiddling has been effected by the rise of the Dance Hall as the primary performance venue in Cape Breton. There also exists a Dichotomy between the music played for dancing and music played for listening. Some fiddlers consider the tune medleys played today quite long.

echoed this same thought when he wrote, “A Cape Breton Fiddler, of course, is a complex creature, so you have all different types of personalities and all different styles of fiddling” (Caplan 40). Other key contributors who have helped document the island’s fiddling milieu also established the importance of individuality and regional styles. Ian MacKinnon would note, “Traditionally there were stylistic pockets of fiddling in Cape Breton centers like Margaree, Mabou Coal Mines, the Glendale-Kingsville area, Iona and Cape North”(MacKinnon 9).

Regarding one of the defining characteristics of the Mabou Coal Mines style, Dunlay and Greenberg wrote, “the wild-note is a characteristic feature of the old ‘Mabou Coal Mines’ style of playing. It imparts a wild and spirited flavor to the tune” (22). The Northside Irish influenced sound of Tommy Basker and Johnny Wilmot, now in the capable hands of Brenda Stubbert and the MacNeil family from Sydney Mines, represents another distinct regional variation within the Cape Breton idiom. You also have the style of music played by Wilfred Prosper and Lee Cremo, both considered Scottish style fiddlers but whose native Mi’kmaq heritage would influence their style. According to Paul MacDonald, Mi’kmaq fiddlers bring a “unique rhythm to Cape Breton fiddle music, a rhythm adopted from the rhythm of the Micmac language” (Wilfred Prosper n.p.). As the Mi’kmaq would do, the Acadians also added some of the rhythm and inflections of their language in creating their own regional variation of Highland Scottish fiddling known as the Acadian French or Cheticamp style.

In discussing various Cape Breton fiddle styles, Dunlay and Greenberg described and demonstrated the stylistic differences between fiddlers. They described Buddy

MacMaster as "having a powerful bow-push using lots of bow, clean sound, rock-solid timing (consistent rather than varied rhythm and lift), and precise, quick left-hand ornaments, while Donald Angus Beaton's style was defined as one using broad strokes, whip bows, driven bows, flying spiccato, drawn-out left hand ornaments, trills, wild notes, rhythmic variety, drones and "cutting up the tune." Greenberg then played the Margaree Reel in Beaton's and MacMaster's style. "It's a different world," said Greenberg after demonstrating both styles. "One is not better than the other, both are totally Cape Breton. The timing in the end turns out to be the same for dancing, but it is what is happening at a smaller, internal level (that makes the difference)."¹¹

The musically rich island of Cape Breton remains one of North America's little cultural oddities in which musical innovation drove a tradition as new influences began seeping in and were absorbed. Despite the common contention that the 'blood is strong', when referring to the inherent Scottish-ness of Cape Breton fiddling, the reality was that both the blood supply and fiddling tradition were becoming diluted.

Industrialization opened up new avenues for cultural exchange in the urban centers but with a price. What began as a tradition deeply rooted in the Gaelic fiddle music of the Scottish Highlands, becomes driven by innovation and enters a period of increased influence from the Irish repertoire.

Changes to the inherent social structure of rural Cape Breton life clearly affected the passing on of all traditions rooted in the Gaelic language, including fiddling. Opportunities no longer existed, at least in the abundance that they once did, for younger

¹¹ *Am Foghar Magazine* Autumn 1996 Edition.

fiddlers to learn in the traditional fashion. Traditional teaching practices generally involved younger fiddlers being given a few tips by older community members with regards to holding the fiddle and proper bowing techniques. In communities like Glendale and Judique, where house parties were still frequent, firsthand learning opportunities were almost daily occurrences. As those opportunities diminished, a shift in teaching techniques also occurred.

While opportunities exist for younger players to learn in the traditional style, the norm has quickly become private instruction. While many younger fiddlers were afforded the opportunity to study with members of the tradition well versed in both Cape Breton music and theory, this is also slowly becoming the exception instead of the rule.

According to Virginia Garrison,

Few fiddlers in recent years have been left on their own to learn to play, due primarily to the appearance of the fiddle class. A steady decline in familial teaching and learning practices has taken place, however (282).

The younger generation of today's Cape Breton fiddlers, including Ashley MacIsaac and Natalie MacMaster, would benefit from instruction from individuals like Antigonish's Stan Chapman.¹²

This period would also mark the first generation of Cape Breton fiddler not using aural methods as the primary method for learning repertoire. According to Virginia Garrison,

¹² Stan Chapman is an Antigonish, Nova Scotia based teacher whose teaching skills are highly regarded in the area thanks to pupils like Ashley MacIsaac and Natalie MacMaster. Several of the largest fiddling festivals in the area have given tributes to Chapman in the last few years.

The use of the ear (aural skills) alone or in combination with note reading, however, is the primary learning mode of practicing Cape Breton fiddlers of all ages, except for those between the ages of 11-19 (283).

Not only would the use of the ear decrease as the primary method for the learning of new repertoire, the tradition would also see a shift in what was once a male dominated institution. According to Garrison, “for the first time in the seventy-year history of Cape Breton fiddling as recorded by this research, the ranks of beginning fiddlers are dominated by female rather than male learners” (283). To balance things off, the once female dominated ranks of piano accompanist slowly began being infiltrated by more male players. Today, Allan Dewar, Joel Chiasson, Troy MacGillivray, Mac Morin, and Jason Roach represent some of the regions most talented young Cape Breton style piano accompanists.

Dan R’s generation of fiddlers arguably represent the last link between the older traditional Gaelic based Cape Breton fiddling styles and the younger generation of players who speak no Gaelic. His thoughts regarding note reading and going by the book, clearly illustrate the penchant for individuality as the dominant ideology amongst Cape Breton fiddlers of his generation. Dan R. was of the school that, though the written note was an important jumping off point, in a tradition that stressed individuality you had better make sure you jump. In the Ron MacInnis narrated 1977 CBC radio documentary *Dan R.: The Life and Tunes of Dan R. MacDonald*, Dan R. sums up the feelings of the vast majority of his generation regarding note reading, when he said: “If you are going to

be going by the sign and the way everything is written in the book you're gonna be mechanical, and I don't want to be a mechanical player!"

Dan R. MacDonald represents the best possible figure to tell the story of change as a constant within the Cape Breton fiddling tradition during the last 100 years. Dan R. rode the wave from its early Gaelic roots in into an urban industrial context following World War II and finally back to Cape Breton when the cornerstone for the tradition's present state of popularity was being set. His life story represents a critical element in our understanding of change within the Cape Breton fiddling during the 20th Century.

Chapter 3 The Early Years

The Red Shoes
REEL D.R. MAC DONALD

© John Donald Cameron

Figure 2: The Red Shoes Reel

Born on February 2, 1911, Dan Rory MacDonald grew up with a passion and talent for music that forever altered the landscape of Cape Breton's Scottish fiddle tradition. While Cape Breton has historically had its share of fiddle playing composers, the birth of Dan R. MacDonald arguably produced its most prolific and successful to date. At the time of his September 1976 death, estimates of Dan R's compositional output were around 2000¹ tunes. One can only hazard a guess at his exact number of compositions and in the end the numbers are far less important than the overall impact he would have on the tradition.

¹ On several occasions, Dan R. would make reference to having composed "handy two-thousand" tunes. He also frequently made mention of the fact that many of his tunes weren't properly notated and subsequently had been lost. Several informants corroborated this fact during my research. Chapter 8 includes detailed discussion of his compositional output and how I arrived at my estimate.

More than twenty-five years following his death, two hundred of Dan R's tunes remain a significant part of Cape Breton's traditional fiddling repertoire.² In recent years the popularity of his compositions has moved beyond the confines of his native island becoming part of a larger global repertoire of traditional fiddle music.³ This is due in part to the increased international visibility of Cape Breton fiddling and its most famous practitioners including Buddy and Natalie MacMaster, Ashley MacIsaac, the late John Morris Rankin and Jerry Holland. In the hands of the first generation of Cape Breton fiddler able to earn a living solely from recording and playing the fiddle, Dan R's compositions have spread like wildfire.

It was a path laid by Dan R's nephews John Allan and John Donald Cameron. John Allan would bring Dan R. and his music to a wider audience on his early nationally broadcast television variety shows, while John Donald's role in the Cape Breton Symphony's 1982 and 1984 UK tours increased the awareness there of Dan R. and his music. John Donald also posthumously published two collections of Dan R's music, *The Heather Hill* and *Trip to Windsor* collections.

Against the backdrop of his familial roots, this chapter explores the early years of Dan R's life and follows him until the outbreak of World War II. It begins with the arrival of Dan R's ancestors in Nova Scotia and continues through his birth, the death of

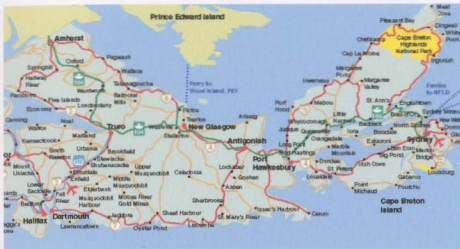
² I believe a more detailed study would indicate that between 80 and 90% of all commercial fiddle recordings released in Cape Breton during the last 10 years have included at least one of Dan R's compositions. Ian MacKinnon's Thesis, *Fiddling to Fortune*, examines the commercial recording industry in Cape Breton until 1989 and even a cursory examination of it reveals how integral Dan R's tunes are in the Cape Breton tradition. His compositions have become even more popular since John Donald Cameron's 1989 publication of Dan R's tunes which have seen wider distribution thanks to Paul Cranford.

his mother at an early age, and his subsequent shuffling between relatives for living accommodations. It concludes with a discussion of the pre-war “thirties” when Dan R’s musical education and future life path as a composer became solidified. Figure 3.1 provides a graphical representation of the area referenced in these discussions.

By 1775, two years after the arrival of the passenger ship *Hector* at Pictou, Nova Scotia, the influx of Scottish settlers stretched to a coastal location due east of Pictou which became known as Arisaig. Arisaig became the site of the first Scottish settlement within what now constitutes Antigonish County. In the next eight years all the arable land in Arisaig, and much of Antigonish County, became populated. By the 1790s new arrivals had fairly simple options. To acquire one’s piece of the new world they needed to move further and further away from their point of disembarkation. The sparsely populated Island of Cape Breton became the de facto choice for many new Scottish immigrants (Fergusson, 31).

Dan R’s familial roots appear to pre date the arrival of the *Hector* in Pictou. Based upon extant records and oral history it appears that Dan R’s Great-Great Grandfather Ranald MacDonald followed his father and brother to Canada from Scotland in the mid to late 1770s. Their ancestral path became a familiar one – by ship or small boat to Pictou (“The Birthplace of New Scotland”), followed by interim stops in locations along the Nova Scotia mainland, with the Island of Cape Breton as their final destination.

Figure 3 - Nova Scotia/Cape Breton Geographical Map⁴



Like many of the first Scottish immigrants to Nova Scotia Ranald MacDonald, Dan R's maternal great-great grandfather, landed in Pictou then slowly made his way to Cape Breton via the Nova Scotia mainland. He settled in Arisaig where he remained until 1798 at which time he moved to a 180-acre plot of land in Long Point, Cape Breton. That same year Ranald started his family with the birth of the first of his ten children, James. In 1820 James would establish the family's claim in Centennial near Dan R's birthplace of Judique South. Dan R's grandmother Catherine, the youngest of James' six children, was born in 1850. Catherine married into the O'Hendley family and had six children; Dan R's mother Janet (Jessie) was Catherine's fifth child.

In 1909, at the age of nineteen, Jessie married John MacDonald a carpenter from the Glencoe Road just outside the town of Judique. Known locally as Johnny the

⁴ Mapquest.com

Carpenter,⁵ he was well respected and a “noted fiddler at local ceilidhs” (A.D. MacDonald 393). Despite musical leanings on both sides of Dan R’s lineage⁶, his parents likely never imagined the contributions he would make to Cape Breton’s fiddle tradition. Jessie and Johnny the Carpenter’s only son would have a multi-generational impact on fiddlers in Cape Breton, arguably exerting as significant an impact on tradition as any fiddler of his or subsequent generations.

Dan R. MacDonald was born into the fertile musical landscape of Cape Breton Island on the 2nd day of February 1911, at his uncle Neil’s home in Judique South.⁷ While the vibrant culture into which Dan R. was born would help foster his musical talent, his father’s position in life coupled with the tragic death of his mother became the seed from which Dan R’s lifestyle and individuality grew.

As his nickname suggests, Dan R’s father earned his living as a carpenter. In rural Cape Breton this meant life as an itinerant laborer, working wherever one was required. Johnny the Carpenter’s peripatetic lifestyle became an issue in 1914 following the birth of Dan R’s only sibling, Catherine (Katie Ann). Shortly after the birth of Katie Ann, Dan R’s mother took ill and passed away. The itinerant nature of Johnny the Carpenter’s vocation precluded him from raising two young children, and, as was often the case in this type of situation, relatives stepped in to lend a hand.

⁵ In a community in which John MacDonald was a common name an individual’s Gaelic patronymic distinguished one from the other. Iain MacIllleasbuig Iain ‘ic Ruaraidh can be literally translated as John son of ? son of John son of Ruaridh.

⁶ Legend has it Dan R’s grandfather was also composer and might have been responsible for the popular traditional Cape Breton reel Margaret MacDonald’s Delight. John Donald Cameron wasn’t certain the tune was composed by his great grandfather but said it was a possibility. I originally discovered the legend on Paul Cranford’s website.

⁷ Dan R.: The Life and Tunes of Dan R. MacDonald, Narr. Ron MacInnis. Prod. Gordon McGowan *Between Ourselves* (CBC Radio: Halifax) 23 July 1977.

Donald and Catherine MacDonnell of South West Mabou adopted Katie Ann into a stable household. It would be the home in which she grew up and within which she gave birth to the first of her own children. Dan R's stability was not as guaranteed as his sister's. Still a toddler, Dan R. spent the years following his mother's death shuffling between the homes of his father's relations. After spending time with his uncle, Angus 'the Carpenter' MacDonald, Dan R. eventually went to live with his great-uncle Hugh A. O'Hendley in Judique South. Moving to the O'Hendleys represented a marked improvement for Dan R. according to his cousin Catherine MacKenzie.

He didn't have it easy. He had a hard life and he went to live with his relatives and they were poor and had a large family. According to him he just got what was leftover from the rest of them. That's the way he saw it. But then he went to live with his other relatives (The O'Hendleys). [Dan R. Would Say] 'Oh jeeppers, I was brought up well at the O'Hendleys.

Despite the stability afforded Dan R. at the O'Hendleys, the abundant lack of stability in his earlier years set the standard by which he lived.

In the Judique of Dan R's youth, numerous opportunities existed to listen not only to fiddle music but local storytelling and the entire scope of the areas Gaelic traditions. Judique could be said to be representative of the majority of small Scottish Catholic communities dotting the west coast of the island, with little comparison to the Judique of today. The rapid decline of Gaelic as the language of socialization amongst Judique's inhabitants represents one of the major differences.

Dan R. would be socialized from an early age in the Gaelic language and it formed the cultural underpinnings of his music. According to cousin Alex F. MacKay,

“We always spoke Gaelic, my brother Jim and I, when he (Dan R.) was around.” Dan R. preferred the Gaelic language, always using it when around others who were fluent.

The Gaelic language was so pervasive in the mostly Roman Catholic areas along Cape Breton’s west coast that until the early part of the twentieth Century children heard little, if any, English until attending school. The following account of Glengarry, Cape Breton (near Mabou) native Donald MacDonnell’s first day of school indicates the pervasiveness of Gaelic in Cape Breton during Dan R’s youth.

A chuimhn’ a tha’gam air, cha robh fios agamsa de’n t-ainm a bh’orm! Se Domhnall Iagan mhic Iain, sin na chuala mise riamh agus nuair bha sinn a’ coiseachd dhan sgoil. A’ chiad latha a dol sìos an rathad, bha John A a feuchainn ri ionnsachadh dhomh gur e Donald MacDonell a dh’ràdhainn. Cha robh fios agamsa gur e Donald MacDonell a bh’orm. Cha robh fios agamsa ach gur e Domhnall an t-ainm a bh’orm.

What I recall is that I didn’t know my name. All I ever heard was Dòmhnall Iagan mhic Iain, and when we were walking down the road to school. On the first day, John A. was trying to teach me to say Donald MacDonnell. I didn’t know that I was called Donald MacDonnell. I didn’t know Donald was my name (Beaton, Margie, and Mairead Beaton 13).

Dan R’s story paralleled Donald MacDonnell’s, as it would for the vast majority of the island’s last generation of Gaelic speaking fiddlers. While Dan R. began learning English at school, he spent the most significant part of his youth being socialized within a Gaelic context. Dan R. loved spending time with community tradition bearers, whether they

were fiddlers, pipers or storytellers. Though he gained a holistic view of the Gaelic traditions within his community, the fiddle soon became the main focus of his interest.

Near the O'Hendleys, at the farm of Dan Archie MacDougall, several of Dan Archie's own children played the fiddle. It was here according to Daniel Graham that "on one particular evening, when the boy [Dan R.] failed to show up to supper, Mr. O'Hendley found him at the MacDougall home, listening to the fiddle music" (par. 4). Once young Dan R. heard and saw other children his own age playing the fiddle, he was obviously no longer content with simply being a passive participant.

Dan R's path in life was decided at a young age when his fascination with the fiddle appears to have begun to overwhelm him. According to Graham one morning at school Dan R. shared the fruits of this fascination with a classmate, asking him,

If he wanted to see what he had made the night before. He then produced four violin pegs, which were finely carved with his own pocketknife. When asked how he colored them black he replied that he had removed the shade of the Kerosene lamp and held the pegs over the flame and "they just turned out like ebony pegs (par. 5).

This incident, early in Dan R's life, clearly illustrates his attraction to the fiddle and its music. It would be a fascination that would continue to grow throughout Dan R's life never abating.

According to those around him, Dan R's early interest in the instrument quickly turned to an obsession. With no fiddle of his own, it wasn't long before he attempted to find one. According to cousin Catherine MacKenzie,

He told this story to me about when he was young fella. He always had a yen to play the fiddle and there was a house it was vacant. And the people who had lived in it, somebody in that house had a fiddle. And he thought the fiddle was in the house. And this wouldn't leave him alone. He wanted to see the fiddle, wanted to see the fiddle. And he wanted and he wanted and he wanted to see the fiddle!

And there were men working on the road. The road was maintained just by pick and shovel in those days or maybe a horse and whatever. But there were men working around in the vicinity. And uh anyway he was just kinda bumping around and he was in the vicinity of this house that the fiddle was in, he thought the fiddle was in.

So I don't know how he got into the house but he worked his way in someway. And he rooted everywhere he could to find the fiddle and he wasn't finding the fiddle. And there was a trunk. The trunk was locked. Ohhhh!!!! You could just, he was positive the fiddle was in this trunk. If he could only get into the truck! He found a bar, he found something and he pried the trunk open.

No fiddle, but there was a gun and he was fascinated by the gun. And he got searching around and he found ammunition for the gun. He loaded the gun, raised the window put the gun out and pulled the trigger. (Laughing Hysterically) The fellows working on the road whewwww!!! (simulating gunshots going over their heads)

Dan R. was caught red handed in the house he had no business in and the gun and the whole thing. And I guess poor Dan R. was in disgrace. Ohhhh...the worst kind of disgrace. And somebody sent for his father, his father was a carpenter. (He) figured Dan R. was heading for the penitentiary just headfirst. Sent for his father to straighten him out.

(Imitating Dan R.) 'I explained to my father that I was interested in the fiddle and I heard there was a fiddle in the house and I was looking for the fiddle and when I was looking for the fiddle I found the gun'...now that was Dan R.

In all likelihood this incident delayed Dan R's fiddle playing days, but it wasn't long before Dan R. and destiny would meet.

With the help of his father, he got hold of a fiddle around the age of ten.

I didn't play the fiddle (at that time) till my father took me up to Hugh A. O'Hendley's in Judique South in 1921. So Hugh O'Hendley got a violin that his brother had. That was my grandfather, Allan O'Hendley up in [Port] Hastings. And there was no strings in it so I took the violin down to Alexander MacDonnell and he rigged it up for me and I started from there. I didn't get anywhere playing the violin there. Nobody read any music around Judique.⁸

Following the deaths of his father and Hugh A. O'Hendley in 1930, Dan R. moved to the Glendale/Queensville area with Mrs. Hugh A. O'Hendley. Mrs. O'Hendley originally hailed from that area. Dan R's cousin, and Glendale resident, Alex Francis MacKay remembers meeting not long after Dan R. arrived in the area,

I first remember seeing Dan R. back in 1930. I was only about six years old. Six or seven years old. Well he was staying at MacGillivray's at Glendale there. He, the guy that brought him, Hughie O'Hendley died and his wife was from Glendale. She was a MacGillivray. So they came back over to Glendale for a while. I don't know how long he was there but the first time he ever visited here was then. 1930. He was only young himself. I don't believe he stayed very long at MacGillivray's. He spent a lot of time at Queensville at Dan Hughie MacEachern's and then John Willie MacEachern's. Then he was a couple of years I would say with Gordon MacQuarrie over at Milford.

⁸ Dan R.: The Life and Tunes of Dan R. MacDonald, Narr. Ron MacInnis. Prod. Gordon McGowan Between Ourselves (CBC Radio: Halifax) 23 July 1977.

Dan R. spent most of the 1930s in Glendale living with friends and relatives working the farm as well as local woodlots harvesting pulp and firewood. He used his free time to avail himself of some of the area's finest fiddlers, including famed itinerant blacksmith/fiddler Big Ranald MacLellan.

Big Ranald was one of Dan R's favorite fiddlers. Of him Dan R. once remarked, "He'd make the hair on your neck stand. He'd charm the snakes out of the woods" (MacGillivray TCBF 62). The fact that Big Ranald's offspring included two musically inclined daughters a little younger than Dan R. was also likely a drawing card. One daughter's remembrances of those early days portray a very positive image of Dan R.

Dan R. used to come to the house all the time with Donald, my brother. That's when we met Dan R. first. Well Dan R. before he went overseas, he was a handsome person. He was tall, he was good looking. He was always a respected person. He had character galore and he was very religious. He was an ideal person in our house. He was always welcome there. A very, very fine person. (MacLellan 1996).

Marie told me that while alcohol was readily available at some of the local parties, Dan R. wasn't a big drinker in his youth. This insight gives credence to other material that indicates Dan R's fondness for alcohol was a trait he inherited later in life.

Dan R. worked in the woods by day and, whenever and wherever the opportunity arose, played the fiddle at night. He also regularly played for church functions, picnics and dances.

He and I played for a few dances in around the old schools, the old schoolhouse. We had no piano, just played together. We played in Creignish and Glendale. You know the old schoolhouses. Then they used to dance in them. The pay wasn't very big either, a couple of dollars. Lucky to get that back then, 30s early 40s. He could play real good if only he was in the right shape (MacKay 1996).

Alex Francis also noted that Dan R's love of music drove him to what some considered great lengths to play the fiddle.

I recall one time he had to play. He was in staying at Queensville then I guess. There was a picnic in Boisdale coming up, and he was supposed to play there. And I remember he walked from Queensville over here and he went up the river down here on this road coming up on the other side of the river. He came up that way, it would be a little shorter than following the main road you know. And he came up the other side of the river and he took his shoes off and crossed the river. (He) walked up here and stopped here for a while and kept on over, walked over to River Denys to get the train at River Denys. That's quite a walk. He was going to play a picnic in Boisdale the following day I think (MacKay 1996).

While living in Queensville, Dan R's playing received a boost when he met up with "this MacEachern fellow who had a Skye Collection" (Graham par 6). *The Skye Collection*, an important collection of Scottish music published in 1887, provided Dan R. with his first attempt to read music. In a 1969 interview with ethnomusicologist Earl Spielman, Dan R. admitted note reading didn't go well at first.

It was against me the first winter. I was splitting wood with him and he showed me and I couldn't understand it. And two or three guys showed me and I couldn't understand it. They must have been showing me wrong or something. This MacEachern fellow in Queensville showed me and I got on it right like that.

The “MacEachern fellow” was Queensville fiddler John Willie MacEachern, whom Dan R. would describe during the 23 July 1977 posthumous CBC radio documentary *Dan R.: The Life and Tunes of Dan R. MacDonald*. According to Dan R.,

(He was) a good reader. And he had a little book there an instruction book with the Irish Washerwoman in it and figures in it and he showed me how he done it, how it was done. So I goes and I studied it under lamplight up in bed till two o’clock in the morning and next day when I got up I caught the fiddle and I could read the tune out of the book.

Once Dan R. learned to read music it opened up a whole new world for him. From this humble beginning, Dan R. freely gave tips to any inquiring fiddler of his own generation and also helped John Morris Rankin and Kinnon Beaton with the finer points of musical theory. Of greater importance was the fact that Dan R’s ability to read music gave him the tools to notate his own compositions once he began composing.

It wasn’t until 1936, at the age of twenty-six, that Dan R. moved from being purely a fiddler to take his place amongst Cape Breton’s long line of traditional composers. According to Dan R., “the very first tune I composed – it’s in Gordon MacQuarrie’s book - was *The Red Shoes*” (MacGillivray TCBF 32-33). Regarding the title of his first composition, Dan R. told the following story for *Dan R.: The Life and Tunes of Dan R. MacDonald*.

Angus D. MacEachern in Glendale made a pair of shoes. He made them himself and he painted them red, with Sherman Williams paint. And I called it ‘The Red Shoes’. That’s what I called it, ‘The Red Shoes’” (Dan R.: *The Life and Tunes of Dan R. MacDonald*).

Popularized by its inclusion on a 1936 “Little” Jack MacDonald recording, its fame was further cemented by Winston Fitzgerald’s recording of it. The tune remains a classic in the genre, having appeared on at least fifteen different commercial recordings. Mabou’s Red Shoe Pub, opened on December 10 1998, is named in its honor.

By the time he went to live with cousin Alex Francis MacKay in the winter of 1938, composing had begun to dominate Dan R’s life.

Figure 6 –Mabou, Cape Breton’s The Red Shoe Pub⁹



He was composing all the time pretty well. I remember one day, I guess this was when he was staying in Queensville there. He came over here, it was about five miles from here. He had to walk. He had his violin and on the way over he composed a tune. The pine logs were beside the road and he sat on that and composed a tune. When he arrived here

⁹ <http://www.redshoepub.com/history.htm>

he told me he wrote the tune down and he called it 'The Roadside Polka'. Yeah! Oh he could, he told me he could compose his tunes anywhere walking the road or anyplace when they would come to his mind" (MacKay 1996).

Even while sleeping, Dan R's penchant for composing didn't cease. With families often numbering upwards of ten or more children, it was common in the Cape Breton of Dan R's youth for multiple young members of the same sex to share a bed. When Dan R. lived with the MacKay family he and cousin Alex Francis regularly shared a bed. Alex Francis recalled one night in particular,

I could feel his foot going you know. I don't know if he was whistling or not or it was going through his mind...the tune. But I could feel he was keeping time with his foot anyway. And uh when he got up in the morning he wrote the tune. I just forget what the name of the tune was but he composed it through the night anyway (MacKay 1996).

Once Dan R. turned on the compositional faucet in 1936, the tunes poured out of him consistently until his death. He had little control of when the urge would strike, but once it struck he almost always notated the composition.

In interviews, those who knew Dan R. paint a portrait of a man driven by Scottish Highland fiddle music and the need to compose within that idiom. During the summer of 1939, as Dan R. began another season of work at the Basinette Lumber Camp in Port Hastings, a young fiddle player named Jarvis Benoit arrived at camp to work during his two-week school vacation. Benoit provides wonderful insight into how driven Dan R. was:

I was about fifteen or sixteen then. That would have been, I was born in 1924. It would have been 1939 right around the

war. He (Dan R.) worked in the sawmill at the camp. From what I heard he didn't work that long at any one place. He was fiddle crazy and moved about a lot (Benoit 1996).

The camp workday started at 7AM and lasted on average ten-hours. Despite the long shifts, there was always ample time for merriment. During his two weeks at the camp, Benoit said he remembered Dan R. would; "stand up right in the middle of the camp and he'd play for hours sometimes. And of course we had a bunkhouse and we'd all sleep in the bunkhouse and every night he would play" (Benoit 1996). Though not aware of his reputation as a composer at the time, Benoit also recalls one of Dan R's common pastimes.

He was always writing! He was writing. And he had hard time finding bits of paper and he had thick glasses. I remember his glasses were thick and always writing. We'd go outside and he'd be sitting and writing down and he'd come in and think how does this sound and he'd play it (1996).

Benoit, himself a fine fiddler, remains in awe of the command over the instrument that Dan R. possessed. According to Benoit, Dan R. would:

Write some variations for you on those tunes you know. He'd completely make another tune out of it would sound the same but uh...It was quite the thing. At that time I didn't realize who he was. And he was never...it was too bad all that he did and he really wasn't appreciated that much. It's only now that the people realize (1996).

Dan R. continued to spend part of each year during the late 30s and early 40s working in the woods, while the remainder of his time would be spent playing the fiddle and composing. As Benoit witnessed firsthand, this routine helped establish Dan R's consummate musicianship.

Dan R. eventually came out of the woods, dance halls, and kitchens of Cape Breton and reached a much broader audience via the radio and recordings during this time. According to Dan R's nephew, John Donald Cameron, fiddler Bill Lamey,

ran a radio program from Sydney--CJCB—back in the late 30's. I guess it was. And he brought Dan R. on as a guest one night, to play on the program. And he was the first person to put Dan R. on the radio, Bill Lamey was." (qtd. in Caplan Our Uncle 8).

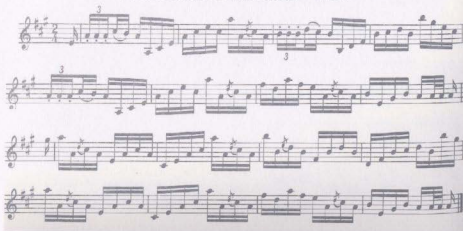
While Dan R. was well known within the communities where he regularly stayed, his appearance on Lamey's radio show was the first to bring him to the attention of a wider Cape Breton audience.

As the 1930s drew to a close, Dan R's music would continue to be heard throughout his native island as his original compositions began seeping into the tradition. The 1940s would bring some distinct changes to the island's economy while many of Cape Breton's best and brightest young talent, including Dan R., would leave for the battlefields of Europe.

Chapter 4

World War Two & Cape Breton Fiddling

J. Murdock Henderson - Reel



© John Donald Cameron

Figure 5: J. Murdock Henderson Reel

At the beginning of the 20th century, rural Cape Bretoners relied on farming, fishing, and small family lumbering businesses to keep them at a decent standard of living. The need for everything from livestock to moonshine in the healthy industrial centres like Sydney and Inverness helped sustain these more rural economies. Dan R's would be born at the beginning of period of steady decline in the island's industrial base, most noticeably affecting the coal and steel industries. In his article detailing the history of Cape Breton's Dominion Coal Company F.W. Gray wrote,

It is singular that all over the world 1913 was the year of peak coal production, a portent doubtless of coming events.

With 1914 commenced a series of world events wars, trade depressions and more wars. All this means that the last thirty years [i.e. to 1943] have been a difficult time (XXII).

For Dan R. the difficult times which began to affect industrial Cape Breton meant very little as the negative affects of the industrial downturn had yet to impact the island's more rural insulated areas where Dan R. lived, worked, and played the fiddle as a youth.

While Dan R flourished within his relatively simple life in rural Cape Breton, conflict in Europe was about to change his life and influence the future course of Cape Breton fiddling. The outbreak of World War II also added pressure on an already fragile Cape Breton economy, introducing changes into the island's economic and social institutions from which its Gaelic rooted traditions would never fully recover.

Specifically, the outbreak of World War II resulted in many of the region's most promising young Gaelic reared tradition bearers leaving for the battlefields of Europe. Some never returned and the vast majority of those who did became a seemingly never-ending stream of workers leaving Cape Breton's diminishing pool of industrial and farming opportunities in search of urban employment. Dan R. was somewhat of an anomaly. He also left to serve but returned to make substantial contributions to the tradition, both when living in Cape Breton and while employed elsewhere.

Dan R. MacDonald's personal odyssey to Europe's battlefields began on 7 May 1941 when he enlisted at Mulgrave, Nova Scotia. Dan R. assumed the rank of private with the Royal Canadian Artillery (RCA) No. 6 District Depot (DOD #5 1) and made his way to New Glasgow, Nova Scotia for basic training. During his enlistment a full

physical was conducted. Thanks to years working in the woods Dan R. was in good shape weighing in at one hundred and seventy-six pounds (DOD #2 1).

Having turned thirty just months prior to enlisting, Dan R. was not your typical Army private. Given his age, it's likely that ulterior motives, rather than simply pure patriotism, played a significant role in Dan R's decision to enlist. Though I'm certain that Dan R. was aware of the importance of the war effort, I am also convinced that his love of Scotland and its music played the bigger role in his decision to enlist.

Dan R's deep affinity and appreciation of Scotland's violin music is without question. The Cape Breton of his youth was rife with songs and stories about the old country, and these stories fueled his interest in Scotland and its music. During my fieldwork almost every individual interviewee mentioned the passionate interest Dan R. had for Scottish fiddling. One story in particular, regarding an event that occurred later in Dan R's life, clearly illustrates his undying interest in Scottish music. On this particular occasion his constant voicing of admiration for one particular Scottish fiddler, Hector MacAndrew, caused Dan R's sister Katie Ann to remark: "If you like him so much why don't you swim on over and kiss his arse" (qtd. in Caplan ed. *Our Uncle* 6).

While little debate exists about Dan R's interest in Scotland and its fiddlers, can one make the case that he enlisted primarily, if not solely, to provide himself a means by which to get there? Facts gathered from fieldwork and Dan R's own military documents, seem to substantiate this position. Winifred MacDonald, at whose Lanark, Nova Scotia home Dan R. was a regular guest, told me: "Dan R. joined the army and went overseas.

That was the purpose to get over to Scotland. He told Hughie¹, ‘I had to get over there that’s the only way I could ever get over there’ (Winifred MacDonald 1996).

From military records one gleans additional insight into Dan R’s primary motive for enlisting. Records indicate that upon his enlistment military officers questioned Dan R. regarding his reason for joining the army. Dan R’s reply was simple and to the point, “to be with friends” (DOD #19 2). This statement becomes significant and important when one considers that the friends Dan R. enlisted with were also fiddlers. One may debate the reasons for Dan R’s enlistment but one fact is beyond question, by joining the Canadian Army that summer day in 1941 Dan R. found a way to get to Scotland without swimming.

Following basic training in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, Dan R. spent the better part of the next two months stationed in Petawawa, Ontario for advanced training (DOD #5 1). In the winter of 1941, upon completing advanced training, Dan R. returned to Cape Breton on furlough. He utilized this time to partake in the usual merriment afforded a soldier prior to shipping overseas. On December the 12th, five days after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, Dan R’s convoy began its eleven-day trans-Atlantic crossing from Halifax, Nova Scotia to Scotland.

By the time Dan R. departed Nova Scotia for Scotland, the European situation was anything but calm. The Germans had already invaded Denmark, Norway, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Greece and Yugoslavia; Italy had declared war

¹ She is referring to her husband Antigonish, County fiddler Hugh A. MacDonald

on Britain and France; the Soviets were active in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. By this time Germany had also expanded its reach by engaging in separate wars with the Soviets and Allied Forces.

During the long trans-Atlantic crossing, Dan R. would have ample time to reflect on his hopes and dreams to meet Scotland's finest living fiddlers. Upon Dan R's arrival in Gourrock, Scotland² on 23 December 1941 he remained assigned to a division of the Royal Canadian Artillery (RCA). From military records it appears that Dan R. was not enamored with his posting with the RCA. Though apparently unhappy, he certainly didn't let it affect his work. His commanding officer noted in Dan R's official military records that Dan R. was; "a pleasant type of man, willing and hard working. Well adjusted in Army" (DOD #5 1).

Though it appears that he was 'willing and hard working', Dan R. also had no problem voicing an opinion regarding his unhappiness with his posting. His Personnel Selection Record, signed by his commanding officer, noted that Dan R. claimed "he could not learn map reading while with RCA" and that he was "not very keen on Military Training of any description" (DOD #5 1). His military personnel papers even go so far as to make mention of the fact that Dan R. "states he is happiest when in the woods" (DOD #1 1). Dan R. must have voiced his discontent to his commanding officer on several occasions for the statement "soldier claims he is a lumber-jack and not a soldier" was officially entered into his military record (DOD #5 1). Dan R's Army records also

² Gourrock is 72 miles west of Edinburgh

indicate that they were aware that between 1928 and 1940 he was a laborer in the woods of Cape Breton as that too is officially entered.

On September 4, 1942 his constant claim that he was a “lumber-jack and not a soldier” finally resulted in Dan R’s re-assignment to the #22 Coy Division of the Canadian Forestry Corps (CFC) to await deployment to the Scottish Highlands. Though uncertain of the extent of Dan R’s role in his re-assignment, the fact remains that nearly nine months after his arrival in the United Kingdom, either his good planning or luck paid off.

The Canadian Forestry Corps represented a critical war resource that created by Britain during World War I to help deal with its inability to “maintain the normal flow of sea-borne imports, not the least of these being timber” (Wonders 1). At the outset of World War II, with Britain still dependant upon foreign lumber and German blockades preventing lumber from being shipped into England, the Queen called upon Canada once again to help contribute to wartime lumber production. By May of 1940 a new Canadian Forestry Corps began forming with twenty companies quickly culled from Canada’s wealth of well-trained woodsmen. Over the next two years, thirty units were mobilized from across Canada and sent to the Scottish Highlands to assist in the war effort (Wonders 7).

Not long after his re-assignment Dan R. made his way by train from Gourock, a small town due west of Glasgow between Greenock and Paisley, into the Highlands of Scotland to Aberdeen just northeast of Dundee. The train route that Dan R. took into the

Scottish Highlands would have carried him through some of the most beautiful scenery he would ever witness outside of his native Cape Breton. Figure 5.1 is a map of this area.



Figure 6 – Dan R’s Highland Route

By the time Dan R’s division arrived to its posting at Abergeldie Castle, civilian contractors had already completed setting up camp for the #22 Coy (Wonders 20). The British had also already established several locations that they felt would prove most fruitful for lumber harvesting (Wonders 20). “Usually located on estate property near a road to permit vehicle access” (Wonders 23), most of these pre-determined plots were on privately owned estates all graciously donated by their owners to the war effort. Dan R., in a 1969 interview with Earl Spielman, would note that he and the #22 Coy spent the better part of three years stationed at Abergeldie Castle in the township of Kincardineshire.

If Dan R's experience mirrored that of other Canadian Forestry Corps members in the Highlands his work began in earnest within a week of moving into camp. The approach was simple, "companies usually worked in two sections, one cutting 'in the bush' and bringing out the timber, and the other sawing it into lumber in the company mill, and both using mostly Canadian equipment" (Wonders 37).

A 1944 article by G.F.G. Stanley, appearing in *Canadian Geographic Journal*, accurately described the dynamic of camp life.

It (operated) its own bush gang and its own mill. It (carried) on its strength tradesmen of every kind necessary for the efficient carrying on of its allocated task: sawyers, millwrights, mechanics, lumberjacks, camp cooks, electricians, shoemakers, tailors, carpenters and so forth. It (had) its own armourer sergeant, its military instructors and its medical orderlies. It (had) its own garages and workshops. Each camp (was) planned on similar lines provided with standardized equipment (144).

Though life at Abergeldie Castle was tough work, it was staffed by some of the best lumberman that the Canadian woods could supply and when the weather held out production was strong.

By comparison it was one of the cushier postings a Canadian soldier could get, but life in the Scottish Highlands was still tough work. It was work made more difficult by weather unlike that which most Canadian lumbermen were used to working in back home. Reflecting on Dan R's wartime experiences some years later, cousin Alex F. MacKay said that Dan R: "complained about all the rain they were getting over there.

Always rained. He said you'd have to wear rubber gear most of the time and it was hard to work with" (MacKay 1996).

William Wonders, whose book *The Sawdust Fusiliers* is the definitive history on the subject of the CFC, substantiates Dan R's claims of horrid rain and its effects on efficiency. Wonders, in describing the main hindrance to the CFCs mission, wrote,

Environmental conditions, chiefly climactic, caused the most serious problems for the CFC operations in Scotland. Although many loggers from the West Coast of British Columbia were familiar with similar dull, wet winters, the majority was not and found them troublesome for work and even perhaps psychologically until they adjusted (51).

The bad weather exacerbated already tough and treacherous working conditions, often leading to severe injury and death.³ On one occasion,

As one member of the No. 3 Company from Ballogie #1 Camp and others were felling a tree, it rolled on its stump and very heavy branch caught (him), pinning his head against a stone wall where he had taken cover, causing him multiple fractures of the lower jaw, crushing the upper jaw, breaking his nose and giving him multiple lacerations of the face. This according to the MO will affect his efficiency as a soldier (51).

Despite the often horrid weather and other inherent hazards of logging, the Highlands of Scotland was about as good as it got for a wartime soldier. Each Saturday night one could easily obtain transportation from most camps into Inverness, while weekly dances were held at Beauly, Kiltarlity or Kirkhill (Wonders 68). The term friendly

³ No casualty statistics exist for the Canadian Forestry Corps.

would be an understatement in describing the relations between Canadian soldiers and the Scottish residents.

There was much interaction between CFC personnel and the Scottish civilian population. The local people went out of their way to welcome the Canadians on their arrival. They received invitations to dances and receptions in local halls very soon, in some cases within days- No. 19 Company, for example, only arrived in Belladrum Camp on 2 July 1941, but on 8 July it was noted that the 'neighbors are proving very hospitable to the men, several being asked in for evenings and for suppers' with a concert party held in Kiltarlity the next evening with tea and biscuits for the men afterwards (Wonders 64).

In addition to the fine local treatment, each soldier received regular periods of leave during which they were, for the most part, allowed to roam freely in Scotland.

This freedom was not without risk. Though Germany was the official adversary, it often seemed that the CFC soldiers were their own worst enemy. In March of 1944, one of the more popular off duty activities caused a major medical issue within the CFC.

CFC Headquarters expressed concern that the total number of cases of venereal disease throughout the Canadian Forestry Corps (441 cases had been admitted to hospital in 1943) was well above the average for the Canadian Army overseas, despite the free availability of condoms and prophylactics and compulsory inspection on return from leaves (Wonders 58).

For the most part Dan R. remained out of any serious trouble, utilizing each and every opportunity away from active duty to further pursue his interest in fiddle music. How he went about this, in a country with which he was unfamiliar and in all likelihood

had only a few fiddlers' names as a starting point, remains a mystery. Knowing Dan R. though, it's a mystery that if unraveled would yield some wonderful stories.

Regardless of the initial method and means of Dan R.'s pursuit, he quickly established links within some of Scotland's finest fiddlers. One of the initial and without question most important musical friendships that Dan R. forged while in Scotland was with noted composer, fiddler and music critic J. Murdoch Henderson. As a young man, Henderson, who was born in New Deer, Aberdeenshire,⁴ developed a keen interest in the fiddlers from the Golden Age of Scottish fiddling. He was a close friend of famed Scottish fiddler and composer James Scott Skinner, and remained so until Skinner's 1927 death.

One can only imagine the amazement that enveloped Henderson upon his introduction to a Canadian soldier who critics would later dub, 'Scott Skinner, the Second'. In the short biography that accompanies Dan R.'s first published collection of his own compositions, Daniel Graham wrote; "Mr. Henderson expressed amazement in the Canadian Soldier's musical ability, considering the fact that Dan R. had no formal musical training" (par. 11).

Formal musical training or not, the relationship between Dan R. and Henderson was one of mutual respect and admiration which "worked to the indirect benefit of many."⁵ Tune books that Dan R. received with Henderson's assistance were shared with and widely used by others in Cape Breton, and have had a measurable impact and effect

⁴ Henderson was born in 1902 and passed away four years prior to Dan R. in 1972.

on the Cape Breton repertoire.⁶ One can non-scientifically gauge the effect/impact by reviewing the number of Golden Age compositions recorded by Cape Breton fiddlers. As further discussed in Chapter 8, Dan R. shared this material with Winston Fitzgerald, who is noted for his affinity to both Skinner's compositions and the music of the Golden Age.

Dan R. also learned much from Henderson regarding the finer points of musical theory. It was knowledge that Dan R., through his own compositions and mentoring, would freely pass on to other fiddlers of his generation as well as younger fiddlers like Kinnon Beaton, Cameron Chisholm and John Morris Rankin.

In Scotland, J. Murdoch Henderson taught Dan R. "to play more than just the shell of the tunes" (Graham par. 11) helping him hone his already strong musical abilities to a finely tuned precision. When asked in 1969 if his time spent in Scotland had an effect on his music, Dan R. would tell interview Earl Spielman,

Oh ya. Well, I learnt quite a bit about note and signs and things from this Henderson I met. It's from Henderson that I got all this music I got, through him. Of Course I paid a lot of money for that. Well he got them when I was over there and I sent them to Cape Breton.

Though Henderson imparted stylistic influence on Dan R., the old tune books he introduced Dan R. to would represent the most important by-product of their friendship. These old collections, from the masters of the Golden Age of Scottish fiddling, greatly influenced the repertoire of Dan R. and countless other Cape Breton fiddlers.

⁶ John Gibson would be the first to publicly write about this impact in *Fiddlers to the Fore: Program for 1975 Festival of Scottish Fiddling* (Glendale: Cape Breton Fiddlers Association, 1975) n.p.

While stationed in Scotland, Dan R. would continue not only in his military role but also in his role as Cape Breton's roving musical ambassador. At every free opportunity, Dan R. availed himself of Scottish fiddlers and fiddle music. One such occasion occurred when according to Dan R., he:

Played with the Glasgow Caledonian and Reel and Strathspey Club. Played with the whole band right in at St. Andrews hall. It was Ninth Street Glasgow. It's went on fire since. There was a hundred and fifty fiddlers altogether. We were in a big hall like a theater this was in back in the balcony (Spielman 1969).

An article appearing in the *Antigonish Casket* immediately following Dan R's return to Canada substantiates his claim. It states,

Was 'discovered' as a fiddler when he appeared two years ago as an extra at the annual concert of the Reels and Strathspeys Society in St. Andrews Hall, Glasgow. He was taken to the concert by a friend, and when he offered to play his services were accepted. The whole audience was entranced by his performance and called for repeated encores (*Dan R. MacDonald* 27 Dec 45 10).

Following the concert Dan R. was introduced to Hugh MacPhee, head of Celtic programming for BBC radio in Glasgow. MacPhee obviously liked what he heard that night, as Dan R. subsequently appeared on BBC Radio on at least two separate occasions. While the liner notes to *The Five MacDonald Fiddlers* first LP states that Dan R. regularly played over the BBC, no evidence exists to suggest he played more than twice.

⁶ These books included the earliest published collections featuring the compositions of Marshall, Glenn, Skinner and the Gow family,

His BBC appearances marked the first opening of a window directly into Scotland's musical past, and represent to my knowledge the first time Cape Breton fiddle music was even broadcast in Scotland.

The St. Andrew's Hall and BBC appearances raise a fundamental question about Dan R. the promoter versus the musician. Whether Dan R. was a self-promoter or not is open to debate. I personally don't think Dan R. was a self-promoter, just someone with a single minded focus on playing the fiddle and a penchant for good timing. While Dan R. never had a manager, he always seemed to be in the right place at the right time finding his activities being publicized as they occurred. How he came to play on the BBC is indicative of Dan R's right place at the right time musical persona.

Based on interviews with those who knew Dan R. best, the following represents a reasonable scenario of the events leading to Dan R's appearance at St. Andrew's Hall. A friend, likely J. Murdoch Henderson, informs Dan R. of the gathering of fiddlers in Glasgow. Dan R. shows up, able to speak the universal language of music, and inquires if he can sit in with the musicians for their performance. Dan R. sits in and steals the show. In the audience happens to be Hugh MacPhee, head of Celtic programming for the BBC who asks that he play live on air. If not an exact scenario, the results are far more precise. From this encounter the talents and reputation of Dan R. reached a new audience in Scotland via the airwaves of BBC and the accompanying newspaper articles.

At the time, few people in Scotland were aware of the historical significance of Dan R. MacDonald's music. While classical music heavily influenced the style of the

modern Scottish fiddler, Dan R's style remained heavily influenced and reflective of an older style of Scottish music no longer played in Scotland. Prior to the airing of the first of Dan R's BBC sessions, *The London Express* would report:

One of the most promising radio discoveries of recent years is to be heard soon by Scottish listeners. He is a fiddler from Nova Scotia called Daniel MacDonald. As did the great Scott Skinner he specializes in strathspeys and reels. Andrew Stewart, Scottish programmer for the BBC believes Mr. MacDonald is a real find and that listeners all over the country will enjoy hearing him play (Dan R. MacDonald 27 Dec 45 10).

By all accounts his initial appearance was extremely well received, and the BBC invited Dan R. back on at least one subsequent occasion to make a guest appearance.

Apparently his appearances were heard widely throughout the British Isles as other Cape Bretoners remember listening to Dan R. on the BBC. Among them would be Dan R's childhood friend and fellow fiddler John Joe MacInnis who remembered being, "stationed in Bramshot, Southern England and we used to hear Dan R. (MacDonald) playing over the B.B.C" (MacGillivray TCBF 123). Not only were fans of fiddling aware of Dan R's performances, so were his commanding officers who noted in his official military records: "Hobby is playing violin. States played over the B.B.C (Scottish reels, hornpipes etc.) Scotland and was paid for it" (DOD #5 2).

Dan R. used the monies earned from his BBC appearances, along with his \$1.50 a day military salary, to finance the purchase of what would amount to the most significant printed collections of Scottish Fiddle Music in Cape Breton at the time. In these collections, no longer in much demand in Scotland, Dan R. found a treasure trove of

tunes from the Golden Age of Scottish fiddling. While some of the more popular Scottish collections of fiddle tunes would have been available in Nova Scotia, many of the more esoteric collections did not experience widespread reception within the repertoire prior to Dan R. arranging to have them sent back from Scotland.

These tune collections had an immediate and direct impact on the Cape Breton repertoire. With the commercial recording industry taking a heightened interest in fiddle music, a healthy level of musical competition formed amongst Cape Breton fiddlers. These musicians were always looking to record a new and exciting tune and Dan R. provided a quick fix for many of them. Alex F. MacKay for instance, when discussing his repertoire and sources of new tunes, said: “as for books I got most of mine from Dan R., he got them overseas. He gave them to me - Gow, Marshall, Glen, Skinner - about two dozen books in all!” (MacGillivray TCBF 131). According to an article appearing in *The Clansman* magazine,

These books, which no longer found any use in Scotland, were passed around, studied and copied by hand by the eager musicians in Cape Breton. Doug said that Dan Joe copied 171 tunes from the Alexander Walker Collection, which he borrowed from Dan R. MacDonald (*Clansman* Oct/Nov 9).

While Dan R. was making the Scottish contacts that would enable countless Cape Breton fiddlers to reap the benefits of his musical windfall, he also found time to continue injecting tunes of his own into the repertoire.

Dan R's tune writing exploits during the war have become part of Cape Breton lore. An examination of Dan R's extant tune titles reveals numerous other compositions

likely composed while in Europe. Scottish camps (“Balogies Strathspey” and “Carron Bridge Reel”), Castles (“Dennet Castle Reel”) and German forests (“Reichswall Forest Reel”) have all been immortalized in a Dan R. tune title. Extant copies of many of the tunes he composed while in Scotland would remain with friend J. Murdoch Henderson until J. Murdoch’s death.⁷

After more than a thousand days spent in the Highlands of Scotland, Dan R. received notice of a potential change of scenery. Near the end of 1943 the Canadian Government officially called for,

Allocation of five Forestry companies to carry out Forestry work for 21 Army Group in the operations which were pending in North-West Europe. As the result of a number of conferences held at C.M.H.Q., with senior officers of the Canadian Forestry Corps in attendance, Nos. 5, 15, 16, 28 and 30 Companies were selected for this task in January 1944 and instructions were issued to mobilize Headquarters, No. 1 Canadian Forestry Group with a strength of 15 officers and 110 other ranks (DOD #151 3).

In preparation for a possible military role on the continent, CFC military training programmes were revived in August of 1944 with CFC Companies “each being taken off timbering operations for a week in order to brush up on the units’ infantry training” (DOD #151 3).

The Germans were successfully using the forests of the European continent as staging areas because they provided concealment from Allied air strikes. The forests

⁷ Upon Henderson’s death they were donated to the North East Folklore Archive located in Aberdeenshire, Scotland.

quickly become strategic positions and allied forces were intent on forcing the Germans out of the densely wooded forests. This would require the assistance of several divisions of the Canadian Forestry Corps. On 24 September 1944 Dan R. left the U.K bound for France (DOD #3 1).

Following Dan R's September 25th arrival in France, no additions were entered into his statement of service for nearly three months. The Allied Forces had liberated Paris in late August and entered Germany in mid-September. Life in Western Europe was a far cry from the Scottish Highlands and Dan R. quickly found himself in the middle of the battlefields of Europe. During his two-week involvement in the campaign to take Reichswald Forest, nearly 6,000 Canadian and British casualties occurred. During this period, rumors of Dan R's death spread from Europe to friends and family back home in Cape Breton (MacMaster 1996). The report turned out to be false.

In the fall and winter of 1944 the tide began to turn in favor of the Allied Forces. Following successful campaigns at the beaches of Normandy and the infamous Battle of the Bulge, the General Dwight D. Eisenhower led allies began establishing a front from the North Sea to Switzerland. In February of 1945 at the battle of Hochwald Ridge fighting was intense and Canadian losses were "extremely heavy." Canadian forces played a vital role in the victory at Hochwald Ridge, a victory that enabled the final allied push across the Rhine that eventually resulted in Germany's unconditional surrender.

With the German war effort abating, due to key combat losses throughout the European front, the official German surrender came on 7 May 1945, a week after Hitler's suicide.⁸

Dan R. continued to remain on the European continent until 22 October 1945 when he returned to England. Dan R. would remain in the UK until 2 December 1945 when he shipped off to Canada. He had been away from his native Cape Breton just shy of four years and Dan R. left Scotland with contacts and tune material that would significantly affect the repertoire of Cape Breton fiddlers of his and future generations.

⁸ For a detailed look into this period of the war see MacDonald, Charles B. *A Time for The Trumpets* (New York: William & Morrow Co., 1997)

Chapter 5 -Dan R. in Ontario

Heather Hill - Reel

Composed in Scotland



© John Donald Cameron

Figure 7: Heather Hill Reel

Dan R's return trip from England would likely have been joyous, as celebrations aboard returning Canadian World War Two troopships have become legendary.

According to one active, albeit not substantiated, account of the return trip Dan R. and other fiddlers aboard studied the old tunes books well for they played constantly never once repeating a tune. Upon his return to Canada, Dan R. remained on active military duty for a short time, playing music and preparing to re-enter civilian life.

Dan R. would return to an Island quite different from the one he had left a few years earlier. Just prior to his departure for Europe, many in rural Cape Breton began feeling the impact of a further decline in farming, coal and steel. Between 1881 and 1941

the population of Judique, close to Dan R's childhood home, dropped from 2,027 to 904 (Dunn 126).

During World War II, rural Cape Breton began the final shift from an agrarian subsistence economy to an industrial based economy. Dan R's generation would be born at the time when large families will still the norm as they provided the labor necessary to operate a farm which fed them and helped feed the industrial base. Unfortunately, a continued decline in the island's industrial base of coal and steel, coupled with this population growth among rural farming families, exacerbated an already unstable employment situation. Neither the farms nor the industrial centers of Cape Breton needed the available labor pools. The economy of Cape Breton would become incapable of sustaining this population growth, and another large wave of out migration would begin.

Author Gary Burrill, in his book *Away: Maritimers in Massachusetts, Ontario and Alberta*, discusses how Cape Bretoners filled the role of what Karl Marx would term the "light infantry of capital" (7). According to Burrill the light infantry were,

Those migrant, sometimes-employed workers from underdeveloped regions who serve the needs of investment capital twice over: while still at home and unemployed, they act as a drag on the demands of labor in the center area, which knows they can easily be replaced; and when the business cycle turns upward, they are summoned by the trumpets of expansion to work in the center for comparatively little in relation to the value of what they produce (7).

The young men and women of Cape Breton, who had grown up farming, fishing and doing other manual labor, would happily answer these trumpets of expansion and assume their role as the light infantry. By the time Dan R. disembarked the Canadian troopship in Halifax in mid December of 1945, an estimated “325,000 former Maritime residents were living elsewhere, about three-quarters of them in the United States” (Burrill 5).

Upon his return to Canada, Dan R. remained enlisted and began a well-deserved thirty-day furlough. He utilized this time to return to Inverness County, visiting friends and family. His first winter back in the cold climate of Cape Breton would apparently prove more than Dan R. could handle. On 21 December 1945, St. Martha’s Hospital in Antigonish admitted Dan R. for treatment of a severe case of bronchitis (DOD #19 1). After being released from the hospital the day before Christmas, Dan R. spent his first holiday upon returning to Canada with friends in the town of Antigonish.

Within days of leaving the hospital, Dan R. apparently felt well enough to give an interview to the *Antigonish Casket*. The 27 December 1945 edition of Antigonish’s weekly newspaper included the following story.

A visitor in Antigonish during the past week was Dan R. MacDonald, Queensville, Inverness County, a fiddler of fine talent. He gave a Scottish violin music program of merit over CJFX last Wednesday night, and also made a record for “Recording Artists”, sponsored by Celtic Music Store. Mr. MacDonald recently returned home after four and a half years service overseas, a considerable time spent in Scotland with the Forestry Corps. During his stay in the Old Country Mr. MacDonald made a recording of Scottish

Music. He borrowed one of the best violins available for the occasion, paying a rental of four pounds for the evening. After that he played over the BBC twice.

In the absence of information from the Casket archives, one can only assume that Dan R. had personally clipped the story from the Scottish paper in which it first appeared and provided it to the Casket himself. His appearances on the BBC, although recorded for posterity, were never commercially released.¹

Following the Antigonish hospital visit and interview, Dan R. returned to Cape Breton for a stay at the home of his sister Katie Ann Cameron. In post World War II Cape Breton, music was still a daily part of most people's lives and the Cameron home overflowed with good tunes. Katie Ann was a fiddler and a wonderful Gaelic singer as well. She imparted her love for music to all her children. Keenly interested in music, Dan R's nephews, John Allan and John Donald, remember being in awe of their fiddle-playing uncle who was dressed in his military best when he returned for the visit.

According to John Donald,

Dan R. stayed around a week with us at the time. And at the time he was waiting to get his papers. His discharge from the Army. And his nerves weren't very good. And I suppose us kids were pretty noisy—I think that was bothering him. He stayed a week. And he told us he was going to Port Hood, to Big John Alex's—We called him the Big Fiddler—Big tall man, and a fine fiddler, lively dance player. So Dan R. went over there. And about a week later, John Allan and I and my father went to Port Hood for something. And we were walking back home, and we decided to we'd check in and see if Dan R. was at Big John

¹ Copies of Dan R's BBC appearances are extant in Cape Breton. While on tour in 1982 with the Cape Breton Symphony John Donald Cameron inquired and was presented with a copy by BBC presenter Freeland Barbour.

Alex's yet. So we went there, and there was Dan R. sitting at the table with a book in front of him, playing some of Scott Skinner's music out of the book, at the table. And they gave us tea, and then we proceeded on our way. And we stopped at MacEachern's. MacEachern's daughter, she was our former schoolteacher. They had a big organ there. She played the organ and Dan R. played the fiddle. And we had a great afternoon there. And we kept on home then. And Dan R. went on his way then (Caplan, Ron ed. "Our Uncle, Dan R. MacDonald 2).

For Dan R., going on his way meant bidding his time between the Inverness County homes of friends and relatives until being officially discharged from military service.

Following one thousand six hundred and sixty-three days of service to the Canadian Government, Dan R. received a War Service Gratuity of \$927.53 and was officially discharged on 22 January 1946. Prior to his military discharge, Dan R. was awarded the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal, the 1939-45 Defense Medal and the France and Germany Star for service to his country.²

In his military exit interview, Dan R's commanding officer wrote; "Has no immediate problem and is not worried about future. Was adopted by a family when parents died and has been living with them ever since. Happy to go back farming" (DOD #88). Technically, Dan R. was not a farmer although he understood much about farming from the families he lived with during his earlier years. While Dan R. had been relatively isolated from what went on around him in Cape Breton prior to the war, he would soon personally experience the effects of industrial urbanization. Farming was not in his future!

Though Dan R. did return to Cape Breton, it became a temporary waypoint for him as he quickly resumed his itinerant ways. For the majority of Cape Bretoners of Dan R's generation, "prosperous Boston, with its ready opportunities for employment had all the lure of the fabled El Dorado" (Dunn 126). Boston offered the immigrant the latest conveniences not available to them back home and according to Charles Dunn became, "a symbol of culture and wealth, and the people back home heard its glories sung so often that, overawed, they came to refer to the forty-eight states of the union as "the Boston States" (127).

In Cape Breton following his military discharge, Dan R. learned that island fiddlers Alcide Aucoin, Alex Gillis, Big Dan Hugh MacEachern, Agnes Campbell and Angus Chisholm were all making their homes in the Boston area. By the mid 1940s Boston had become a musical melting pot of fiddle styles, with Roxbury's Dudley Street serving as its vibrant focal point. Irish, Cape Breton and other down east fiddlers found themselves working and playing in the Boston area. Fiddler Paddy Cronin, who immigrated to Boston from Gneeveguilla, Ireland, described the musical crossroads of Dudley Street to Frank Ferrell.

There was a piano and every fiddler from Canada, Ireland from every place around would come. There I first met Tommy Doucet. And in there I met Scotty Fitzgerald. In there I met Johnny Wilmot and Sean McGuire. The Irish dance hall was up over the bar, and you'd come down the stairway and go into MacPhearson's. The ballroom was called the Inter-colonial (Ferrell par. 8).

² See Appendix D for photos of Dan R's Service Medals.

The Inter-colonial, near the intersection of Dudley and Warren Streets, was located in a part of Roxbury commonly known as Dudley Square.

Throughout the fiddling rich communities of the Canadian Maritimes, Dudley Square was an area of renown. On a clear night, radio listeners as far away as Cape Breton could hear broadcasts from Boston area radio stations. Cape Bretoners, with decent radios, commonly received broadcasts of Cape Breton music from Joe MacPherson's Greenville Cafe in Dudley Square. One of the more interesting home recordings of Winston Fitzgerald was actually recorded in Nova Scotia from a live Boston radio broadcast.³ Additional radio exposure only helped further the allure of Dudley Square. After arriving at North Station on the train from Halifax, any self respecting Cape Breton music lover made Dudley Square one of their first stops.

In time, the proliferation of musically inclined emigrant communities like the one convening regularly in Dudley Square caused “burgeoning record companies in the northeastern United States” to stand up and take notice (McKinnon 52). Though companies including Columbia, Brunswick and Decca began releasing ethnic recordings specifically aimed at these groups, their interest in “Ethnic music” was short-lived. During World War II popular music thrived and major record labels like Columbia and Decca significantly reduced their involvement in “ethnic” recordings.

A virtual pullout by these major record labels at the end of World War II created a void on the supply side of the “ethnic” recording market. Irish-American entrepreneurs like Justus O’Byrne DeWitt, noticing an opportunity, happily stepped in and filled the

vacuum. DeWitt, who had moved into Roxbury in the late 1920's, owned his own record store not far from Dudley Square (Michael Moloney 533). In Roxbury, recordings specifically aimed at local ethnic communities like the Irish and downeaster,⁴ were amongst DeWitt's best sellers. With a steady supply of customers, DeWitt found himself in a quandary when Columbia and Decca decided to cease producing their "ethnic series." According to Irish Folklorist Dr. Michael Moloney,

The major recording companies had ceased putting out Irish Ethnic recordings in the 1940's. Decca was the last company to pay them serious attention. Justus O'Byrne DeWitt sought to fill this gap in the Irish record market by founding the Copley Record Company in the late 1940's (94).

Copley Records, which DeWitt clearly established to become a profitable venture, captured a major portion of 'the more commercial Irish market' left open by Decca and Columbia's departure.

Though the majority of recordings on the Copley label were aimed at the 'more commercial market', Dr. Michael Moloney believes that someone within the Copley organization had a deep appreciation and knowledge of traditional Irish music. According to Moloney otherwise it is hard to explain, "why so many great musicians who played infrequently to a minority audience were recorded" (94).

Certainly qualifying as a musician who played to a minority audience, Dan R. would himself record for the Copley Label upon moving to Boston in 1946. Dan R.

³ I first heard this recording from Cape Breton ethnomusicologist Paul MacDonald

⁴ Downeaster is a broad term used to collectively describe someone from Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick or Prince Edward Island. It is also used to denote New Englanders, especially from Maine.

recorded three 78s for Copley, with pianist Mary MacKenzie accompanying him on the first two releases.⁵ For Dan R's last Copley 78, guitarist J.D. MacKenzie backed him up.

Within Cape Breton music circles MacKenzie was known for his unique style of playing his guitar flat on his lap with a slide. His easily identifiable style and strong rhythmic skills made him a favorite of fiddlers at sessions both in Boston and Detroit.⁶ MacKenzie found himself backing up Dan R. on quite a few occasions during 1946, as Dan R. spent considerable time visiting and playing in Boston.

When Dan R. came to Boston for a generally undetermined length of stay, he liked to travel light. Herbie MacLeod, a longtime Massachusetts resident at whose home Dan R. frequently stayed in the late 60's and early 70's, told me that Dan R. would "regularly arrive with a fiddle and two freshly washed shirts which he'd be carrying on hangers" (MacLeod 1997). Before heading to the infamous Dudley Square, Dan R. likely took just enough time to drop his shirts off at the home of someone more than happy to have one of Cape Breton's famed fiddlers staying with them.

Even though the Boston area had its fair share of Cape Breton fiddlers in the late 1940's and early 1950's, one still became an instant celebrity by having a fiddler 'from home' staying with you. Herbie MacLeod was one Cape Bretoner who loved having fiddlers stay at his home. MacLeod possessed a voracious appetite for Cape Breton music, and this pursuit led to his own celebrity status within the Boston Cape Breton community. His Arlington, Massachusetts home was well known amongst Boston Cape

⁵ MacKenzie played on Dan R's Copley 8-500/8-501 recordings.

Bretoners for its informal music sessions. In the liner notes to *Bill Lamey Full Circle* Paul MacDonald would note that at MacLeod's, "sessions were usually impromptu, such as a gathering after a dance. Other times, a fiddler such as Dan R. MacDonald would come to stay, so Herbie would have a session for him."(par 23). Dan R. took several trips to Boston from Cape Breton, continuing to play with the likes of J.D. MacKenzie and others until the end of 1947.

"The Boston States" was not the only destination for the employment seeking Cape Bretoner. The US Alien Registration Act of 1940, coupled with a boom in Western Canadian industrial job opportunities, caused Maritimers to focus their migration tendencies towards Ontario and Western Canada.⁷ Work was plentiful in the Canadian auto making capital of Windsor, Ontario and the city was a short distance from Detroit, a locale which at the time possessed a strong reputation for good Cape Breton music. Windsor, like Boston before it, soon became saturated with Cape Breton musicians. Figure 5.1 provides a visual representation of Windsor's geographical location.

In 1947 Dan R. headed first to Hamilton, Ontario, eventually settling in Windsor where employment at the Ford Motor Company was for all intents and purposes guaranteed. He began work at Ford, and after a short stay with friends found permanent lodging in a boarding house at 1164 Cadillac Street in Windsor. Life in Windsor was

⁶ A photo of MacKenzie accompanying Alex Francis MacKay appears in the liner notes to MacKay's 1997 Rounder Records debut, *A Lifelong Home (An Dachaidh Dha mo Shaoghal)*.

⁷ US Immigration laws became stricter thus making it harder for non-American citizens to gain employment and stay in the country for lengthier periods of time without applying for landed immigrant status.

fairly uncomplicated for Dan R, and he spent the better part of the next decade working at Ford.

Figure 8 - Windsor, Ontario⁸



At 1164 Cadillac St., Dan R. found himself surrounded by other music loving Cape Bretoners and became their unabashed fiddling guru. He would regularly receive tune books from Scotland and send copies of many of these compositions, as well as his own, back to friends in Cape Breton. Gainfully employed for one of the longest stretches of his life, Dan R. always found time to play music and compose. He often played for concerts and house parties in the Detroit-Windsor area and possibly the occasional dance.

⁸ From Mapquest.com Inc. 2000

Windsor resembled Cape Breton, insomuch as house parties were frequent and often bursting at the seams with fiddlers. The Nova Scotia Club in Detroit and the Maritime Club in Windsor, like the bars of Boston's Dudley Square, became a haven for lovers of Cape Breton fiddling.⁹

At one get together of Cape Breton music lovers five fiddlers, all coincidentally named MacDonald, got up and played together. The crowd, unaccustomed to this type of mass fiddling, reportedly went wild. Though not related, Allan, Bernie, Dan R., Hughie and Johnny Archie had all grown up in Inverness County and innately understood each other's style and repertoire. Playing together would come naturally and one can only imagine the musical chemistry in the room that night. Johnny Archie MacDonald noticed the chemistry and, shortly after first playing together, officially formed *The Five MacDonald Fiddlers*.

Soon after their formation, *The Five MacDonald Fiddlers* were making waves in Cape Breton fiddling circles. The following story appeared in the July 15th, 1953 edition of the *Inverness-Victoria Bulletin*.

Judique on the Floor:--- And it sure was at the Roxbury (Mass.) famed Inter-colonial Hall recently when the five MacDonald brothers (sic) of Detroit and their accompanist drove to Boston to help put on a benefit Scottish concert. The benefit concert and dance, put on for Albert Finlay, a former Nova Scotian living in Boston, was attended by ex-Cape Bretoners hailing from Cape North to Port Hawkesbury. The five MacDonald fiddlers and their accompanist stirred the Scottish blood of their listeners as

⁹ Photo of Dan R. at the Detroit Canadian-American Club appears in MacGillivray's *Cape Breton Fiddler* on page 78.

the rendered a number of marches, strathspeys and reels. The quintet who drove 1,500 miles from Detroit just to give a bit of pleasure to their fellow Scots, are shown above, left to right. Dan R., John A., Hugh, Bernie and Allan. With them is their pianist Miss Joan MacDonald, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Neil R. MacDonald. The MacDonald Brothers all hail from Inverness County. The Detroiters were later entertained at the Greenville Café, Dudley Street, operated by Joe MacPherson native of Big Pond Centre, C.B.



Figure 11: The Five MacDonald Fiddlers¹⁰

Though the 1953 article implied otherwise, the only blood relation amongst the group were Allan and sister Joan, the groups' pianist. According to John Donald Cameron on the confusion reached Cape Breton quickly, "On July 29th of that year John Allan and I played in a concert in Port Hood Hall. The main topic of conversation in the hall seemed

¹⁰ Photo appeared in the *Inverness-Victoria Bulletin*, July 15th 1953.

to the picture and story in the paper. For a long time afterward mom had to explain to people that she had but one brother.”¹¹

Besides the occasional Boston trip with The Five MacDonalds, Dan R. also played frequently in Glengarry County. Ontario’s Scottish heart in the southeastern corner of the province between Ottawa and Montreal, Glengarry was as renowned for its Scottish musicians as any County in Canada. Glengarry born pianist Viola MacCuaig, who frequently played and recorded with Creignish, Cape Breton born fiddler Little Jack MacDonald, “fondly remembers (Dan R.) marching into the house with the fiddle, out of its case, tucked safely under his arm” (Clansman Nov/Dec 1992 13). Dan R. arrived at the MacCuaig home as he regularly arrived at most homes during that time, raring to play the violin.

According to several sources, at one Glengarry house party Dan R. unveiled a new violin, which he had purchased from a fellow employee. As within many instrumental traditions, the instrument of a Cape Breton fiddler often has a lineage as significant as ones family genealogy. Dan R’s prized violin was no different. In a scene from the 1971 documentary *The Vanishing Cape Breton Fiddler*, Dan R. described the lineage of this particular violin to filmmaker Ron MacEachern.

This violin I got now; there was a Frenchman formerly from Quebec working at Chrysler’s Corporation Canada. Windsor, Ontario. (He was) Working with me on the line. Who mentioned one night that he had a fiddle in a closet and a guitar that his uncle took from Texas. (They were) in the closet for thirty years and he’d sell me either one of

¹¹ Personal Communication with John Donald Cameron Aug/27/02

them. Well, I wasn't interested in the guitar. I said I'll buy you the violin, I'll buy the violin from you.

Since he was working the same shift with me he called with the violin and I gave him twenty dollars. I took that Violin over to Wunderlik a professional violin maker. (He was) an expert of violins over in Detroit and he looked inside of it and he said that that's where his grandfather was born in Athencastle-Brimonfield, Germany. (He said) it's handmade and there were only five of them made. So when he strung it up and played, he played in this Scandinavian orchestra, he was a violinist and he tried this hard stuff these arpeggios. He said you've got a thousand dollar violin there take care of it.

Dan R. took tremendous care of his violin, often jokingly referring to it as his wife. This analogy makes perfect sense because the violin was his constant companion around the Detroit-Windsor Cape Breton music scene, and the music emanating from it the love of his life.

Apparently, Dan R. found enough music in the Detroit-Windsor area to warrant a seven-year absence from Cape Breton. He wouldn't return to Cape Breton until 1955. According to nephew John Donald, "In 1955, a strange car drove up to the farm where we were making hay - it was Buddy MacMaster saying that our uncle, Dan R., was at our house, a mile up the road. That was the first time we'd seen Dan R. since 1946, when he left the service" (MacGillivray TCBF 80).

This visit was typical of future ones. Once back in Cape Breton, Dan R. would spend several weeks playing music and reconnecting with many of the friends and family members who had sustained him through his youth. When he ventured to mainland Nova Scotia, Dan R. would often stay at the Arisaig home of Wilfred Gillis. While home on the

island he'd often stay at John Duncan MacMaster's home in Judique. In keeping with Dan R's guiding principle, both John Duncan and Wilfred were lovers of fiddle music.¹² During these trips there is unanimity amongst those interviewed that Dan R's main purpose for visiting remained the playing of music. After what always amounted to, at least in Dan R's mind, a shorter than desired stay he would return to work in Windsor.

In 1956, when he received word that cousin Alex Francis MacKay was moving to Windsor to seek employment, Dan R. was thrilled. According to Alex Francis, he and Dan R. saw each other quite a bit during this time and re-kindled the musical friendship they had established prior to Dan R. going overseas. The two traveled together to house parties and dances and would continue this routine until a strike began at Ford. In combination with an overall reduction in the Windsor auto plant work force, this event pushed many Cape Bretoners out of a job. Alex Francis was let go and headed back to Cape Breton, where he found employment at the paper mill in Port Hawkesbury.

With the Ford strike dragging on longer than anticipated, Dan R. decided to jump ship finding employment 'on the line' with the Chrysler Corporation. Chrysler had entered the Canadian auto-making fray in 1925 and helped establish Windsor as Canada's auto making center. Dan R's move from Ford to Chrysler also prompted a housing move from 1164 Cadillac St. to 35 Earle Street.

¹² According to John Donald Cameron, Buddy MacMaster's father John Duncan played the violin in his earlier years though didn't continue playing as an adult. Wilfred Gillis (d. 2002) was a fine fiddler and a member of *The Cape Breton Symphony*. Several of Gillis's compositions are widely played in Cape Breton including "Welcome to the Trossacks March", "The Golden Rod Jig" and "Arisaig Mist".

Houses full of Cape Breton bachelors were common near the Chrysler plant in Windsor. At 35 Earle St., Dan R. found just such a house. For a reasonable monthly fee he received room and board, as well as the company of other music loving Cape Bretoners. According to one time Dan R. housemate John Chisholm, “35 Earle St. was a huge triplex with twenty-one residents in total. All Cape Bretoners” (Chisholm, John Personal Interview).

Dan R., in his mid forties, was the elder statesman of 35 Earle. His room was on the second floor, though he spent much of his spare time on the third floor. On the third floor, in what amounted to little more than an attic loft, the boys of Earle St had their music room. They spent many a night in that attic, often with little regard for their landlady’s repeated attempts at quieting them down so she could sleep.

The Landlady, an Englishwomen named Margaret Perry, ran the house at 35 Earle. She was as renowned for her great food, as she was for her distaste for late night Cape Breton music. The residents often pushed Margaret to the point where words were exchanged between her and the fiddle loving Cape Bretoners. Her first attempts to get the boys to quiet down usually resulted in a somewhat civil exchange between both parties. The boys in the attic would comply with Margaret’s request to quiet down and exchange courteous apologies. Usually, Dan R. would start a ghost story, while the boys had a few more drinks and tried to remain quiet.

Often, the quiet only amounted to a temporary lull. Despite good intentions, and with the volume of their voices continuing to rise, someone was bound to ask Dan R. to

play a couple of 'them new tunes' he had recently written. Dan R, never one to deny a request to play some new tunes, would begin a barrage of jigs destined to get them in hot water with the landlady. According to John Chisholm,

Dan R's foot was quite heavy and the landlady would say 'easy on the footwork up there boys.' So we would put pillows under his feet and he would give the pillow a kick to the ceiling and he would say 'they don't understand good music around here' (Personal Interview).

As Dan R. dug into a lengthy set of what he considered 'good music', he wouldn't have understood the muffled barrage of English slang emanating from the bottom of the stairs. What Margaret was saying wasn't as important as how she was saying it. Her infuriated tone told the whole story. Eventually a quiet hush would fall upon the attic as the boys headed to bed for a few hours of sleep, before waking up to an earful from Margaret at breakfast.

Chrysler provided Dan R. with a steady paycheck for much of 1957. This allowed him to continue living what for him amounted to a fairly comfortable lifestyle. This period in his life isn't that dissimilar from his time spent in Scotland during World War II. In Windsor, like Scotland, Dan R. worked his regular job while using every opportunity away from work to play music, compose and visit other local musicians.

Dan R. continued playing with *The Five MacDonald Fiddlers*, as Cape Breton fiddling LPs increasingly became a way for exiled Cape Bretoners to retain some

semblance of a regular connection to their roots. In a 1986 interview, Archie Neil Chisholm vividly described the collecting habits of exiled Cape Bretoners.

They wanted everything that they could buy in the shape of records or get in the shape of tapes from any player who visited from Cape Breton. It became a link with their heritage and a link with their culture; and records in particular, because they would hear a player, say playing at a dance up in Toronto or in Boston from Cape Breton, well they just heard him that night...So it was a real link with their heritage and culture...they would pride themselves on their collections of records and boast how many records they had. It was almost a status symbol to have the largest number of records (MacKinnon 113).

The Five MacDonald Fiddlers capitalized on this interest when, after playing in the Detroit/Windsor circuit for a few years, Johnny Archie MacDonald approached the people at Rodeo Records about recording the Five MacDonalds. Rodeo happily obliged and released the group's first LP, *Scottish Reels, Jigs, and Strathspeys with the Five MacDonald Fiddlers*. Once the Five MacDonald Fiddlers released their first LP into an emigrant community with a seemingly unquenchable appetite for recordings, word of their talent and unique five fiddle combination spread even further. Dan R. continued playing and recording with the Five MacDonald Fiddlers until he and Johnny Archie had a falling out.¹³

The period of Dan R's strained friendship with Johnny Archie coincided with his last year in Windsor. As a result, Dan R. spent much of that year composing tunes in the attic of 35 Earle Street. According to his roommate John Chisholm, Dan R. was still

receiving tune books from Scotland which often had mistakes in them. Dan R. would identify the mistakes and make the changes needed to correct the tune. Dan R. continued sending these, and his own compositions, back to his favorite fiddlers in Cape Breton including Buddy MacMaster, Winston Fitzgerald and Alex Francis MacKay.

When Dan R. found out that his nephews John Donald and John Allan were themselves progressing well as musicians and were able to read music, he even provided them with some material. According to John Donald not long after Dan R. found out they could read music,

A beautiful big letter came to John Donald Cameron, Violinist, South-West Port Hood, Inverness County. And it was from Dan R. in Windsor. And he sent 4 or 5 tunes. And one of the tunes was a great jig on the Key of F called "Gordon Quigley" (qtd. in Caplan 6).

Dan R, continually composing, wasn't likely fazed when the Chrysler Company announced a round of layoffs in 1957. With little seniority at his new employer, Dan R. was almost immediately laid off. Decades before consultants praised the virtues of "networking", Dan R. proved that he appreciated the benefits of this concept. Once again, thanks to his fiddling skills and friends, Dan R. landed on his feet with a job cooking for the miners of Elliot Lake, Ontario.

Elliot Lake's defining historical moment came when, at the beginning of the Cold War era, Franc Joubin discovered uranium. For several years the Canadian government

¹³ As best I can ascertain the fallout was caused by a mutual misunderstanding between Dan R. and Archie which they reconciled years later after when both parties got together and fully understood each others side of things.

had offered a reward for the commercial discovery of Uranium. Joubin's discovery, ultimately worth billions, near Blind River, Ontario, opened up mining and other jobs in the surrounding area. The rapid growth of the town of Elliot Lake, essentially built for developing and operating the mines, became a by-product of the uranium discovery. Figure 5.2 depicts the location of Elliot Lake with regards to major North American cities.

Figure 12 – Elliot Lake Geographical Location¹⁴



It is reasonable to presume that friends from Cape Breton, already in the mining town, led Dan R. to Elliot Lake after losing his job at Chrysler. Dan R.'s friend, fellow Inverness County fiddler Angus Chisholm, worked in Elliot Lake as a security guard at the time. The two knew each other well and Dan R. most likely became aware of employment opportunities in Elliot Lake from Chisholm. In Elliot Lake, Dan R. found work as a cook's assistant. He worked the better part of the next year in Elliot Lake, while continuing to nourish his appetite for fiddle music. Angus Chisholm and Dan R.

were both frequent contributors to the Elliot Lake Cape Breton fiddling scene. Each a character in their own right, they each found a kindred musical spirit in the other.

In 1959, after only a short time in Elliot Lake, a health issue that had plagued Dan R. for years finally got the better of him. According to nephew John Donald,

By 1959, you know, his sight was getting bad. He was in Blind River and Elliot Lake. And he started getting cataracts. By that time I was working in the Royal Bank. And one day I went into the post office and I met Mrs. MacEachern—John Willie's wife—and she told me Dan R's eyesight is getting bad, that he was going to have to give up work" (qtd. in Caplan 6).

Though no longer able to do his job, Dan R's problematic eyesight never took away his ability to compose. John Donald Cameron, in personal correspondence, would note that this period (post 1959) was one of Dan R's most active during which several of his more popular tunes including "The Lime Hill Strathspey", "The Glencoe March", "The River Bend Jig" and "Moxham Castle" were composed.

Dan R., having lost enough of his sight to be less than fully functional in his Elliot Lake job, abruptly ended his nearly fifteen year "gig" as an itinerant industrial worker. At this stage of his life Dan R. was not rich, nor was he famous beyond a small circle of ardent Cape Breton fiddlers and music lovers whom he met during the 1940s and 1950s. Yet his playing, composing, and jovial nature enriched the lives of all those he came in contact with and who shared his love of fiddle music.

¹⁴ <http://www.mapblast.com>

While Dan R's work life may have been curtailed, his musical life was about to enter a new phase. Upon returning home to Cape Breton, in spite of his ongoing battle with cataracts, Dan R. would enter the most influential and fruitful years of his musical life. He would return to his familial as well as musical roots and begin a period in which his popularity soared, his compositions and talent moved to the national and international stage, and his impact and influence on the next generation of fiddlers increased. In no small measure, his nephews contributed to the initiation of Dan R's transformation from itinerant worker/musician/composer to an icon of Cape Breton fiddling and composition. This transformation continues, as more musicians and scholars become aware of Dan R. and the contributions he made to the Cape Breton fiddle tradition during his lifetime.

Chapter 6

Return to Cape Breton: The Legend Begins

The Lime Hill - Strathspey



© John Donald Cameron

Figure 11: The Lime Hill Strathspey

Early in 1959, unable to continue working because of his eyesight, Dan R. returned to Cape Breton and found lodging in a boarding house at 7 Ferry Street in Sydney's North End. From this location Dan R. entered this next stage of his life the same way he entered his post World War II period, driven by and focused solely on music. As he had done in every other place he lived, Dan R. quickly established his role as an integral player in the local Scottish music scene.

Aside from a brief period in Halifax during the early 1970s, and the occasional trip to "The Boston States" or the Nova Scotia mainland, Dan R. would remain in Cape

Breton until his death. In combination with existing material relevant to this period in the Cape Breton fiddle tradition, the data I gathered from personal interviews has enabled me to contextualize Dan R.'s life within the context of the island's fiddling community. These interviews provided further insight into Dan R. the character via accounts of his excesses with food and drink. They also enabled me to better appreciate his passion for, and contributions to, Cape Breton music.

At the onset of the 1960's the popularity of fiddling in Sydney, Cape Breton's largest urban area, was nowhere near what Dan R. had known in the Inverness County of his youth. When Dan R. first began playing in Sydney the turnout was small, though those in attendance were passionate about music. With only a handful of prominent Scottish fiddlers in the area during the early 1960s, Dan R. played often. According to pianist Marie MacLellan, "there was only Dan R. and Paddy (Leblanc) and John Willie Campbell. That was all that played. Of course Winston 'Scotty' [Fitzgerald] came then in later years" (MacLellan).

Participating in nearly every local fiddling event, Dan R.'s free and easy lifestyle took him on an endless tour of Cape Breton's remaining reputable ceilidh houses.

According to his frequent piano accompanist Marie MacLellan, Dan R.:

used to go to all the different concerts. And him and I used to play at Ashby Legion. They had a Ceilidh going there. It was one of the first Ceilidhs that was in Sydney. They didn't care for Scottish music around the area at the time. But anyway, we used to go and we'd say if they don't like it's too bad we're going to play anyway. And we used to fight a lot. Can you play anything else... It was on a Wednesday night 9-1. That's where we got to know Dan R.

very well. He'd be there every night and he used to play a lot for us. And terrific music he'd play (MacLellan).

Within this environment of church halls, social clubs, and Ceilidh houses, Dan R became a Cape Breton fiddling circle celebrity. It is really during this period that the legend that has become Dan R. begins taking shape.

Although Dan R. played the social halls and churches, his performance venue of choice remained the small informal house session at which the presence of knowledgeable listeners brought out the best in his playing.¹

You couldn't help but listen to him play the fiddle, he could really play. My uncle Angus, who was a great old time violinist I can assure you. (it was) in Elliot Lake or Blind River. He and Dan R. were in this place and there were a crowd of people. Angus was playing and Dan R. wasn't that interested in playing at the time and Uncle Angus said 'Dan R. get your fiddle were gonna play together.' And we all knew Dan R's playing. Dan R. got his fiddle and Uncle Angus couldn't believe how well that man played. He never heard him play prior to that or after that to my knowledge like he did that night. They played together. Dan R. was a very capable violinist (Cameron Chisholm).

Knowledgeable individuals within the tradition attribute Dan R's preference for house parties, and his failure to strictly adhere to the dance style of playing later in his career, as the primary reasons why less knowledgeable listeners often fail to give him proper credit for his playing ability. Older musicians, who knew Dan R. best, agree that when he was focused and on his game he was as impressive a fiddler as could be found

¹ The recordings treasured by the die hard Cape Breton music aficionado are the non-commercial recordings made at these informal musical sessions.

on the island in his day. “If Dan R. went to a place where there was a lot of noise and all of that he didn’t sort of give a damn how well he produced. But when Dan R. wanted to, he had the ability to produce as good as the average or better than the average” (Archie Neil Chisholm).

With the return of Dan R. to Cape Breton and the increasing influence of Winston ‘Scotty’ Fitzgerald, Dan Joe MacInnis and other important local players, things began to change paving the way for the beginning of a major resurgence in interest within the tradition. What occurred in Cape Breton reflected what was occurring within many of North America’s fiddle traditions as mass media began to influence style and repertoire. During the first half of the twentieth century the marked influence of a single fiddler would begin a process of stylistic amalgamation.

According to Alabama old-time fiddling documenter Joyce Cauthen, it was during this part of the century that “the automobile, radio, and phonograph have made it possible for fiddlers to step outside of local boundaries” (Cauthen 6). Mass mediated forms of entertainment would instantly catapult the music of the most popular regional fiddler to a much wider audience, in the process decimating fragile regional stylistic differences within many traditions.

Within the Irish tradition, famed Sligo fiddler Michael Coleman heavily influenced fiddlers during the 1920s and 1930s. Coleman’s recordings were “played continually and became the center of conversation and analysis” (Bradshaw 60). His recordings continue to be influential today. In the Scottish tradition, J. Scott Skinner’s

influence was “all but driving the older forms of traditional Scottish fiddling out of Scotland” (Krassen 42). Within their respective traditions, Don Messer from New Brunswick, Eck Robertson from Texas and Clayton McMichen in Georgia, all played similarly influential roles in changing style and repertoire.

Clayton “Mac” McMichen’s influence, and rise to prominence within Southern United States fiddling circles, was typical of the most influential recording era fiddler within many of North America’s regional fiddling traditions. According to Charles Wolfe,

“Mac” was to dominate southern fiddling; he was to win the national fiddling championship crown no fewer than eighteen times; he was to broadcast on every major radio station; he was to work the south in shows staged by Larry Sunbrock; and was to record for almost every major record label (Wolfe 81).

The Cape Breton equivalent to McMichen, Skinner, Robertson et al. was Winston ‘Scotty’ Fitzgerald for whom Dan R. served as a behind the scenes influence on his repertoire.

One of the Cape Breton tradition’s most influential and popular recording artists, Fitzgerald was born in 1914 at the northern tip of Cape Breton Island in the community of White Point. Of mixed Irish-Acadian heritage, Brooklyn, Nova Scotia born country-western star Hank Snow added the ‘Scotty’ moniker to help distinguish Fitzgerald as a Scottish style fiddler and record companies helped it stick by continuing its use when he

released his first recordings.² Winston's recordings were so popular that many of his arrangements and medleys remain mainstream in the contemporary Cape Breton tradition, retaining much of his classic flair.

Dan R's influence on, and connection to, Fitzgerald flowed from the old tune books supplied to Cape Bretoners by Dan R. while he was in Scotland and Ontario, tunes from Dan R's own pen, and tunes from other modern Scottish composers provided by Dan R. to his friends in Nova Scotia during the 1940s and 1950s. The Fitzgerald connection was but one of many Dan R. would make amongst the fiddlers of his day. Beyond Fitzgerald, the influx of new tunes Dan R. brought to the tradition would add significantly to and affect the repertoire of the vast majority of Cape Breton fiddlers.³

From Scotland by way of Dan R. and onto the recordings of the island's most prominent fiddlers, Dan R's influence on Cape Breton's repertoire and style was quick and lasting. Appendix B provides deeper insight into just how many tunes from Winston's repertoire, and those of other artists, one can directly trace back to Dan R's compositional prowess. In addition, one may non-scientifically gauge Dan R's influence on Fitzgerald through the compositions that Winston would learn from the tune collections Dan R. either directly or indirectly provided. As noted in a review from 10 December 1997 edition of *The Halifax Chronicle Herald*,

² This was a common practice. If the last name was not easily distinguishable as Scottish record companies would add a moniker indicating the player was Scottish. Dan R's friend Paddy Leblanc for instance would release two recordings on the Celtic label. The first was titled *The Fiddling French Canadian Scot* while his second LP was titled *Fiddlin' Scotty Leblanc*.

Paul Cranford's latest collection of fiddle tunes called simply, Winston Fitzgerald, memorializes the most famous of 20th century Cape Breton fiddlers with transcriptions of nearly 250 tunes arranged from his performances ... Cranford also obligingly supplies a list of composers which shows at a glance, incidentally, Fitzgerald's passion for J. Scott Skinner, who is represented by the largest number of tunes in the Fitzgerald repertoire.

Dan R's reputation as a fiddler would be furthered by an active recording career in the early 1960s. By the time Dan R. settled in Sydney, the city had an already long established association with the commercial recording industry. Several of the more important early recordings of Cape Breton fiddling, including Winston Fitzgerald's early 78s, were recorded at Sydney's Lyceum Theatre on 225 George Street. Built in 1904 as an opera house, the Lyceum was frequently utilized by record companies as a recording studio. Dan R., who composed "The Lyceum Reel" in its honor, likely recorded, or at the very least performed, in the theatre.

The Celtic Records Label, founded by Bernie MacIsaac, also frequently recorded fiddlers at the Lyceum. MacIsaac's Celtic Music Store, on Main Street in downtown Antigonish, represented one of the more important local outlets at which to purchase fiddle recordings. When major record labels ceased to pay significant attention to 'ethnic recordings', MacIsaac faced a problem similar to that encountered earlier in Boston by Copley Records owner Justus O'Byrne Dewitt. By running the Celtic Records Label out

³The enumeration of artists who have recorded his compositions, appearing in Appendix A, are indicative of just how important the influence of Dan R. was on the Cape Breton repertoire.

of his already existing record store, MacIsaac sought to alleviate the simple but problematic issue of too little supply for the increasing demand.

Celtic Records was the first local independent record company to begin offering its own recordings for sale. In the first year of its existence artists from Celtic Records recorded not in Sydney but also at Montreal's Compo Studios. Cape Breton Fiddlers Angus Chisholm, Dan J. Campbell, and Angus Allan Gillis made the first of the now legendary trips in December of 1935 (MacGillivray TCBF 15). From these sessions, Bernie MacIsaac pressed the first recordings his fledgling Celtic Records Label would release.

Nearly twenty-five years after its 1935 founding, Dan R. began recording for the Celtic Records Label. Between 1959 and 1963, building on his familiarity to fiddling audiences from his Five MacDonald Fiddlers recordings, Dan R. recorded and released a total of four LP's. Rodeo Records released *Fiddling to Fortune* (RLP-59) and *A Selection of Jigs, Reels, Hornpipes, Strathspeys Etc.* (RLP-108), while Celtic Records released the other two self-titled LPs.⁴

In spite of the suggestive title of his *Fiddling to Fortune* LP, the reality in Dan R's day was that no Cape Breton fiddler was getting rich. Outside of a small monetary stipend for the occasional recording session or television appearance, the going rate for playing

⁴ *Celtic CX-28 and CX-42.*

the fiddle was food, alcohol, and a bed.⁵ In Cape Breton, performers made a meager income from their recordings. Recordings mainly served as a tool, which if used properly could help a performer gain a level of prestige within the fiddling community and increase opportunities for a paying gig.

Generally, for each of his recording sessions Dan R. was paid a small one-time fee. While collectors from Halifax, Boston, and Detroit acquired every recording released, regardless of the sales volume royalties rarely came Dan R's way. In his last two-hour session for the Celtic Records Label, he and accompanist Marie MacLellan recorded material for an entire LP. For the session, Dan R. was lucky if he walked away with two hundred dollars. This wasn't an issue with Dan R because that's all he expected, as money was never a high priority in his life. Dan R. played not for the money, but for the pleasure, camaraderie, and interaction with other musicians who like him were passionate lovers of Cape Breton fiddle music. When Dan R. inquired about getting paid, he did receive the occasional royalty payments from George Taylor at Rodeo Records.⁶

Inadequate pay for performance extended beyond the recording studio. In Sydney, Dan R. was rarely if ever paid for his fiddling. The community, as represented by the church, social groups, and townspeople of Sydney and other locales in the area, made up and, in some ways, controlled the local Scottish music scene through access to the halls

⁵ According to Ian MacKinnon's thesis on the commercial recording industry in Cape Breton, musicians were paid \$25 each for their appearance on The Cape Breton Barn Dance, which ran from 1962-1969. (Mackinnon 92)

⁶ Personal Communication with John Donald Cameron

and churches where funerals were held. Funerals were another important performance context for the island fiddler.

While community groups and individuals depended upon Dan R. for the services he rendered, compensation generally came in the form of food, shelter and alcohol. Marie MacLellan described to me the important position Dan R. held in Sydney's Scottish music scene, and also began shedding light on what the community gave him in return.

They depended on Dan R., and I suppose when you go into a place and they're waiting for music and they don't offer you any money all they offer you is a glass of rum. Well, the way Dan R. was he'd take his violin and he'd go and he'd play a little while and he'd want a drink. Then he'd see he wasn't getting any money...he wanted another drink. And he'd drink till at last he could hardly stand up. That was all he was getting out of it and that's probably why he did it.

The lifestyle of the semi-itinerant fiddler and its accompanying forms of compensation apparently suited Dan R. just fine, though they did come with a downside. Many of the now legendary stories of Dan R.'s drinking and eating exploits, equal parts fact and fiction, are directly connected to this lifestyle. One thing for certain was that Dan R. was certainly not the first Cape Breton fiddler to mix playing the fiddle and alcohol.

Long before Dan R. ever got his hand around a bottle, the connection between the fiddle and alcohol was cause for consternation amongst Cape Breton clergy. In early Cape Breton pioneer communities many church organizations viewed the fiddle as the physical embodiment of a whole host of social ills, the most prominent of which was excessive

drinking. In the western counties of Cape Breton religious suppression of traditional culture was common, though the level of fanaticism varied from parish to parish.

A vivid example of this intolerance can be found in the story of Maister Coinneach (Father Kenneth), a Catholic priest assigned to the parish of Mabou in the 19th century who gained a reputation as one of the most rigid and ill reputed churchmen in Cape Breton's history. Father Kenneth's intolerance of traditional life, especially fiddling, is still evident in the oral tradition of the area. He is notorious for initiating the mass burning of fiddles in Mabou during his parish assignment.

Father Kenneth's reaction represented the extreme, and many of the clergy's early negative attitudes towards fiddling would eventually evolve into one of tolerance despite the continued presence of alcohol at musical events. More than likely, clerical tolerance grew out of a realization that music and dancing were such an intrinsic part of their parishioner's lives that fighting it was a waste of time.

Ironically, it was the strong religious convictions of Cape Bretoners that helped the fiddle survive continued attempts by some clergy to choke off the music. In the liner notes to the groundbreaking 1978 Topic Records LP, *The Gaelic Tradition in Cape Breton*, Lamey, Rankin and Shaw note,

Attempts to discourage fiddle music in Cape Breton decades later met with no more enthusiasm or compliance than did the clerics' dire warnings against the distilling of moonshine. This may be in part due to the belief known to the older generations of Cape Breton Gaels that 'the fiddle is the only instrument that the Devil can't play because the bow and the body of the instrument form the sign of the cross.

Though drinking and fiddling remained inseparable bedfellows, as more native Cape Bretoners became men of the cloth attitudes towards fiddling began to change. Dan R. certainly benefited on occasion from this newfound tolerance.

Dan R's weakness for alcohol, although understandable within the social context of his existence, would overshadow the extremely important contributions he made to the Cape Breton tradition and delay proper recognition for his role in helping promulgate and sustain Cape Breton fiddling during its leaner years. For Dan R., drinking was an on the wagon off the wagon roller coaster ride and those who knew him best categorized him as a periodic problem drinker. Dan R. had times when he was off the bottle for lengthy stretches, and others when he'd spend lengthy periods in an anti-social mood because of his attachment to it.

The summer of 1960, following his return from Ontario, is indicative of Dan R's on and off again issues with alcohol. According to cousin Catherine MacKenzie,

The first year he stayed with us, that first summer...he was drinking. But then before he came again he got off the booze. And he was off it for a few years. And when he was off it, he was off it. No power on earth could get a drink into Dan R, but unfortunately it didn't last (Catherine MacKenzie Personal Interview).

Abstinence rarely lasted, and Dan R's friends came to know the cycle well. During one visit to fiddler Cameron Chisholm's residence in Margaree, Dan R. announced he was 'off the bottle and on the wagon again'. Upon hearing this Cameron Chisholm remembers

telling Dan R, “why don’t you make it a sleigh because the sleigh would last longer.”

Chisholm’s reply clearly illustrates what was obviously common knowledge, everywhere Dan R. went alcohol was going to be available.

Dan R. was not caught alone at the intersection of availability and weakness. In 1960s Cape Breton it was nearly impossible for a fiddler to stay on the wagon, or a sleigh for that matter. The autobiography of Archie Neil Chisholm historically frames the social atmosphere Dan R. was up against.

Society provided temptation everywhere. It was part of the bounty paid for your entertainment and musical ability--- hours and hours of music. For that you got a thank you, a “you’re a hell of a good fellow,” a slap on the back, and lots of drinks. That wasn’t the case with only me, but with many fiddlers, and it cost them dearly (qtd. in Ducharme xi).

In a culture where food and drink was the tender of the day, Dan R. possessed an unfortunate combination of capacity and fondness. His inability to handle this combination is at the source of many of the most popular legends told about him. Alex Francis MacKay, who witnessed many of Dan R’s battles with the bottle, provided his thoughts on Dan R’s drinking during an interview.

It was strange that he couldn’t handle the drink very good. If there was a bottle around he’d want to drink it all. But I remember before he went in the Army he didn’t care if he’d get a drink or not. I seen him play for a wedding one night, there was all kind of booze there. He stayed right sober and didn’t care if he got a drink or not. He played all night.

After he came back from overseas he seemed to be getting heavier on the drink. I saw him in here one night when my brother was home from Ontario and he went to town with

him and he came back with a bottle of whiskey. He sat in the dining room down there and took the fiddle and put the bottle beside him. Dan R. was drinking whiskey every once in a while till he got too full to play. I didn't know how I was gonna get him to bed, he was so big. There was only about that much left in the quart, he drank it all. No problem he jumps up and walks right upstairs to bed. And I thought he wouldn't be able to get up off the chair. He had an awful capacity (Alex F. MacKay Personal Interview).

According to fiddler Carl MacKenzie, once a bottle had been passed to Dan R it would often be easier to get him to give up fiddling than try to get it back.

I had a pint of rum and just broke the cork on it and passed it to Dan R. He put down about half of it and looked with all seriousness, it wasn't a joke or anything, (He said) 'have you got any for yourself' (Carl MacKenzie Personal Interview).

Any issues arising from Dan R's drinking binges were insignificant when compared to the problems caused by his worsening cataracts. While Dan R. had mixed success controlling his drinking, he did successfully address his eyesight. A cataract operation, in combination with a special pair of prescription glasses, rescued Dan R. from his virtually blind state. Restoring his ability to see properly, the special glasses also became somewhat of a trademark.

The thickness of Dan R's eyewear, plus the discernable and distinguishing combination of tape and band-aids that held them together, would add to his notoriety and character status. Dan R. could have easily replaced or repaired the glasses, but it simply wasn't a priority. What mattered to him most was that his glasses were functional and

allowed him to notate his compositions. For Dan R. if the glasses met this musical need, fixing them wasn't an issue because to him they weren't broken.

With his eyesight restored, Dan R. likely could have returned to work in Ontario. Instead he remained in Cape Breton, relying on a small monthly Canadian government pension to make ends meet. This monthly pension, when combined with Dan R's innate skill at finding houses with abundant supplies of music and food, always provided more than enough to make ends meet. According to friend Archie Neil Chisholm, "Dan R. would see that his weekends or wherever he would go, would be places where they were strong on the cream and the meat and the big feeds. And Dan R. loved that" (Archie Neil Chisholm Personal Interview).

Beyond food and shelter, transportation was another fundamental need of the travelling musician. Despite having neither a car nor a license, Dan R's was able to get around as his music was his ticket to mobility. He attracted music lovers of every shape and variety who were willing to give the local fiddler a lift. In Port Hawkesbury his fans even included several officers at the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Headquarters (RCMP). Every so often, in return for a ride from one of the officers, Dan R. headed to the barracks and entertained those on duty (Cyril Cameron Personal Interview). On an island renowned for hospitality, even extending to the local RCMP, making ends meet was not a major challenge for a man with the musical skills of Dan R.

Dan R. was not the sole traveling musician in Cape Breton. Sandy Boyd, a semi-itinerant piper, spent many years teaching Highland piping in Cape Breton and on the

Nova Scotia mainland. Born in Ayreshire, Scotland in 1907, Alexander ‘Sandy’ Boyd received instruction from some of the finest highland bagpipers of his day. He immigrated to Canada after WWII, beginning a lifestyle similar to that led by Dan R. According to Cape Breton piping historian Barry Shears, “benefiting from the hospitality of families, Sandy would often move in for extended periods of time, teaching piping to family members in exchange for room and board” (Shears iv).

According to John Donald Cameron, Dan R. would have first met Boyd in the mid 1950’s. “It would have been during one of his visits from Windsor that he came into contact with Sandy. When he visited our house in 1955 he showed us a new reel that he dedicated to him, namely Sandy Boyd’s Reel” (John Donald Personal Communication).

Dan R. would continue his friendship with Boyd and went about immediately rekindling their musical friendship not long after returning to Cape Breton from Ontario in 1959. Upon hearing that Boyd was in Antigonish for the 1960 Antigonish Highland Games, Dan R. made his way to Glendale and “politely” barged into Alex Francis MacKay’s home to discuss getting a drive to Antigonish. After some cajoling, Alex Francis agreed to drive Dan R the approximately forty-miles to Antigonish.

Once in Antigonish they stopped at the local Sobeys grocery store. Inside, Dan R. recognized an Antigonish area piper with whom he was acquainted. Despite his size, Dan R. was quick on his feet and immediately made a beeline towards his friend. Not even saying hello, he just walked up and with a hurried and slightly raised voice bellowed, “Have you seen Sandy!!!” As usual there was no fooling around with Dan R., he was

direct and to the point and got what he wanted. When he was told that Boyd was at the home of Lanark fiddler Hugh A. MacDonald, Dan R. wasted little time in getting there to join in the musical activities.

Hugh A. MacDonald's ancestors were one of the first Scottish families to settle in the Antigonish area, their plot being only the eleventh deeded in the entire County. His relations had begun their Canadian odyssey on Prince Edward Island, prior to making the move to the Nova Scotia mainland. Surnames weren't exactly plentiful in the Scottish highlands and things didn't change much in Nova Scotia. In Lanark the MacDonalds new neighbors, as had been the case back in Moidart, were mostly MacDonalds and MacNeils. Nicknames became extremely important for delineating one family of MacDonalds from the other, and Hugh A's became known as the #11 MacDonalds after their deed.

Hugh A. MacDonald, one of Canada's first fiddlers to commercially record, was one of the few non Cape Breton fiddlers widely respected on the island.⁷ Dan R. would come to know Hugh A. well, for not long after arriving back in Nova Scotia from Ontario, Dan R. began making regular trips to the #11 MacDonald's Lanark farmstead. According to Hugh A's wife Winnie, Dan R's visits were always interesting occasions.

Sweeney MacDonald they called him. Don't know what his right name was, but they called him Sweeney. They landed down at our place and Hughie was in the process of killing a pig. Hughie, Howard and Alex. And when you kill the pig they shoot the pig first and then they cut his throat and all that. Whenever they die they have this big barrel of boiling water they got from the creamery and you have to put the

⁷ Hugh A. MacDonald recorded for Bernie MacIsaac's Celtic Label in the mid 1930s.

pig in it when it was boiling hot to take the bristles off of the pig. And in the middle of just killing the pig who landed but Dan R. and this Sweeney. Oh my god...Hughie wouldn't even look at them because he was so serious in the pig business. Anyway they got the pig in the thing and they had it out on the floor and they put it on boards to scrape the bristles off it. And there Dan R's sitting on the side of them talking fiddling. Playing the fiddle and talking. It's a wonder they didn't go foolish. But of course Hughie loved the fiddle too you know so it wouldn't have too much effect on him except that he wanted to get his work done (Winifred MacDonald Personal Interview).

Once the work had been done it was a different story as the #11 MacDonald's Lanark home always came alive with music.

Dan R. and Sandy Boyd traveled very similar paths starting in the late 1950s and continuing well into the 1970s. Both benefited from the fact that during the 1960s and 1970s fiddle music still held an extremely important place in the lives of many Cape Bretoners. People clearly understood that serious fiddle music was both lengthy and nocturnal in nature. A potential host would always have an extra bed made up in preparation for a wandering musician. Each community had its known ceilidh houses, at which one could nearly always find music. These communal meeting homes, at which both Boyd and Dan R. often stayed, have a long history in Cape Breton and were once common in many rural musical traditions.

Within this environment, Dan R was a beneficiary of the hospitality and a benefactor to the community and his hosts. Typically, individuals like Dan R. and Sandy Boyd would come to town, settle in a home with an extra bed or couch, and word of their

presence would spread. The home would provide a community focal point, attract local musicians, and provide the atmosphere in which several families would gather in weeklong musical frenzies.

In the process, Dan R. would pass on tunes and techniques to players of differing skills and ability. It was a symbiotic relationship, with Dan R. receiving room and board in exchange for his musical services. Dan R. would repay his hosts by composing a tune in their honor, giving them music lessons and leaving first-rate musical notations of his and other traditional tunes. According to nephew John Allan,

Dan R was always a single man and he would sometimes go from place to place and stay with people for a few weeks. As gift for his hosts he would write tunes for them. He would be at the kitchen table composing tunes, and he wrote many tunes for the people he staid with (qtd. in Moll par. 5).

Though based in Sydney during his first few years back on the island, Dan R. had a standard route that regularly took him throughout Cape Breton.

In following this route, he focused on music while always searching for those families with the welcome sign out. Dan R. was careful not to wear out his welcome, moving on to the next closest residence on his route before overstaying his welcome. A 1981 interview with Alistair MacGillivray, who had just completed an extensive survey of the lives of Cape Breton fiddlers, clearly identified Dan R's modus operandi.

According to MacGillivray, Dan R. would,

arrive at homes where there was lots of music in the house, where music was loved. And you knew when this character arrived that the parties were going to start every evening

probably for days on end. And the first time he had a good visit there he'd be back again. I remember Father John Angus Rankin saying that Dan R. had sort of a pattern—it seemed he'd be going in a cycle. —he'd go all the places regularly. And then come back and hit them again. Father John Angus, for one, really looked forward to his visits, and really respected what the man was doing. Music was his vocation; he was bringing happiness through it (qtd. in Caplan 41).

His rounds, while living in Sydney, regularly took Dan R. to his old haunts along Cape Breton's southwest coast including Margaree, Judique, Kingsville and Glendale.

In Margaree, he'd frequently stay at the residence of the Chisholm family. At the Chisholm residence, Cameron's mother Annie Mae was always around when Dan R. stayed and made him quite a few good meals in her day. Annie Mae's attitude towards hospitality reflects the norm in the vast majority of homes along Cape Breton's predominantly Scottish west coast; "Ohhhhh!!!! We loved Dan R. He was one of us. That was the way it was in this house regardless of who came in" (Annie Mae Chisholm Personal Interview).

In 1967, after nine years with Sydney as his base of operations, Dan R. returned to Inverness County. He settled in Mabou, about fifteen miles down the road from his birthplace, at the home of his widowed sister Katie Ann. Dan R. established himself in a small portion of her home that he called his "studio", a small extension set off from the main part of the house. A small stove heated the "studio" where Dan R. spent his free time composing. Though reputed to have a large collection of music books you wouldn't have found them in his "studio". According to personal communication with John Donald

Cameron, by that time “He had given all of them to other fiddlers including John Allan and I.” Dan R. had likely picked through the collection enough times to extract what he needed from them, and if he needed to re-visit their content at any time he knew who had them.

Despite the fact that they were brother and sister, Dan R. and Katie Anne didn’t actually know each other well when he first moved into her Mabou home. Separated as children, they spent the better part of the next fifty-five years apart. Based on discussions with several knowledgeable sources, besides the occasional good mannered musical argument, few issues arose between Dan R. and his sister. Katie Anne was a ‘meat and potatoes’ girl when it came to Cape Breton fiddling, and loved her strathspeys and reels. Occasionally, she had to goad Dan R. into playing a good set of strathspeys and reels when, for weeks on end, he’d be fixated on playing pastoral airs.

Life in the small town of Mabou, close to several of his favorite fiddlers including Buddy MacMaster and Donald Angus Beaton, was a grand spot for Dan R. to live out the better part of his remaining years. At the time, the Mabou area was one of the most densely populated areas on the island in terms of fiddlers per square inch. In Mabou, Dan R. focused almost exclusively on his music. Though the others in the Cameron household shared his passion for music, Dan R’s devotion to the instrument was so intense that it sometimes overwhelmed them. According to nephew Alex Dan, who not only loved fiddle music but also frequently provided piano accompaniment for his uncle, “Dan R. played so much and was composing so often that it affected them all and got to them all”

(Alex Dan Cameron Personal Interview). Despite his almost single minded dedication to fiddling and composing, Dan R. had other interests as well. These included reading, classical music, and boxing.

According to his official military records Dan R. only went as far as completing his “Grade 5th reader” (DOD #24 1). Though his education by today’s standards was minimal, Dan R. was a true Gael and possessed an almost photographic memory. During this period of his life Dan R. read voraciously on a wide array of subjects and was known to quote passages from Dante’s *Inferno*.

Dan R. and I used to go the bookmobile all the time in Mabou. Dan R. used to be always searching for books. Anything that had to do with the violin, anything that had to do with biographies. He had a book about Heifitz. Even more important he had records of Yehudi Menuhin, Fritz Kreisler, Sammy Losenski, Leonoid Cogan all these great classical violinists. And he could recite the history of all these classical violinists and what not, and he used to marvel at that (Cyril & Alex Dan Cameron Personal Interview).

One of the books Dan R. frequently read was Stephen Samuel Stratton’s *Nicolo Paganini - His Life And Work*.

One of the Romantic period’s first major composers and performers, Paganini never recorded. Dan R. relied on books, not recordings, to gain knowledge of Paganini’s fame and abilities. During one winter Dan R. renewed this biography at the local library branch four times, reading the extremely small print over and over.

It appears that Dan R's time in Scotland generated his interest in classical music. He loved listening to it and owned quite a few recordings. Of all the violinists he listened to, Dan R. had a clear favorite though even then the discussion eventually turns back to Paganini.

I had a record of Heifitz playing Saint-Saëns and another Russian piece. I had a record of him playing Mendelssohn's concerto. And I had another record of him, and on the record was some of Paganini's. And there was one piece there that would always make you cry, The Girl with the Flaxen Hair. I never heard anything played so slick. Heifitz is my favorite of them all and the best of them all since Paganini. If Heifitz is better than Paganini, it must be awful. I read about Paganini that he had...his fingers were like iron curls and his bow hand resembled the wings of a hummingbird (qtd. from 7 June 1969 Earl Spielman Interview).

Classical music was something Dan R. appreciated from afar, rarely if ever playing it himself. Ethnomusicologist Earl Spielman once asked Dan R., "You never tried to play Paganini?" Dan R's reply, "Noooo!!!! God almighty you'd have to have seventeen fingers for to play that", says it all (qtd. from Spielman1969).

Beyond music and reading, Dan R. was also passionate about the sport of boxing. Dan R. could tell you specific relevant dates regarding the careers of every heavyweight champion and became nearly as knowledgeable about boxing as he was violin music. He read the various boxing magazines of the day and never missed a televised prize fight. During his lifetime he would personally meet two of the greatest heavyweight boxers in history, Rocky Marciano and Joe Louis.

In Mabou, while Dan R. maintained his interest in reading, music, and boxing, he entered a nearly ten-year period (between 1967 and 1976) that became one of his most active as a composer. Many attribute his prodigious output to two basic factors namely, ready availability of composing materials, e.g., proper manuscript paper, and a stable living environment. Dan R. was particular about when he composed, and Mabou offered an environment suited to his standards. According to Catherine MacDonald, Dan R., “liked to play when the air was kind of crisp. He liked that. He’d get up at two o’clock in the morning and compose a tune” (Personal Interview).

In Mabou, composing a tune was but the first step in the process for Dan R. After he composed a new batch of tunes, Dan R. had a standard set of procedures for disseminating them. For assistance he relied on Catherine MacDonald, who at the time was employed at the agricultural office in Mabou. As a favor, Catherine often typed up letters and envelopes for him. For several years he would jokingly refer to her as his secretary. According to Catherine,

He would make a copy for Donald Angus Beaton and one for Buddy MacMaster and one for his own files. When he would come to the agricultural office he would ask me to type up two envelopes for him, one for Buddy MacMaster and one for Donald Angus Beaton. Then he would go on and mail them and he would give me the story behind the tune that he composed and why he named it that (Personal Interview).

Dan R. regularly brought new tunes, often composed for a specific fiddler, to MacDonald for processing. Occasionally, Dan R. even noted in the letters what other

tunes he felt belonged in a medley with his new composition. Dan R. was a one-man publishing house, frequently mailing compositions to friends in Cape Breton, the United States and Scotland.

Periodically, Dan R. would tell Catherine that he appreciated what she was doing for him and that when he composed a tune he felt suited her he would put her name to it. As promised, during one trip down to the agricultural office, Dan R. unveiled one of the new tunes being mailed out. It was a jig called “Miss Catherine Campbell’s”, titled in his “secretary’s” honor.

From his perspective, Dan R. settled into a life fit for a king in Mabou. By some standards it wasn’t much, but for Dan R. it was grand. He was well respected by his peers with many of them regularly inviting him into their homes to share music. From his virtual treasure trove of knowledge, many local players gleaned a substantial amount of wisdom regarding fiddle music and musical theory. John Morris Rankin and Kinnon Beaton, at the time young musicians in the Mabou area, benefited greatly from having a wise fiddling sage like Dan R. around as they musically matured. According to John Morris, “Dan R. MacDonald was one of my biggest influences. I used to chord to him on the piano. He’d get you warmed up, then play the tricky stuff in the flats!” (qtd. in MacGillivray TCBF 163).

Dan R’s lifestyle and the forms of compensation common in that lifestyle during the 1960s contributed significantly to the beginning of his legend within the genre. Dan R’s excesses included all three essential ingredients of life – alcohol, food, and music.

Many stories abound about Dan R's love of food, a love that nearly rivaled his love of violin music and his capacity for alcohol. Many friends and long time lovers of Cape Breton music still tell comical stories involving Dan R's infamous food overindulgences.

Three such stories provide insight into the seriousness of this problem, as well as the often-comical nature of the blending of these excesses. These vignettes, drawn from various interviews, clearly point out this connection and Dan R's penchant for excess, whether it was alcohol, food, or music. The first focuses on alcohol and the others on his fondness for food.

Dan R. knew only one way to pay back people for their kindness, through his music. Occasionally, Dan R. would attempt to barter with his friends for goods and services using new compositions. One particular day, Dan R. and his nephew Alex Dan had downed a couple quarts of beer early in the day, which generated a thirst for even more liquor. According to Alex Dan, those first beers,

Just set us off that we wanted to have more. I didn't have any money myself. Neither did Dan R. so on the way back we had an urge for a drink. On the way back Dan R., in the front, looks at John Donald and says 'would you mind taking a drive over to the liquor store, John Donald.' John Donald says 'well o.k.' When we got over there, Dan R. said 'I don't have any money on me but I got a couple of tunes in G.' He said, 'I'll give them to you when we get back to Mabou.' So John Donald got out of the car, and being so easy going John Donald said 'what would you like.' Well a forty ounce Dan R. said, and a twelve of beer. And John Donald says, 'I wonder how much that is.' As John Donald was walking away, Dan R. got out of the car (and says) 'Oh yes you better get a couple of quarts of wine too, I'm gonna be sick tomorrow' (Personal Interview).

What little money Dan R. had, he usually spent on top of the line accouterments for his violin, the occasional bottle of rum and the regular bucket of Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) necessary to satisfy his serious weakness for the product. With no driver's license, Dan R. relied on others to drive when he got the craving for KFC. On more than one occasion, Dan R. talked first cousin Alex Francis MacKay into driving him to the Port Hawkesbury KFC.

Alex Francis remembers one particular trip when Dan R. purchased two large buckets of chicken. The fate of the first bucket was quickly determined, with Dan R. polishing it off before the end of the twenty-minute drive from Port Hawkesbury to the MacKay farm in Glendale. Inside the MacKay home, Dan R. put the second still full bucket of chicken on top of the refrigerator. Dan R. then sat down in the MacKay's parlor and rattled off some tunes on the fiddle. He and Alex Francis then discussed fiddle music before going to bed.

Sometime later that evening, or possibly early the next morning, Alex Francis remembers being awoken by the sound of what turned out to be Dan R. plummeting down the stairs. Not wearing his glasses, Dan R. was rendered legally blind and apparently lost his footing as he made his way down the stairs in search of the second bucket of chicken. Awoken and in somewhat of a stupor, Alex Francis called to Dan R. in an attempt to ensure that he still had a pulse, hadn't broken any bones or ruptured a vital organ. With the faint sound of suppressed pain in his voice, Dan R. acknowledged that he

was just fine. The following morning Alex Francis realized that Dan R. was indeed fine when he discovered the now empty second bucket of chicken by Dan R's side.⁸

On another occasion, after playing the annual Mabou picnic, Dan R. began making his way home. According to nephew Alex Dan,

Finlay Cameron's wife called Dan R. in as he was walking up Back St. that day. She said, 'Come on into the house I've got something for you to take home.' (She had) About nine lobsters and all this stuff on the table. That was fine. So anyway, Bernard or somebody came around after and said to Katie Ann 'Did you get the lobsters? What Lobsters? Well, the lobsters that Dan R. brought over. She replied, 'I never seen any lobsters around here.' Then I went down in Dan R's room and there was this big box of Kentucky Fried Chicken full of all the shells and the whole works. And Dan R. was lying back snoring with his hand over the belly (Personal Interview).

One can only imagine Katie Ann's displeasure at finding nine completely ravaged lobster carcasses piled high in an empty KFC box on Dan R's floor.

According to at least one extant story, Dan R's passion for food resulted from an event that occurred while he was stationed in Europe during World War II. Dan R's company, involved in the Allied siege on German positions in Belgium, witnessed the conflict continue longer than anyone had anticipated. Provisions were scarce, and in the vast majority of military companies malnourishment was the norm. Dan R. lucked out as his company ended up settling down near a patch of nearly rotten, but under dire

⁸ Alex F. MacKay told this story at his dinner table after my official interview with him. Unfortunately, I was so enthralled with Alex F's story that I neglected to get my cassette recorder to record the story for posterity. I jotted down my initial thoughts on the story before leaving the MacKay's driveway and have tried to render the story as faithfully as possible to Alex Francis's version.

circumstances edible cabbage. After months of eating little but half rotten cabbage, Dan R. vowed if he made it out alive he would start eating and not stop till the day he died (Cyril Cameron Personal Interview). If true, this promise eventually caught up with him, began to limit his playing venues and most likely contributed to his death.

At one point closer to the end of Dan R's life his weight seemed to be something in which he took pride, though it also began causing him some legitimate health issues. Buddy MacMaster, a telegrapher and station agent for the Canadian National Railroad as well as a fine fiddler, was working the CNR line running between Inverness and Point Tupper. One of Dan R's closest friends, MacMaster saw quite a bit of Dan R. during the later years of Dan R's life. Dan R. made frequent stops to visit Buddy at the Judique Train station, always playing some tunes and chatting about fiddle music.

On occasion, Dan R. had another reason for stopping. Scales were certainly not a common household item in Dan R's day, and the train station was one of the few places at the time with a scale large enough to weigh someone of his physical stature. According to Buddy, Dan R. would, "walk over to the station and he'd want me to weigh him on the railway scale. It was a good scale, very accurate kind of a platform scale" (Personal Interview). At the last weigh-in MacMaster remembers Dan R. topped the scales at 299 pounds, and according to Buddy that was "lightly clad".

Dan R's weight gain appears to have been gradual. His military records show him being 176 pounds. According to John Donald Cameron, "He did weigh 320 pounds at the last, but he had not weighed as low as 176 since perhaps the 1940's. When he came to

visit us in 1946 we considered him big, and he told Mom he weighed 220. His weight continued to increase and when he returned to Cape Breton he weighed in the vicinity of 270-280" (John Donald Cameron Private Correspondence).

Dan R, as in his youth, rarely played for dances during his later years. Even on a cool summer night in the famous Glencoe Hall gets awfully hot inside once the dancing starts. In the dog days of summer, it often would resemble a sauna, so Dan R. would tend to avoid the venue. Though Dan R. shied away from playing dances, he loved to play the open-air concerts that occurred throughout much of eastern Nova Scotia during the summer. Outside it never got as hot as in the small dance halls; plus Dan R. loved to play for knowledgeable listeners, which typically was often the case at open air concerts and house parties. It was here that Dan R's was able to play the breadth of a musical tradition, not just the jigs and reels commonly heard at a dance.

At the same time Dan R's weight began to limit his activity his compositions were becoming better known not only within Cape Breton but within the wider fabric of what has generally become known as 'Celtic fiddle music.' His tunes became better know in part because of the change which began blowing across the fiddle landscape of Cape Breton in the early 1970s. Due to the change and the forces that brought it about, Dan R. and the Cape Breton fiddling community found themselves at the center of a grass roots preservation movement.

According to East Tennessee State University sociologist Richard Blaustein, during the 20th century there have been two major revivals of traditional fiddle music.

The first occurred in the 1920s as the United States shifted “from a war economy to a domestic consumer economy” (Blaustein 259). This revival often involved major contributions from outsiders like Henry Ford. The second resurgence of fiddle music in North America in the 1960s and 1970s was according to Blaustein “a genuine grass roots preservation movement” (Blaustein 260). The itinerant journey of Dan R., played out during the 60s on the local scene, was heading in a new, albeit, short-lived direction during which time Dan R. would live out his golden years riding the crest of this movement.

Chapter 7 - Dan R's Golden Years

The Glendale Festival - Reel



© John Donald Cameron

Figure 12: The Glendale Festival Reel

At the beginning of the 1970s, Cape Breton was poised to experience what has become an almost ubiquitous theme common in the re-telling of 20th century North American fiddling revivals. A single pivotal event exacerbates nativistic attitudes within a community and brings about changes that later get labeled a revival.

The pivotal event within the Cape Breton milieu would occur in November of 1971 when the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation first aired Ron MacInnis's documentary film, *The Vanishing Cape Breton Fiddler*. This film, which forecast the disappearance of traditional fiddling in Cape Breton, became the catalyst for a true grass roots preservation movement.

In Cape Breton, Dan R's friend, Fr. John Angus Rankin helped jump start this movement. His dissenting view and remarks during an on camera appearance in one of

the film's final scenes touched a chord with many Cape Bretoners. Fr. Rankin made his main point clear when he stated, "The vanishing Cape Breton fiddler, what is that! As long as we have Scotsmen, Irishmen, Frenchmen, and Mi'kmaq Indians who love Scotch music were gonna have the Cape Breton fiddler" (qtd. in *The Vanishing Cape Breton Fiddler*).

Following the airing of *The Vanishing Cape Breton Fiddler*, echoes of resentment towards producer Ron MacInnis reverberated in Cape Breton. According to MacInnis,

I just happened to walk by with that program, and say a few things that sparked a few people and got their dander up, and the whole movement took off. It was like waving a red flag in front of a bull. Father Rankin and I, from that day on, went to war- he, sure he was going to prove to me fiddling wasn't dying out, and me, equally sure it was (qtd. in MacGillivray TCBF 176).

While Fr. Rankin obviously did not buy into the notion of a vanishing tradition, the film did trigger feelings in him that led to actions marking the onset of a distinct period of revitalization within the Cape Breton fiddling tradition.

While publicly not showing his concern, Fr. Rankin felt a need to respond to MacInnis's contention that interest in Cape Breton fiddling was waning. As far as Fr. Rankin and other key players in the movement were concerned,

The music was entrenched in their own personal lives; they witnessed this first-hand at local concerts, dance halls, and in their respective kitchens. It would be highly unlikely in their reality that the music would ever disappear. On the contrary, the homes in our communities are saturated with music, they said (Sheldon MacInnes CB Fiddlers Association CD Liner Notes par. 10).

A response was necessary because Fr. Rankin, and others within the tradition, believed this vibrancy wasn't as recognizable to those in the outside world as it was to them. To illustrate that the tradition was alive and well, Fr. Rankin helped gather together a small but knowledgeable group of dyed-in-the-wool fiddle supporters to begin planning a response.

The response came in 1973 in the form of the Festival of Cape Breton Fiddling. Held that July at Fr. Rankin's Glendale parish, this open air festival gathered together more than a hundred and thirty fiddlers from the various island communities, the Boston State's, and other areas where Highland Scottish fiddle music still thrived.

Beyond simply the number of fiddlers, this group included the traditions elder statesman including Dan R. and Sandy MacLean alongside younger players like Buddy MacMaster and Carl MacKenzie. Several younger fiddlers including Kinnon Beaton and John Morris Rankin, widely considered the best of the next generation, were also present at Glendale that day. It is notable that in interviews, liner notes, and articles each of these younger fiddlers has indicated the positive impact, both direct and indirect, of Dan R. on their repertoire.

The revival, which occurred following the 1973 Festival of Cape Breton Fiddling, is interesting when one examines it from the point of view of what was actually revived. In the case of Cape Breton what occurred is a phenomenon that Dr. Burt Feintuch has described as a "musical revival as musical transformation" (Feintuch 183). Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin's 1984 *Journal of American Folklore* article entitled *Tradition, Genuine or Spurious*, further echoes Feintuch's thoughts concluding: "it is by

now a truism that cultural revivals change the traditions they attempt to revive" (Handler and Linnekin 275).

In the years immediately following the first Glendale festival, Dan R. would ride the upside turn of the typical ebb and flow cycle of popularity that regional fiddling styles in Canada passed through during the twentieth century. From 1973 to 1976, Dan R's musical talents and compositions would move from the island of Cape Breton to Canada's national stage with the help of two of his nephews, John Allan and John Donald Cameron.

In retrospect, the cornerstone for this transition to a national stage was set in 1964 when Dan R's nephew, John Allan was in the infancy of his musical career and Father John Angus Rankin was holding a series of concerts at his Glendale parish. These regularly held concerts pre-dating 1973s Glendale Festival, along with other locally held cultural events promoting the tradition, were what caused Fr. Rankin to question the vanishing Cape Breton fiddler scenario in the first place.

One particular summer day in Glendale, Dan R. was in attendance along with John Allan who came to sing some songs and play the 12-string 'cartar' during the day's festivities. Also present that day was CJFX Radio, an important and predominantly Scottish radio station based in Antigonish on the Nova Scotia mainland.¹ The station recorded much of the day's lengthy concert, which included fiddlers from all parts of the island. CJFX also recorded several of John Allan's performances. Upon airing the

¹ According to John Donald Cameron "it was Gus Mackinnon of CJFX who did the recording for the station, for his own show. It is highly unlikely that the radio station would have been present if it were not for Gus.

material on CJFX in the mid 1960s, John Allan's Glendale recordings began receiving favorable listener response. The interest from these recordings led Cameron to release his first full-length recording in 1968, *Here Comes John Allan Cameron*.

From this Glendale exposure, the subsequent listener response, and the success of this first album John Allan became a mainstay on the Celtic music scene. In the summer of 1973, The Canadian Broadcasting Company (CBC) invited John Allan to host a thirteen episode TV variety show to be filmed in Halifax. John Allan jumped at the idea of hosting his own show, hoping it would reflect his Cape Breton roots and become a showcase for 'home-grown talent'. Not long after getting the job John Allan learned his show, by this time being called CBC's *Céilidh*, was being given the coveted CBC Saturday evening slot preceding Hockey Night in Canada. Indeed this would be an opportunity to bring Celtic music, and display Cape Breton talent, to a national audience.

While discussing content and format with CBC producers, they asked John Allan to assemble a group of Cape Breton fiddlers to play a regular medley of tunes during each episode. Several fiddlers immediately popped into John Allan's head, and Dan R. was on his nephew's short list.

When John Allan first approached Dan R. with the idea of appearing on *Céilidh*, he seemingly was not interested.

Dan R. did the first series but he didn't want to go. He didn't want any part of a national television show. He wanted no part of it. And the money was incredibly good. Back in the early 70's the money was incredibly good and expenses and all. Dan R. wanted no part of that. I'll never

forget coaxing him and giving him heck (Cameron Chisholm Personal Interview).

To some, Dan R's reluctance may seem inconsistent with his previous exposure on recordings and radio but he did these things mainly for the respect it earned him amongst his fellow fiddlers. Potentially, Dan R's reluctance was tied to a number of factors including: being away again from his beloved Cape Breton Island; his lack of appreciation for the mass appeal of such a venue in spreading the tradition beyond the local island communities; and a personal preference to play for a live audience, rather than an amorphous mass of viewers one couldn't see.

Another reality of the day may shed some light on his reluctance to accept this offer. Most prominent tradition bearers in Dan R's day had strongly held beliefs regarding the communal nature of their gifts. They felt it was their role to provide music or stories or pipe music in the community. Food and lodging was all they asked for in return, not money or fame beyond their geographical and fiddling communities. In his introduction to Gaelic Storyteller Joe Neil MacNeil's book of folktales, *Tales Until Dawn*, John Shaw clearly illustrates the communal nature of Cape Breton's cultural framework. Shaw notes that when he asked Joe Neil MacNeil if this communal concept of tradition was prevalent in Gaelic Cape Breton, "Joe Neil's unhesitating answer was, Nach eil fhios agaibh gu robh...Don't you know it was" (xxii-xxiii). Dan R. understood and adhered to this tradition. Participating in the *Céilidh* show may have represented a break with tradition in his eyes. If it was a break, it was a break that strengthened the tradition.

Named for the house visiting tradition, CBC's *Céilidh* was a groundbreaking television show. Though Winston Fitzgerald had made guest appearances on *The Cliff MacKay Show* and *Don Messer's Jubilee* television shows, *Céilidh* was the first show to regularly feature Cape Breton fiddlers on national television. The show set forces in motion that elevated Cape Breton fiddling and Dan R. to a national stage.

Eventually, Dan R. did agree to appear on the *Céilidh* and once in Halifax it didn't take him long to start enjoying his role on the new variety show. Along with the rest of the cast, Dan R. received accommodations at the Dresden Arms Hotel, was fed very well, and for one of the few times in his life got paid to do what he loved.

In Cape Breton, being paid to play the fiddle was a very recent addition to the tradition, and certainly not something to which Dan R's generation were regularly accustomed. Being paid to play was simply not part of the traditional fabric of rural Cape Breton Gaelic society. Though the tradition was beginning to change, food, drink and shelter were still the norm. It was during the 1970s that the first Cape Breton fiddlers began to emerge who were able to earn some part of their living solely by playing music, though it was still barely enough to get by.

One need look no further than one of the more active performers and exponents of the tradition during Dan R's time to see fiddling more as an avocation and less as a profession or job to support self and family. Winston Fitzgerald, who was one of the few fiddlers of his era to get paid to play and played often, was still unable to support himself solely on money earned from fiddling. In a recently published collection of tunes culled from Fitzgerald's repertoire, Paul Cranford writes:

Winston didn't make his livelihood from music. Over the years he did many kinds of work...The Halifax Shipyard, the army, fishing, cooking, carpentry and aluminum work. He always kept a day job playing dances, concerts and ceilidhs evenings and weekends (Introduction par. 6).

Dan R. was cut from the old mold so getting paid for performing on the *Céilidh* show was a new experience. According to John Allan, "Dan R. I'm willing to bet never got paid to play for a concert in his life. The *Céilidh* was the first money he saw thanks to the fiddle" (John Allan Cameron Personal Interview). Unaccustomed to receiving money for playing the fiddle, Dan R's excitement would be reflected in the freeness with which he spoke about his pay.

Dan R., a regularly featured performer on the *Céilidh*, loved to interact and discuss music with guest performers backstage prior to episode tapings. On one occasion, when The Brann Sisters were guests of the show, Dan R. shared a little more information with them than the producer felt appropriate. According to John Allan,

Dan R. wanted to share his joy with the different guests and he told them what he was being paid. They went back to the producer, Charlie Reynolds, complaining because Dan R. was making what they were. Well, Charlie Reynolds came out and started yelling at Dan R. and told him that under no circumstances was he to divulge what he was getting paid. He gave him old hell and it was embarrassing to me, and embarrassing to the other performers. When Charlie Reynolds went back into the control room, Dan R. just turned and said, "Whatever I did, it couldn't be as bad as the Watergate Affair!!!" (Gillis 184).

Though still not certain what if anything he had done wrong, Dan R. composed *Charles Reynolds Reel* in the producers honor and hoped it would ease any strain between them.

The strain between Dan R. and Charlie Reynolds was nothing compared to the frequent disagreements between the host and the show's producers. John Allan Cameron was and remains an extremely talented showman. His talent backboned a musical career spanning four decades, including a five year stint as Anne Murray's opening act and appearances at prestigious venues like Nashville's Grand Ole Opry. Despite this often-grand stage, John Allan's dedication to the music of Cape Breton never waned. Long before the present day popular renaissance of Celtic music, John Allan dedicated himself to bringing the roots of Cape Breton music to the world.

I remember stepping onto the stage at the Horseshoe Tavern on Queen Street in Toronto wearing a kilt. Now that's a country bar. Loretta Lynn played there, and all the big Nashville acts, and I arrived on the stage wearing a kilt! It took a certain degree of intestinal fortitude. But, as John Prine's song says, "You are what you are and you ain't what you ain't" (Fleming 38).

What John Allan was is exactly what he remains today, an ardent lover and supporter of Cape Breton music. According to Virginia Beaton and Stephen Pederson's book *Maritime Music Greats*, Cameron is also important because he "was one of the first folk/country performers from the Maritimes to emphasize heritage and origins, and to work with musical literature that was indigenous to the area" (54).

John Allan's commitment to his native island and its Celtic traditions, led to firmly held beliefs about which direction *Céilidh* should take for success. His ardent belief in the music of Cape Breton, and a vision for the show that included his uncle and Angus Chisholm, caused friction between John Allan and the shows producers. John Allan knew what needed to be done to sell the show, but also knew his roots and wanted

the *Céilidh* to hire more homegrown talent. John Allan appreciated the important role musicians like Dan R. and Angus Chisholm held in the tradition and fought for their inclusion in the show.

As the first season wore on, disagreements mounted with producers who continued to feel Dan R. and Angus Chisholm didn't present the image that the show was aiming for. It became apparent to John Allan that if he intended to remain as host, the producers would force him to make some unpleasant choices. In the long run, these ended up being choices John Allan was not willing to make. The disagreements about the future musical path of CBC's *Céilidh* caused producers to replace John Allan after only one season as host. Dan R., like his nephew, was not asked to return for a second season.

Not being rehired didn't pose a problem for Dan R. He returned to Cape Breton and continued to play a musical circuit he had successfully traversed for the better part of the last fourteen years. Dan R., now in his early 60s, remained active and rarely if ever missed the big concerts including Broad Cove, Glendale and the Concert Under the Stars in Antigonish.

Not long after leaving Halifax to return to Cape Breton at the end of the *Céilidh* tapings in 1973, Dan R. moved from Mabou to Judique South. In Judique South, Dan R. was within a few miles of his birthplace where his Cape Breton career had begun sixty-two years earlier. Here he lived close to Buddy MacMaster, continuing to visit Buddy and other local fiddlers on a regular basis. Continuing health problems, brought about by Dan R.'s elevated weight and diabetes, curtailed some of his lengthier trips. Dan R. continued

to survive on his monthly pension, though it was supplemented with income earned from composing royalties thanks to actions taken by his nephew John Donald.

Despite his replacement on the *Céilidh*, the musical career of Dan R's other nephew, John Allan, continued to flourish and bring more attention to Dan R's compositions. In 1975, on the heels of hosting the *Céilidh*, John Allan's new self-titled show debuted on CTV. Filmed in Montreal, *The John Allan Cameron Show* consisted almost entirely of Canadian content. It introduced Canada to many of its seminal folk artists for the first time, including Stan Rogers. As with John Allan's previous show, a group of fiddlers were gathered together in an attempt to make Cape Breton music more palatable to a larger audience. The group became known as *The Cape Breton Symphony* and included four Cape Breton fiddlers with bass and drum backing. They played Cape Breton tunes in unison, something that was uncommon in what remained an essentially solo tradition at the time.

For Dan R., *The Cape Breton Symphony* brought his compositions to an even wider audience. After more than four decades of dedication to Cape Breton music, this would represent the first real money Dan R. derived solely from his compositions.

The only time he started making any money on his music was when the Cape Breton Symphony (was created)—we used to play on John Allan's television show. I registered Dan R's name with CAPAC (Composers, Authors and Publishers Association of Canada) and we made sure we played some of his music. You know Trip to Windsor and a lot of those. And he was getting royalties at the time. That was in his later years, of course. He did okay then..." (John Donald Cameron qtd. in Ron Caplan 14-15).

Making money from the music he loved was always something that confused this man who was driven simply by a love for music.

There was one day when Dan R. got a cheque for \$2500. And he didn't understand. He said, "What's this for?" I said, "We played your tunes on national television, and made sure they were logged." And he still didn't understand why. I said, "Well because every time something is played—and I make sure, Dan R., that your tunes are in there, and we play X amount of Dan R. MacDonald tunes, because they're first quality they're good—and you'll make a few bucks. And Dan R. certainly needed. I mean he was never rich. He was rich in so many ways, and if I could provide an avenue where he could make a few more dollars, that's fine. And I made sure the royalties went to Dan R" (John Allan Cameron qtd. in Ron Caplan 15).

In 1975 Dan R. would move again, this time for the last time, to Port Hood where he continued playing music and composing while battling health problems. His weight caused circulation problems in his legs, requiring occasional medical attention. Though intermittently painful, it never kept Dan R. from his regular rounds of the summer festivals. He continued visiting and composing, but limited his non-local travel to a handful of his favorite, regular ceilidh houses and big summer events. During the fall of 1975, Dan R. remained in Port Hood for what was likely to be another rough Cape Breton winter. He spent the winter in pursuit of his passions - reading, composing and playing music.

When the winter of 1975-76 drew to a close, Dan R. once again prepared for the summer festival circuit. July was one of the biggest months in eastern Canada for fiddle music. Dan R. headed up early in the month to Antigonish, for what turned out to be his

last stay at Hugh A. MacDonald's Lanark home. He performed at the Concert Under the Stars in Antigonish, as he had consistently done virtually every year since returning to Nova Scotia. Hugh A., gravely ill at the time, remembered saying goodbye to Dan R. thinking it would surely be the last time they would see one another (Winifred MacDonald Interview).

Near the end of July, Dan R. fittingly made his final public appearance at the island's most renowned open-air concert at Broad Cove. One can only imagine the sense of devastation among longtime concert attendees if they had known this represented the last time he would set foot on the Broad Cove stage. According to Danny Graham, "following the concert Dan R. played for his friends and fans in the parish Glebe house. Many of those present recall that they had never heard him play so well" (par. 18).

Within a month of the Broad Cove Concert, Dan R. was in the hospital and the news was not good. Circulatory issues required Dan R's leg to be amputated above the knee. Even following the amputation of his leg, Dan R maintained an upbeat and positive demeanor. Along with his own family, longtime friends including Buddy MacMaster, Donald Angus Beaton, and Cameron Chisholm visited Dan R. at the Inverness hospital.

Buddy, concerned about his friend, remembers being a little apprehensive as he headed to see Dan R. for the first time since the amputation. MacMaster's fears were somewhat assuaged when he came across Dan R. whistling tunes in his room, keeping time with his stump. Upon being asked how he was following the operation, Dan R. threw both his hands in the air and gestured towards them saying, "I still have these.

That's all I need' (Buddy MacMaster Personal Interview). Dan R's hands were his tools and as long as he had his hands apparently Dan R. would be just fine.

By all accounts, Dan R. was recovering well from surgery and began preparing to be released. Hospital staff ordered him a set of crutches to take home and nephew Alex Dan spent the entire day with his uncle in the hospital. Dan R's longtime friend, Fr. John Angus Rankin, also came to visit that day. He and Fr. Rankin spoke at length about music and life in general. Following Fr. Rankin's departure, Dan R. was in high spirits as he headed to bed. Sadly, Dan R. would never leave the hospital, passing away peacefully during his sleep on September 20, 1976.

News of Dan R's death quickly spread amongst lovers of Cape Breton music, seemingly taking everyone by surprise. Those who knew Dan R. well, still remember where they were when they got the news. Alex Dan, who spent the previous day with his uncle in the hospital, remembers exactly where he was when he heard the news. "I was coming back from Port Hawkesbury in John Donald's car. I stopped at the Co-op in Port Hood (long pause).....and I was told" (Personal Interview Alex Dan Cameron).

Immediately following his death, every local newspaper including the Cape Breton Highlander, Inverness Oran, Antigonish Casket as well as all the major papers in Halifax featured stories on Dan R. To his closest friends, who had come to know Dan R. through music, his death left a gap in the tradition that they knew full well would never be filled. A physically imposing human being, he was hard to miss on the stages of Cape Breton. His absence from these stages over the next few years was as equally hard to miss according to those who knew him best.

Sylvia Tyson and co-host Doug Lennox, who had met Dan R. and earlier featured him on their CBC Radio show *Touch the Earth*, broke the news to a wider Canadian audience. Tyson's show opened with the following.

S. Tyson: I received word a short while ago from Kenzie MacNeil of some very sad news that Dan R. MacDonald had died. You may remember Dan R. from our Cape Breton show that we did. Doug Lennox is with us.

D. Lennox: The feeling I think that you will get from the service is a tribute to a man who is a legend who lived a simple and quiet life in a small community in Cape Breton. And embodied a lot of what we were trying to capture in the céilidh show that we did last spring.

D. Lennox: I remember meeting him and driving down to where he was boarding. He gave that talent but really never received that much in worldly goods for it. We felt that we had touched a very special part of a pocket of what makes this country important to all of us when we were in Mabou and Dan R. MacDonald was a giant part in that feeling.

At the time, Dan R's funeral was one of the largest Mabou had ever seen. The full military funeral at St. Mary's church was standing room only, with crowds overflowing from the church onto the surrounding grounds.

It was beyond anything. The church was packed and they were packed outside. They were almost extended down to the graveyard. And do you know what I had forgotten until you mentioned it, I was the one that had given the eulogy. And uh it was, there was a feeling I would say the feeling that I would get from the whole crowd was the fact that everybody felt that they had lost something. A great many felt we lost something that we didn't realize until now, and that was losing Dan R. It was almost a gloom, what you would call a gloomy feeling because every person that you

would meet you'd hear the expression; poor Dan R. was gone. And nobody said it without a feeling of loss or sorrow. If you wanted to summarize him in one word he was character. Not a character in the clownish type, he was a character unto himself as it were. He was one in a million who had possessed the genius of a tremendous musician and instead of capitalizing on it he gave it away (Archie Neil Chisholm Personal Interview).

Donald Angus Beaton, Buddy MacMaster and Alex Francis MacKay came to say farewell to a dear friend. Fiddlers Angus Allan Gillis and Winston Fitzgerald were pallbearers. Sixteen-year-old John Morris Rankin, who often accompanied Dan R's fiddling, was also present, along with a symphony of Cape Breton fiddlers. Close to a hundred fiddlers jammed into the church that morning to pay tribute to a man who dedicated his life to Cape Breton music, asking little in return.²

Beginning with his first composition in the mid 30s, until the last he composed shortly before his death, Dan R's consistency as a folk composer puts him in elite company. His compositional gift and in depth knowledge of the tradition arguably were what made him one of the most prolific and successful Scottish music composers the new world has ever seen. Some would argue, and rightfully so, that Dan R. deserves his place amongst Scottish composers like Gow, Marshall and Skinner.

While his output and variety certainly merit consideration for inclusion in the above illustrious group of composers, Dan R. would himself likely argue that he had no place on the list. While he had a tremendous sense of pride in himself and the role he played in the tradition, and took his job as composer seriously, Dan R. was a man with a

² CBC Radio in Halifax broadcast a nicely edited piece highlighting his memorial service.

different reward system than many of today's performers. Dan R's reward often came as he was sitting backstage in the tuning room listening to another of his new compositions broken in by Buddy or Donald Angus. Knowing that his composition was being played and enjoyed by a musician he respected was all the validation Dan R. needed for his efforts. He rarely expected or asked for money for anything he did. He gave of his music and gave it freely.

Those who loved his music also loved the man, unconditionally. Those who didn't understand Dan R., well that was another story. Often it would be a story involving the already familiar theme of a landlady, overdue rent and the destroying of several months' worth of Dan R's tune manuscripts.

Dan R. certainly had some flaws, and wasn't respected by everyone for the role he played in the tradition. Those lacking respect for Dan R., simply didn't fully comprehend his role within the tradition. Finding a Cape Bretoner who loved fiddle music and disliked Dan R. is nearly impossible. Jealousy, more than anything Dan R. did himself, is more often than not responsible for any occasional ill will harbored against him. Dan R's heart, his musical talent and the sincere camaraderie he had with other musicians overshadowed any character flaws in the man.

Dan R. was also very religious and could often be found in a local church completing the rosary before morning mass. He was well liked both by his friends, and the strangers he met in his travels. With Dan R., more than one person who began the day a stranger ended it as a friend. In an interview with Catherine MacKenzie, Dan R's cousin, she paid a more fitting tribute to him than I could ever hope to muster.

There were people who considered Dan R. to be a joke. I know that. Well, I'm not one of them. Dan R. was no joke to me. He was a little bit different. Maybe there was some little thing missing, maybe it should be missing in us all (Catherine MacKenzie Personal Interview).

Dan R's avocation and vocation, from his birth on 2 February 1911 in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia until his death on 20 September 1976, centered on fiddling and composing tunes which he named in honor of the friends, neighbors, family and others who meant something to him during his life. Through the years he touched, amused and inspired many with his music, antics and friendship. While his compositions are many, a good number well known and still widely played, a more in-depth understanding of what made Dan R. the composer tick is needed to fully appreciate his career.

Chapter 8 - The Composer

Morrison's Ridge - Jig

Dan R. MacDonald



©John Donald Cameron

Figure 13: Morrison's Ridge Jig

For Dan R. MacDonald, composing was his niche within the Cape Breton fiddling tradition and he took great personal pride in filling that niche. His substantial compositional canon is the result of forty years dedication to his native island's traditional music and will rightfully remain the dominant element in his legacy. Within a week of his death the Halifax Life section of *4th Estate Magazine* accurately described this legacy, "a hundred years from now people will still be playing this man's music and talking about him" (Ray MacLeod 3).

When asked in a 1969 interview about his compositional prowess, Dan R. would tell ethnomusicologist Earl Spielman that he had composed "well over a thousand." By the time *The Vanishing Cape Breton Fiddler* aired two years later, Dan R.'s take on his lifetime compositional productivity had doubled. At the time, Dan R. would tell

filmmaker Ron MacInnis, “the old manuscript when I done in from the thirties it was pretty handy two thousand anyway.” Though in my estimation this represents the high end of the likely number of tunes Dan R. composed, “pretty handy two thousand” is unfortunately about as close an estimate as one is going to get.¹

Though we will never know for certain the exact number of Dan R. composed tunes, extant interviews with both the composer and those who knew him best establish two undeniable facts. As a composer Dan R. was prolific and composed habitually throughout his life. Based upon extant interviews I believe it is reasonable to assume that he averaged three new tunes a month during his forty years as an active composer. If one believes therefore, as I do, that Dan R’s compositional output is double what is presently accounted for, the obvious question that bears asking is why don’t we have access to all the extant tunes he composed?

The demise of Dan R’s compositions at the hands of an irate landlady is one frequent motif in extant stories, and a contributing factor to why we only have a fraction of the compositions he created during his lifetime. Other factors, including availability of composing materials and his “gifting” of tunes, are of equal if not more importance in the big picture of why we don’t possess all of Dan R’s compositions.

In the early days, Dan R’s lack of proper manuscript paper often meant his tunes wouldn’t survive long enough to be sent to friends. Even Dan R. was aware of the fact

¹ John Donald Cameron is an expert on his uncle’s compositions. Personal correspondence with him revealed that my estimate regarding Dan R’s compositional output concurs with his.

that for many years his inability to properly document his compositions often led to them being lost;

A lot of them I don't know where they went when I went overseas. A lot of them were in manuscript and I wrote on the back of calendars and every other thing and I had not much manuscript. I don't know what happened. (qtd. from Spielman Interview).

When Dan R. did have manuscript the tune would always be properly notated and then titled, prior to being sent to a friend or added to his collection of finished compositions.

Generosity is also a major reason for the loss of a good portion of Dan R's early compositions. For Dan R. his tunes were gifts, both literally and figuratively, meeting different fates along the way. Some of his earliest compositions survived in the repertoires of one or two fiddlers eventually taken to the grave with that fiddler, while others thrived after being recorded by one of the island's best fiddlers. Allister MacGillivray accurately described the extramusical function of Dan R's tunes, "they were a sort of currency, given by him in exchange for friendship and hospitality" (Cape Bretoner Magazine par. 4). The theme of Dan R's tunes as currency is discussed in further detail within Chapter 9.

During my fieldwork in Cape Breton an often-repeated theme was that Dan R. gave or mailed compositions to other fiddlers, eventually losing record of the tune himself. An example of this occurred with his composition "Balogie's Strathspey", of which no written record of it existed prior to being "recently discovered in the repertoire of Alex Francis MacKay." Several other previously unknown Dan R. compositions were

subsequently recorded on Alex Francis's 1997 Rounder Records CD *A Lifelong Home*. They were discovered when attempts were made to name the tunes in one of the CDs medleys. When Alex Francis was asked about the tunes he remembered it was Dan R. who had composed them. Alex Francis couldn't remember original titles, so new ones were given based upon Dan R's standard naming procedures.²

Even if we only consider Dan R's extant output that exists in notated form, the number of compositions he wrote during his lifetime is still quite remarkable. Appendix A features an inventory of close to 500 of Dan R's extant compositions. An additional number of unpublished compositions are in the private collection of John Donald Cameron. For comparative purposes, with regards to lifetime compositional output, one need only look at noted traditional Irish composer Ed Reavy or Scotland's famed composer J. Scott Skinner.

The Companion to Irish Traditional Music calls Reavy, "one of the greatest and most prolific composers of Irish music in the twentieth century" (Vallely 30). Reavy has an extant output of about 130 compositions. Though only 130 of Reavy's compositions are extant, his children estimate his output was considerably larger and closer to 500.³ With regards to Skinner, the Graham Dixon penned introduction to a recently re-released autobiography on Skinner's life calls him prolific stating, "he composed over 600 tunes" (Skinner Intro).

² Paul MacDonald, *Alex F. MacKay: A Lifelong Home* (Cambridge: Rounder Records ROUN7020, 1997).

³ Reavy encountered issues similar to Dan R. with regards to his inability to properly notate many of his early compositions.

Dan R's significance as a composer can be further established based upon the sheer number of commercial recordings his compositions have appeared on. Over 150 of Dan R's extant compositions appear on commercial recordings, many recorded multiple times. One of Dan R's most popular tunes, "Trip to Windsor Reel", has been recorded over forty times. "Trip to Windsor's" success is indicative of the geographic and stylistic boundaries Dan R's tunes have crossed. Musicians within Irish, English, Scottish and Cape Breton fiddling traditions have recorded "Trip to Windsor". The tune even recently appeared on the CD *Wake the Dead-A Celtic Celebration of the Songs of the Grateful Dead* [Arista/Grateful Dead Records GDCD 4074] and has been played on the stage of Carnegie Hall [Boys of the Lough: Live at Carnegie Hall --Lough Records 1989].

Another unique aspect of Dan R's tunes are how widespread their popularity has become within a variety of regional fiddling traditions, some stylistically different from Cape Breton. In an e-mail dialogue with Ottawa Valley fiddler April Verch, I asked several questions regarding *Trip to Windsor*, a tune she recorded on her Rounder records release *Verchusosity*.⁴ Verch's reply illustrates the fairly standard path Dan R's tunes took on their way into various regional fiddling repertoires.

I learned the tune when I was quite young and still studying with my first fiddle teacher, Rob Dagenais. Rob was born and raised in the Ottawa Valley (like me), which most probably means that Trip to Windsor was being played in the Ottawa Valley for some time already. I probably learned it in 1986 or so. At that time I wasn't picking tunes for any reason that I knew of, other than liking them in general...I did play it as my contest reel for a couple of

⁴ April Verch, *Verchusosity* (Cambridge: Rounder Records ROUND7019, 2001).

years. What I can tell you now however, is that it is a tune known in many circles, from my experience both throughout Canada and the United States and even in the UK. I live in Saskatchewan now and it is a popular tune here as well, and I have played it with others in jam sessions in Boston, California, and England. I can also say that it is a timeless fiddle tune that has not diminished in popularity since I learned it and I have a feeling it will always be a favourite.

In my opinion, one of the reasons this tune travels so well is that although it was written with a "maritime" flavour, it does not have to be played as a maritimer might play it to sound right. For example, it does not require the "cut" or bowed triplet that east coast fiddlers would include, they can easily be left out, or replaced with trills or other ornaments which prevail in other fiddle traditions, and it still sounds like it was meant to be played that way. It is also a tune which is difficult enough to be interesting, but easy enough to be fun to play. It is technically accessible to all levels of musicians. I really like that it covers the entire range of the fiddle, and is, in a way, constructed so that dynamics happen naturally. For example, in the B part of the tune, it dives to the low A note, and then builds back up in register, so that it builds naturally. I think that aspect of the tune which occurs a couple of times throughout it also adds to inexplicable drive the tune has. I really do love this tune, it was a good one to ask me about!

While some of Dan R's tunes certainly traveled well, he rarely if ever composed with other styles in mind. Dan R's internalization of the Highland Scottish fiddle tradition was what enabled him to innovate in such a successful manner, and he ultimately composed with players of that tradition in mind.

Dan R. bears a distinct similarity to Irish fiddler Tommie Potts with regards to his internalization of the Irish fiddle tradition. Michael O'Suilleabhain, in the Fintan Vallely

et al. edited collection of lectures from the 1996 Crossroads Conference held in Dublin, described this internalization.

I believe that I can show conclusively here that he is the epitome of true innovation by virtue of the fact that his understanding of tradition was so grounded as to allow him to be primed for the innovation that flowed through him.

Dan R's understanding of the tradition grew from its omnipresent nature during his youth, and like Potts he was primed for the innovation when it flowed through him.

Dan R's compositional style, like his playing style, began deeply rooted in the Cape Breton tradition. He experienced change driven by a profoundly modern Scottish influence during WW II but settled into a style that blended both influences near the end of his life. In a 1994 article about his uncle, John Donald Cameron noted the connection between Dan R's compositional style and these distinct periods.

It may be said that the compositions of Dan R. MacDonald fall into three categories: a) those composed before he went overseas, the main influence being the playing of older tunes by native performers; b) those composed while in Europe, which were influenced by the music of Northeast Scotland which the great J. Scott Skinner was a native son and c) those composed after Dan Rory returned to Canada, which combines both influences. A common thread to them all, however, is that they remain true to the Scottish idiom (Tunes/Puir Spring 1996).

The fact that Dan R's compositions remained true to the Scottish idiom certainly wasn't an accident. Dan R's focus in life was to create new compositions, though he remained

aware of the contextual limitations within which he needed to operate for his tunes to be accepted into the tradition.

These limitations were dictated by an unwritten but clearly understood code affecting whether or not the tradition would accept or reject a new tune. In an comparison of the fiddling styles of Texas and Cape Breton, Earl Spielman would note the particulars regarding the contextual framework of the composer within the Cape Breton tradition.

It concerns the use of particular harmonic progression, a melodic ornament, a rhythmic figure, an ordering of sections of a multi-sectional work, as well as the previous mentioned choice of style, tempo, meter and phrasing. The emphasis on each place is on preserving and continuing a tradition—on perfecting an already existing musical style. And here a very important yet subtle distinction must be made. Individual style might appear to be thwarted or discouraged in a strict musical tradition. On the contrary, individual style is very much encouraged but is restricted within certain boundaries. That is, variation and alteration that do not destroy or jeopardize the overall style are permitted (43).

One of the main reasons behind Dan R's success as a composer was his ability to do what Spielman described better than anyone, vary and alter within the traditions musical code without destroying.

In an article on musical improvisation Ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl would note that this type of musical code consisted of what he called "distinct traditional units." Nettl continues, "These units are, as it were, the building blocks which tradition accumulates, and which musicians within the tradition make use of, choosing from among them, recombining and rearranging them" (Thoughts on Improv 13). In Cape Breton, with the

noted exception of Dan R.'s friend Dan Hughie MacEachern, few other fiddlers have been able to recombine and rearrange the building blocks of tradition as successfully or as prolifically as Dan R.

Not only was Dan R. aware that he was creating within a 'traditionally determined format', he disliked it when other musicians took his compositions and strayed from this format. As far as Dan R. was concerned it reflected badly upon his reputation. Dan R.'s concern for his compositional offspring is evident in a story told by his nephew, Cyril Cameron.

The only time I seen Dan R. get 'masach'⁵ was with Don Messer. He thought Don Messer was a great fiddler you know. But at the time he was playing one night and Dan R. got kind of rough. I said what's wrong. (Dan R. said) Are you listening to Messer playing that tune? Yeah, it sounds good to me. Yeah, that's my tune he said. Messer changed some things and called it a breakdown. I guess it bothered Dan R.

It bothered Dan R. because it wasn't the tune as Dan R. had composed it. It had been changed, and the changes made by Messer deviated from the traditionally determined format within which Dan R. normally operated. Messer had played Dan R.'s composition as a breakdown, a tune type not commonly played within the Cape Breton Scottish tradition.

The more thorough a composer's knowledge of this musical code, the more quickly a tradition is likely to accept his compositions. For the most talented composer, his output often fit the tradition so seamlessly that tunes would often pass to other players

aurally without those learning it knowing who composed it. So how exactly did Dan R. go about re-combining these building blocks of tradition?

Attempts at directly documenting the compositional process are commonly hindered by the inherently solitary nature of the act. For Dan R., and many other folk composers, a diminished level of privacy would often bring about a temporary cessation of the composing process. It would only resume when the composer felt the reestablishment of an appropriate level of isolation. Unfortunately for the researcher, the composer would often only reconvene the process when attempts at properly documenting it were all but impossible.⁶ As a result, when a composer died, much of the information about his compositional process and output was lost forever.

Though firsthand opportunities for direct documentation of Dan R's compositional process ended with his 1976 death, I believe we can still gain a realistic understanding of the approach he used to successfully combine the building blocks of tradition. By examining extant stories regarding Dan R's compositional process, and comparing them with the few other studies of folk composition that exist, a similar picture begins to emerge.

In his 1995 study of Newfoundland fiddler Emile Benoit, Colin Quigley discusses an initial spark that triggers a musical idea amongst folk composers. This spark, which provides the impetus for a new composition, Quigley refers to as "noticing" (73). For Benoit this noticing phase could be kicked off by ambient noise or a pre-existing melodic

⁵ Idiomatic Cape Breton Gaelic word generally meaning angry or incensed.

⁶ Dan R's favorite time to compose was early in the morning when the air was crisp and he had his privacy.

phrase from a tune already in his repertoire. He would then take this basic musical building block and expand on it to create a new composition.

Dan R's compositional approach is consistent with Quigley's description of Benoit. Like Benoit, Dan R. often began with the practice of 'noticing' and took musical inspiration from just about anything. On an island which exuded music, Dan R. received his inspiration from anything and everything.

Cape Breton was a musically charged island similar in atmosphere to the regional fiddling tradition of Donegal, Ireland. In Donegal, according to Allan Feldman and Eamon O'Doherty, older musicians "would take music from anything. They would take music from the sound of the sea, or they would go alongside the river at the time of a flood and they would take music from that" (50). Like the fiddlers of Donegal, ambient noise played a part in Quigley's assessment of Emile Benoit. For Benoit it could be anything from a buzz saw to the sound of an airplane that was his initial musical impetus for a new tune.

This 'noticing' phase could hit Dan R. at any time, and once it did the building of a new tune would begin immediately. Fiddler Carl MacKenzie spoke with Dan R. regarding the noticing phase of his composing process.

First of all, he said in the morning was the best time to compose. That's when he made his best tunes. And the other thing was maybe he'd be at a mill or someplace and he'd hear the saw going. Not necessarily a saw but something that had a repetitious sound, and it gave him an idea for a phrase for a tune. And he'd build around it. (Carl MacKenzie Personal Interview).

For Dan R. the composing process almost always began with a whistle. When he would stay with her family, Dan R.'s cousin Catherine MacKenzie heard the whistle often. According to MacKenzie, "He'd be just there at the table with the pencil and there would be a little whistle under his breath" (Catherine MacKenzie Personal Interview).

Dan R. would describe the importance of whistling during the posthumously broadcast 1977 radio segment *Dan R.: The Life and Tunes of Dan R. MacDonald*.⁷

You can be in bed hard asleep. This will come in your mind, right in your brain. I gotta get up right away. You're start whistling and you put that together. You can go ahead and take a lead pencil and a piece of manuscript and you can put that down. Maybe you get the first turn. Well, the second turn is the hardest of all. Now the other night I composed a tune, I called it "the Stornaway". I got up slowly in the night and I wrote it right down right easy when John Angus was sleeping. And I wrote it down, and I played it next day. You let 'er go for three days that's always...it's subject to change. You can change that and block that out and put something else in that's better. That's what I done on that jig, "The Stornaway Jig." I thought of something else right in my brain. I put something else in that was a little better. Now the jig is all right.

Though the morning was his favorite time to compose, Dan R. had little control over when the urge would hit. While whistling, he would begin working out the A part of the tune. For Dan R, the A part of the tune came easiest. It was what Cape Breton fiddlers regularly call 'the turn', the point in the tune where it shifts from its A to B part, that he felt was the hardest segment of the composition to compose. For many Cape

⁷ Broadcast as a segment on CBC radio's *Between Ourselves*

Breton fiddlers including Carl MacKenzie, Dan R's handling of the turn is what makes his compositions so memorable.

He had a way of weaving them together. You hear lots of tunes that they'll play an A part and a B part and then the B part goes back to the same ending of the first part. You know very similar. You can predict the way the tune is going to go. Generally, he (Dan R.) will put an ending your not expecting and it just brings out the tune. He took the jig from just simple fiddling to something that took a lot of effort. He made some wonderful jigs. Livingston Pond Jig-- wonderful jig, difficult, but it's a wonderful tune. He made great tunes across the whole spectrum (Carl MacKenzie Personal Interview).

The fact that Dan R. composed consistently across the entire spectrum of the tradition is undeniable as his Jigs, Reels and Strathspeys are all equally popular within the genre.

His compositional abilities by all accounts resembled a faucet over which he had no control. It was always on! Though I doubt Dan R. ever tried to personally shut off the faucet, the musically charged atmosphere his fiddling friends created precluded such a scenario and, in fact, contributed to his output.

In his study *Irish Music in America*, Dr. Michael Moloney discusses the importance of direct encouragement from one's musical peers in the compositional process. In examining two of Irish-America's most recognized composers, Ed Reavy and Paddy O'Brien, Moloney clearly illustrates how important musical interaction and acceptance from one's community is in the compositional process. Ed Reavy, according to Moloney, "stopped composing when he lost his immediate community of musicians

and stopped receiving direct encouragement” while O’Brien never composed a tune while living in New York. All of his two hundred plus compositions were composed while home in Tipperary (389).

Like O’Brien, Dan R’s musical friends were the fuel that powered his compositional engine. In Scotland it would be fiddlers like J. Murdoch Henderson (“J. Murdoch Henderson Reel”) and Ron Gonella (“Ron Gonella Jig”). In Boston it would be individuals like Herbie MacLeod (“Herbie MacLeod Strathspey”) and Bill Lamey (“Greenough Jig”). In Ontario it was Neil R. MacDonald (“Neil R. MacDonald’s Strathspey”) and Sanford MacLellan (“Sanford MacLellan Reel”). As discussed further in Chapter 9, Dan R. repaid their friendship and hospitality with tunes titled in their honour.



Figure 14: Dan R. MacDonald & Dan Hughie MacEachern⁸

Dan R. spent his later and most fruitful years as a composer living in Cape Breton's Inverness County, an area renowned for having some of the finest fiddle players on the island. Within walking distance of Mabou's Highland Street, where he lived with his sister, Dan R. could drop in and visit a whole host of local musicians. Down the road were the Beatons, Donald Angus and Kinnon, as well as young Joey who would begin composing in 1967 with Dan R.'s occasional guidance. Just up the street was fiddler Willie Kennedy, whom Dan R. quickly befriended after he moved to Mabou.

House sessions, often featuring music till the sun came up, were still a regular occurrence throughout Inverness County. According to University College of Cape Breton Extension & Community Affairs director Sheldon MacInnes, these sessions were essential to a composer like Dan R.

At good sessions for example, the music is often discussed in a serious demeanor as well as being played. This is an important element in the process of sharing new compositions and in offering a spontaneous critique on the local works of Dan R. or Dan Hughie (67).

Dan R. liked the notoriety his compositions gave him within the island's fiddle community. According to those who knew him best composing was his greatest joy in

⁸ Photograph is courtesy of Cyril Cameron who took it in front of Dan Hughie MacEachern's home. It appears in the liner notes of Alex Francis MacKay's Lifelong Home CD on Rounder Records and is credited as being taken in 1947. According to John Donald Cameron, "The picture was actually taken in 1971. Cyril, Dan R. and I visited him one fall afternoon. Dan R. and I took our fiddles and Cyril took his camera. When we were leaving Dan Hughie came outside and its actually my fiddle he is holding."

life. In the 1977 radio segment *Dan R.: The Life and Tunes of Dan R. MacDonald*, Fr.

Rankin provided further insight into the joy Dan R's got out of composing.

I think that he got an awful joy out of his composing. Because he'd never tell you....he often did this me. He'd never tell me that he made a tune. But if you knew him and you were playing with him you'd run across a new one. What do you think of it? That's pretty darn nice. I made that see and he'd beam. And I think he got a great deal of satisfaction out of his music, his ability to play, and his ability to compose.

Although Dan R's friends played the tunes he composed on radio and television, this wasn't what made him the happiest. The joy for Dan R. came from the fact that the tunes he had mailed to Buddy MacMaster, Winston Fitzgerald and Donald Angus Beaton were liked and being played by a fiddler he admired. To show his respect, Dan R. would compose and name tunes in honor of these musical friends ["Buddy's Favorite Reel", "Winston Fitzgerald Clog", "Donald Angus Beaton Jig"].

Amongst the most well respected musicians within the inner circles of the Cape Breton fiddling tradition, Dan R's tunes remain widely known and admired.⁹ Margaree fiddler Cameron Chisholm, a semi reclusive but widely regarded fiddler within Cape Breton fiddling circles, is one individual who thought highly of Dan R's work. Chisholm shared his thoughts regarding Dan R's compositional skills with Allister MacGillivray during an interview for his bio in MacGillivray's *Cape Breton Fiddler*. "Pass me a book

⁹ See Appendix B for a list of musicians who've recorded Dan R's compositions.

from Scotland and I'll only take a few tunes here and there. But if all of Dan R's tunes were in one book, I'd have to go from page to page and learn them all" (97).

In his own bio within Allister MacGillivray's *Cape Breton Fiddler* book respected Halifax multi instrumentalist Dave MacIsaac echoed Chisholm's admiration for Dan R's compositions. According to MacIsaac,

Dan R. was the most consistent composer of fiddle music ever! I have some of his rarer tunes such as 'Rosewood Reel' on Bb, 'The Lockwood Jig' on F, 'The Fiddlers Green Road' on A, and 'Mrs. Neil R. MacDonald Strathspey' on B minor (129).

Early on, it would not only be the quality of his compositions but also his prodigious output that established Dan R. as a composer of distinction amongst fellow Cape Breton fiddlers.

Dan R. was fond of saying his compositions came to him "right easy like a dream." What set Dan R. apart from many other folk composers was that when the tunes came 'right easy', he made certain to notate them. The medium (e.g. scraps of paper, tree stump) was not as important as getting it notated. Titling the tune once it was notated was often the next step in Dan R's compositional process.

In the recently published *Encyclopedia of Celtic Tunes for Flatpicking Guitar*, Steve Kaufman discusses a trip to the UK during which he traveled to and recorded various musical sessions with his minidisk. He clearly illustrates the relative low level of importance a tune title has in the tradition. At the completion of each piece he recorded

Kaufman inquired as to the names of the tunes played in the previous medley. According to Kaufman;

It doesn't matter was a phrase I heard very often. And this was a remarkable lesson. I soon learned that it really doesn't not matter what the tunes were called. The tune is the important factor and the title is nothing more than something you and I can use to categorize or place the song into a slot of some kind. You utilize a tune to specify and remember certain tunes but the title is the least important part of the tune –it's only a tag or like a post it note (5).

Kaufman was only partially correct in his assertion that the title is nothing more than simply a tool for categorization. For musicians who knew nothing about a tune's origin the title may have simply served as a tool, but for Dan R. as with most composers the titling process held much deeper significance. The title often holds the story behind the composing of the tune or helps date its composition.

For Dan R. titling his composition was often as important as the musical component, and he had a definite ideology regarding it. Like Newfoundland fiddler Emile Benoit, Dan R. used tune titling as a way of "giving his compositions meaning through his extra musical association" (Quigley 96). He rarely named a tune without a reason, a fact evident in the vast majority of extant stories regarding his titles. If time permitted, I believe narratives about the vast majority of Dan R's extant compositions could be collected. Though not the main scope of this thesis, within Appendix A I have attempted to note as many of these 'extra musical associations' as possible.

While the tendency has been to dismiss the title as being of relatively little importance, an examination of Dan R's extant tune titles helped me greatly in the process

of putting his life in context. I found that amongst the many benefits of extant tune titles was the fact that one could often use them to help gauge the approximate date of composition. Based upon when an event occurred or a person was born, we can with a high level of certainty estimate the period in Dan R's life during which the tune was composed.

Using this method to date several of Dan R's compositions, for which we already have definitive dates, provides an example of how accurate the outcome can be. We know for a fact that in 1947, after returning from Scotland, Dan R. went to Windsor, Ontario. Though he didn't make it a regular practice to date his compositions, Dan R. himself would note that he composed the "Trip to Windsor Reel" in 1947. "The Glendale Festival Reel" was likely composed post 1973, as that year represents the events inaugural outing. "Kinnon Beaton's Jig" couldn't have been composed before 1956, as that was the year Beaton was born. Tune titles reflecting place names Dan R. couldn't have reasonably known about prior to going to Scotland ("Bonar Bridge Hornpipe", "Ballatar Castle Reel"), were almost certainly composed during or after World War II.

The story behind the composing of "Morrison's Ridge Jig" is indicative of how Dan R. clearly connected tune titles with aural associations. John Donald Cameron described the tune and it's titling in a 1996 article appearing in the Cape Breton publication *Am Braighe*.

As he approached the house he must have had the inspiration for a new tune because he was not inside for very long when he asked Angus if the area they went for the hardwood years ago had a particular name. When Angus

replied that it was known as "Morrison's Ridge", Dan Rory asked his cousin Edna if she could give him a pencil and a plain sheet of paper. He then sat at the kitchen table and drew staff lines on the paper she got for him. He began to write music. Edna watched as he paused, rose from his chair and went outside where he walked around for a few minutes. He then finished writing his music and that evening played "Morrison's Ridge" for his uncle and cousins. When it was suggested that he consider naming the tune for the MacDonalds, Dan R. said that the mood of the music was more in line with the pastoral atmosphere of Morrison's Ridge (4).

Though Dan R's tune titles were more often than not meaningfully thought out, he would occasionally be pressed for time and for simplicity sake title his compositions after a word or place that intrigued him. On one occasion after composing a new reel, the word 'dismal' piqued Dan R's fancy and he put the ill-fated title "The Dismal Reel" on the composition. Upon sending it to violinist J. Murdoch Henderson in Scotland, J. Murdoch told Dan R. that it was a "dandy" tune undeserving of any title using the word dismal. At Henderson's suggestion Dan R. changed the title to "The Devil's Delight", though Winston Fitzgerald recorded it using its original title on one of his Celtic label releases.¹⁰

Dan R's love of nature was also reflected in his choices for tune titles. Examples include "The Whirling Brook Reel", "The Red Robin Jig" and "Heather Hill Reel". John Allan Cameron would relate the story behind the composition of another of Dan R's more widely recorded tunes, "Heather Hill Reel".

¹⁰ Winston's first release on the Celtic label was Celtic CX-40.

Dan R. was working in the woods in Scotland. And he was always whistling. (Whistles.) And he got an idea. He was cutting down these large trees and they were building bridges at the time. And a tune formed in his head. And he took a pencil, and he wrote it on this large tree stump. And there was a hill nearby with lots of heather on it. And he called it "Heather Hill." And it later became "Heather on the Hill." And the next morning he came back with his fiddle, and he played it off the stump. And that tune has become---I mean everyone has taken it for granted. I mean, it's a great, great tune (qtd. in Caplan 9).

Dan R's love of the outdoors extended to fishing and several extant tunes were named after fishing expeditions. "The River Bend Jig" would be so named following a successful day of salmon fishing in Judique.

When I was at Hughie O'Handleys and I went with those MacDougall's one night we got five salmon. I started on my own. I went down to Angus Gillis the Blacksmith in Judique and I told him to make a gaff for me. And I told him that I'd give him a salmon when I'd get it. And he made the gaff for me. And he put a handle in it for me. And I remember going one morning after a flood, I started at Long John's bridge and I went clear up to Allan William's. And I got seventeen. The ice broke out of the turn and came in clean clear through the field and went cross the road and we couldn't even get to church. Big chunks of ice ten feet high. And John Archie, Long John, had to go and get Joxie MacDonald with the snowplow to pick that off of there so we could get to church. Big flood. And still there was about three or four feet of water over there I had to use rubber boots going to church one day. Then that went down and it was all right then. And there's nothing on this gods green earth as powerful as water or the ice it will break through anyplace. It will put tree's out of there roots it will do anything.

RM: Is that the one you wrote River Bend Jig about?

Dan R.: Yes (qtd in *Dan R.: The Life and Tunes of Dan R. MacDonald*).

Though people would certainly still be playing and enjoying his compositions, Dan R.'s legacy has his nephew John Donald to thank for the fact that people will actually be aware that they are playing Dan R. tunes.

This prodigious composer never published a collection of his tunes, although when he first moved in with his sister in 1968 he was approached about it. According to John Donald, the problem with Dan R. was,

He just liked to hear his music played, so he gave it out freely. In the sense that he wrote out the tunes for somebody and passed them on to them. They learned it, but then they'd play it, and someone else would pick it up on a tape recorder or somewhere, or learn it by ear someways. If it was a good tune and got well liked, they'd be playing it all the time. And the tune was never registered—it was passed along orally, here and there. Eventually, nobody knew who composed it in many case. (qtd. in Caplan 14).

To solve this issue John Donald compiled, and his company Cameron Music Sales published, 1,500 copies each of *The Heather Hill Collection* in 1985 and *The Trip to Windsor Collection* in 1994. After being out of print for a number of years The Heather Hill Collection was reprinted in 2002.

Though Dan R. was prodigious in his output, not all of his compositions entered the tradition. Dan R.'s compositions, which remain extant and part of the tradition, can be placed into three categories. The first category includes those compositions that are actively played by most fiddlers in the tradition. "Heather Hill Strathspey", "Lime Hill

Strathspey”, “Red Shoes Reel”, “The River Bend Jig”, “Trip to Windsor Reel” and “Tom Raes Reel” all fall into this category. The second category includes another portion of Dan R’s output that is known by only one or two fiddlers but does not exist in the collective repertoire of the wider cross section of fiddlers on the island. The third category of tunes in Dan R’s canon are those tunes he composed, yet are, at present, rarely played by those in the tradition. Tunes like “Alberts Clog” and “Doreen Castle Jig” have only been recorded once, while “The Aboyne Hornpipe” and “The Boomerang Jig” have never appeared on a commercial recording and are rarely if ever played.

While many Dan R. tunes are widely played within the Cape Breton fiddling tradition, his compositional prowess is only now becoming known to a broader audience. The combination of his free and easy lifestyle and passion for fiddling with his willingness to mentor and encourage others has benefited numerous musicians and composers. It has also endeared Dan R. to almost anyone who knew him well. The personal influence, both direct and indirect, of the man and his music is the last remaining important aspect of the emerging legend of Dan R.

Conclusion

The Personal Impact of an Emerging Legend The Devil's Delight- Reel

Arr.: J. Mairdock Henderson



© John Donald Cameron

Figure 15: The Devil's Delight

Semi-itinerant during the later years of his life, the Island of Cape Breton became Dan R's patron as friends and family welcomed him into their homes during his travels. Related or not, Dan R. was treated as member of the family. The island's fiddling communities fed him, nurtured his talents, and paid homage to his creative genius by playing his tunes. Dan R. returned the favor by playing music whenever asked and ultimately honoring the communities, and those who lived in them, by immortalizing them in a tune title.

Like Irish composer Turlough O'Carolan, who named his compositions for those who provided him food and lodging, page after page of Dan R's tunes are named for fiddlers, pianists and other lovers of fiddle music. Three full pages of tune titles beginning with Miss... ("Miss Agnes Campbell's Favourite", "Miss Theresa Morris of

Colindale”) appear in Appendix A, each representing a gesture of appreciation by Dan R. towards an individual he met in his life whom he felt deserved a tune titled in their honor.¹

Though Dan R. was well liked by everyone I spoke to, I erred in not choosing an individual who had a less than positive view of Dan R. According to those who knew him best, there were those who didn’t think highly of Dan R. Commenting on an initial draft of this thesis Cyril Cameron would write,

If you were not married and had a single care free life as Dan R. did....well he was often shunned by the vast majority that were married and committed to raising a family. A single man like Dan R., with little cares other than his own personal affairs, was looked at as a negative and in some case, (with) jealous zeal.

Cyril Cameron’s remarks regarding his uncle seem to be substantiated by other studies of “itinerant” tradition bearers. According to Gerben Zaagsma’s article, the traveling musicians of Prague known as the Klezmerim “were loved but at the same time held in low esteem” (225). The traveling tinsmith/musician in rural Ireland was also held to a similar kind of double standard with regards to their musical talents. Though some didn’t like Dan R. for what he represented, most who met him thought highly of him.

Dan R’s contributions to the genre extend well beyond simply naming a tune in honor of a person or place. Dan R. MacDonald was like a spider at the center of a Cape

¹ The practice of naming tunes for patrons and benefactors is ageless. J. Scott Skinner did it in Scotland, harper Turlough O’Carolan would do it in Ireland as would Mozart and Bach in the courts of Europe during their own lives.

Breton fiddling web, continuously feeding off his surroundings while expanding his reach and influence. Unlike the spider, Dan R would help, rather than simply feed off, those who entered his web. Dan R. was a mentor, teacher, and supporter of his beloved Cape Breton Island patrons, both in life and death. Through personal and third party interviews, as well as via a thorough examination of the extant literature on the subject, I have substantiated my claim that Dan R. MacDonald's impact upon the Cape Breton fiddling tradition has been significant.

As an aspiring fiddler Dan R. learned from two legends within the Cape Breton fiddling tradition, Big Ranald MacLellan and John Willie MacEachern. In many ways, Dan R. followed their lead by encouraging and helping numerous fiddlers including Buddy MacMaster, Jerry Holland, Kinnon Beaton and the late John Morris Rankin. Through his own compositions and the influence of books he personally brought back from Scotland, Dan R. has influenced, either directly or indirectly, multiple generations of fiddlers and composers.

Dan R's contemporaries included noted fiddlers/composers Gordon MacQuarrie, Dan Hughie MacEachern, and Donald Angus Beaton as well as fiddlers Angus Chisholm, Winston "Scotty" Fitzgerald, Willie Kennedy, Bill Lamey, Paddy LeBlanc, Mary Hughie MacDonald, and Johnny Wilmot. During his life Dan R. played with these individuals, composed tunes for them, and contributed numerous tune manuscripts for their use. Chapter six included substantial material regarding Dan R's impact on the legendary fiddler Winston "Scotty" Fitzgerald, but this is not the only connection to these contemporaries.

Growing up, Dan R was a frequent guest at the home of fellow Cape Breton composer Dan Hughie MacEachern. Over the years as both became noted for their compositions, they developed a friendly bit of competition and no doubt influenced one another. Gordon MacQuarrie, like most of his contemporaries, also considered Dan R. amongst “his list of musical friends”.² While Dan R. shared music and tunes with both MacQuarrie and MacEachern, it was by no means a one-way street as their camaraderie helped fuel each others interest in fiddling.

The 1920s gave birth to a host of talented Cape Breton fiddlers, including two of particular note to Dan R’s story- cousin Alex Francis MacKay from the Glendale area and Hugh Allan “Buddy” MacMaster from Judique via Timmins, Ontario. Both benefited from direct associations with Dan R.

In his biographical sketch in Allister MacGillivray’s *The Cape Breton Fiddler*, MacKay would note Dan R’s importance in his musical development.

I was interested. Maybe it was born in me! There were players like Gordon MacQuarrie, Ronald MacLellan, and Dan R MacDonald who’d come to our house; I guess it was in the thirties. They knew we liked music – that’s why they came. Gordon was an influence on me, but Dan R gave me the most tips (130).

MacKay noted that he also owed a good part of his repertoire to Dan R.,

The old traditional tunes are pretty hard to beat, but as for the books, I got most of mine from Dan R.; he got them overseas. When he was finished with them, he gave them

² Though the Island has had its fair share of composers, Gordon MacQuarrie, Dan Hughie MacEachern and Dan R. MacDonald are widely considered three of the genre’s most important.

to me – Gow, Marshall, Glen, Skinner – about two dozen books in all! (131).

Born in Ontario and returning with his parents to the island at the age of four, Buddy MacMaster is unquestionably the most revered Cape Breton fiddler in the tradition today. Following his arrival in Cape Breton in the late 1920s, until this day, he has immersed himself in the island’s music and surrounded himself with accomplished fiddlers. As noted in the biographical sketch to his 2000 CD *The Judique Flyer*, MacMaster’s early years set a solid foundation for his fiddle playing future.

From the time he arrived in Judique, Buddy was exposed to the old-time fiddlers. In Port Hood, there was the Big Fiddler and Johnny Batherson (Matt Minglewood’s grandfather). In Judique, there was Alexander MacDonnell and Angus MacMaster. It was fiddlers visiting in his home that made the strongest impressions on Buddy. Dan Hughie MacEachern (Glenora), Dan R. MacDonald, Gordon MacQuarrie, Dan Hughie MacEachern (Queensville), Bill Lamey, Winston Fitzgerald and Alexander MacDonnell, all were regular visitors to the MacMaster household. (par. 13).

The accomplished fiddler, who didn’t record his first album “The Judique Flyer” until 1989, became well known through the once typical island performance venues – dances, parish halls, and picnics. Buddy, widely recognized for “his rock solid dance fiddling”, shared a passion for fiddle music that made he and Dan R. lifelong friends.

Throughout his career Buddy has also maintained another Dan R. tradition, encouraging and influencing younger fiddlers including his niece Natalie MacMaster. In many ways, Buddy is simply returning the encouragement Dan R. provided him early in his career.

The first dance I got paid for was in the Troy schoolhouse; I was about 15. There was no accompaniment and I played with Vincent MacMaster, a nephew to Angus the Piper. I got four dollars and paid my own way up on the bus and back on the train the next day, which left me three dollars clear. On the way home, I met Dan R. MacDonald and Kitchener MacDonald on the old Judique Flyer. Dan R. told me (regarding my pay), 'You did well!'" (MacGillivray TCBF 150).

In later years Dan R. would provide manuscripts and tunes to Buddy, regularly stopping by the Judique train station where Buddy worked. MacMaster's repertoire contains a healthy amount of Dan R's composed material, and he has included a Dan R. composition on all but one of his commercial recordings.

Cameron Chisholm, born in 1945 in Margaree Forks, Cape Breton, is representative of the World War II era fiddler influenced by Dan R. Cameron, nephew of Dan R's friend and Elliot Lake comrade Angus Chisholm, is also the brother of noted piano accompanist Maybelle Chisholm McQueen. Chisholm cites CJFX radio, his family, and piper Sandy Boyd as "three of the many sources from which he heard good Scottish music as a boy" (MacGillivray TCBF 96). Dan R. would be another major source from which he admittedly benefited.

Poor Dan R. (MacDonald) used to come up from Sydney. He'd write out tunes for me – all his compositions from 'Trip to Windsor to 'High Bridge Jig', and all those other great tunes in Bb. He was better than Scott Skinner. (MacGillivray TCBF 96).

Chisholm and Dan R. shared many tunes and stories during Dan R's golden years as he would regularly stop at their Margaree Forks home. Chisholm rarely records, though

fittingly on his first ever appearance on a commercial recording he included one of Dan R's compositions.³

As one moves into the 1960s, several names in particular rise to the surface of fiddlers with a Dan R connection – among them the late John Morris Rankin, Kinnon Beaton, Dave MacIsaac, and Jerry Holland. Beaton and Rankin represent a Mabou connection, while MacIsaac is from Halifax and Holland born in Boston. Several chapters in this thesis already cite the strong relationship between Dan R. and Rankin, as well as the impact he had on the young fiddler.

Kinnon Beaton, who comes from a long line of Cape Breton Scottish fiddlers, was a friend and contemporary of John Morris Rankin. He also benefited from a musical relationship Dan R. According to Beaton,

Dan R. MacDonald taught me how to read music. He used to be over at our house often, and he showed me the basics. It helped me for learning new tunes, that's for sure! (qtd. in MacGillivray TCBF 82).

The Beaton/Dan R. connection demonstrates the generational and familial relationships that are typical of the Cape Breton fiddling tradition. It also illustrates how easily Dan R's influence and tunes are passed down from one generation to the next.

Kinnon and his father, Donald Angus Beaton, were neighbors of Dan R's in Mabou. Glen Graham and Nova Scotia Minister of Tourism Rodney MacDonald are both accomplished fiddlers and grandchildren of Donald Angus Beaton. Collectively, they represent three generations that Dan R. directly (Kinnon and Donald Angus who

³ Maybelle Chisholm-MacQueen, *Pure Celtic Hearts* (Margaree: Cape Breton) 2000.

heard and played with Dan R.) or indirectly (Glen and Rodney who learned Dan R. tunes from their uncle) impacted. Kinnon's preference for Dan R's compositions is evident on his commercial recordings and he appears to have a special fondness for Dan R's jigs. He's recorded "The Mabou Bridge Jig", "Morrison's Ridge Jig", "The Dundee Jig", "The Glencoe Hall Jig", "The Lakevale Jig", and "The Stornaway Jig". Kinnon has also recorded other Dan R. compositions including "The CBC Strathspey", "Florence MacDonald's Reel", "Herbie Macleod's Strathspey" and "The Moxham Castle Strathspey".

Dave MacIsaac, son of noted Dunvegan, Cape Breton fiddler Alex Dan MacIsaac, received daily doses of Scottish music through his father and the fiddling friends he would visit. Through the influence of his father and exposure to Angus Chisholm and Buddy MacMaster, MacIsaac has evolved into a solid solo performer and gifted "studio" and "stage" musician who has worked with the who's who of the Cape Breton Celtic music scene including John Allan Cameron, Natalie MacMaster, and Rita MacNeil. MacIsaac's connection with Dan R is best seen through his eyes as a noted collector of music,

I have two original Captain Simon Fraser collections, various Gow collections (e.g., Niel Sr., Niel Jr., Nathaniel and John), the Glen collections, Charles Duff, Robert MacIntosh, and Malcolm MacDonald – all quite rare; plus, I'm glad to own a number of manuscripts by Dan R. MacDonald. (qtd. in MacGillivray TCBF 129).

MacIsaac has also recorded several Dan R. tunes including "The Boys of the Lake Jig", "The New Waterford Jig", and "Mrs. Marie MacEachern's Reel".

Jerry Holland, Cape Breton's most influential modern day composer, now lives in North Sydney though he was born in the Boston area. His early exposure to both Irish and Cape Breton fiddling helped cement his interest in the instrument.

My father was my first teacher and we listened to a lot of music together on records and at house parties and dances throughout Boston and Cape Breton. He wanted me to hear all the fiddlers possible, and it was through his determination that I was exposed at a very early age to great fiddlers such as Winston Fitzgerald and Angus Chisholm, Bill Lamey, Johnny Wilmot, Auby and Bert Foley, Jimmy Kelly, Theresa MacLellan, Cameron Chisholm, Dan R. MacDonald ... I owe a great deal to these fathers of music (Holland par. 12).

Holland has recorded numerous Dan R tunes ranging the entire spectrum of his repertoire. His recordings of Dan R. compositions include: "The Red Shoes Reel", "The Celtic Ceilidh Reel", "Charles MacKinnon's Reel", "The Dundee Jig", "Garmont Smiddy's Reel", "Hugh Jim Paul's Strathspey" and "The Reichwall Forest Reel". Holland even recorded "Jerry Holland's Strathspey", composed by Dan R. in Jerry's honor.

The 1970s, a period of revival in Cape Breton fiddling, produced an outstanding cast of accomplished Cape Breton fiddlers who would begin to emerge in the late 1980's and early 1990s. These include Brenda Stubbert, daughter of Point Aconi fiddler Robert Stubbert. Kendra MacGillivray, grand daughter of famed polka king Hugh A. MacDonald and the "Special 7" a group of young fiddlers trained by noted Antigonish instructor Stan Chapman.

According to a 1999 article that appeared in the *Toronto Star*,

Chapman has produced more fiddle masters than anyone else in Canada. Nine of his former students have gone on to professional recording careers. Two of them – Ashley MacIsaac and Natalie MacMaster – are known around the world.... That class produced many of the musicians who fueled an explosion of Celtic culture in the 1990s (Krochak par. 4).

The “Special 7” was a class that included Natalie MacMaster, Ashley MacIsaac, Rodney MacDonald, Jackie Dunn, Stephanie Wills and Melody and Kelly Warner.

Beyond Natalie and Ashley; Jackie Dunn, Rodney MacDonald, and Stephanie Wills have ongoing music careers. Wendy MacIsaac, another Chapman student and cousin of Ashley, also has a solid career, as does Kendra MacGillivray, who studied with Chapman and crossed paths with the “Special 7” during their time with Chapman. Melody Warner continues to play with her band Triskele and recently released a recording with her husband Derrick.

This generation would only have had personal contact with Dan R. when they were very young children, and none would have received any instruction from him on playing the fiddle⁴. Dan R’s connection with the “Special 7”, i.e. Wendy MacIsaac and Kendra MacGillivray et al., is through his relationships with their ancestors. The appreciation amongst this younger generation for Dan R’s compositions is evident by their continued inclusion of his tunes on their recordings.

In terms of indirect relationships with Dan R., Jackie Dunn represents another example of an individual with long standing familial connections to Dan R. Her relatives include fiddler /composer Dan Hughie MacEachern plus Archie Neil, Angus and

⁴ Prior to leaving Hugh A. “The Polka King” MacDonald’s home after a 1976 stay during the Antigonish Highland Games, Dan R. gave Hugh A’s then four year old grand-daughter Kendra MacGillivray a \$1.

Cameron Chisholm as well as fiddlers Howie MacDonald and Dave MacIsaac. Others with indirect, musical connections include Kendra MacGillivray and Natalie MacMaster. As a young child, Kendra often heard Dan R. tunes from her grandfather Hugh A. MacDonald while Natalie experienced a similar influence from her Uncle Buddy.

As a group, these fiddlers have continued to draw extensively upon the material of Dan R. MacDonald for their recordings. Ashley MacIsaac has recorded “Wilfred’s Fiddle Jig”, “Livingstone Pond Jig”, “Long Point Jig”, “Moxham Castle Strathspey”, and “The New Fiddle Jig”. Natalie MacMaster has recorded “Casa Loma Castle Reel”, “Reichwall Forest Reel”, “Neil R. MacDonalds Strathspey”, and “Heather Hill Reel”, which Wendy MacIsaac has also recorded.

Others who have commercially recorded Dan R.’s compositions read like a who’s who of the tradition during the last seventy years. They include 1984 US National Heritage Folk Arts Fellow Joe Cormier, who now makes his home in the Boston area. Prolific recording artist Carl MacKenzie who has recorded over forty Dan R. tunes. Winnie Chafe, Little Jack MacDonald, Paddy LeBlanc as well as internationally acclaimed Irish accordionist Sharon Shannon have all recorded Dan R. MacDonald’s compositions.

Beyond simply the popularity of his tunes, the place names and personal associations in Dan R.’s tune titles reveal the depth and breadth of his musical forays into the Cape Breton tradition. They also demonstrate his penchant for using tunes and titles as his coin of the realm. If one interacted with Dan R. on a regular basis and loved fiddle

music it is highly likely that they ended up receiving a tune named after them, a loved one, or the community in which they lived.

Dan R's friend Winston 'Scotty' Fitzgerald offers a wonderful example of this practice. Dan R composed a tune in honour of Fitzgerald's wife- "Mrs. Evelyn Fitzgerald Reel" (alternately titled "Mrs. Winston Fitzgerald Reel "). He also composed the jig "Beatty Wallace's Piano" in honour of Fitzgerald's pianist, "The Barren Road Jig" for the road on which he once lived, and "Estwood Davidson's Strathspey" in honour of his regular guitarist.

Dan R's good friend and fellow composer/fiddler Donald Angus Beaton and his family were also the beneficiaries of many Dan R tunes. Donald Angus had a jig and reel named for him, the reel was composed and named after him at his request. Dan R. also composed "Miss Mary Beaton's Jig" in honor of Donald Angus's sister and "Kinnon Beaton's Jig" and "Joey Beaton's Hornpipe" in honor of Donald Angus' two sons. This practice was common amongst fiddlers friendly with each other as Donald Angus Beaton's composition "Dan R's Favorite Strathspey" illustrates.

Tunes and titles served as Dan R's legal tender. It served as his quid pro quo for food, shelter, and friendship – musical or personal. Dan R. wasn't rich but he was rarely lacking in money. Dan R. just didn't care for much when it came to earthly goods, besides fiddle music, and spent his money accordingly. For a man whom many would

view as poor from a monetary perspective, he was obviously wealthy in terms of creative genius and that was his way of demonstrating his appreciation and friendship.⁵

Outside of Dan R's close friends and a small group of scholars very few people recognize Dan R. for the important impact he had, and continues to have, on the Cape Breton fiddling tradition. Hopefully this thesis sheds additional light on his impact, and Dan R. MacDonald will begin to receive some of the well-deserved recognition his contributions to the tradition warrant.

By all indications, his compositions will remain an essential ingredient in the evolving story of the Cape Breton fiddling tradition for the foreseeable future. One can find a recent example of his continued popularity in Natalie MacMaster, one of the present generations most widely regarded fiddlers, who was nominated for a Grammy award on the strength of her 1999 Rounder Records recording *My Roots are Showing*.⁶ Given Dan R's impact on the tradition it was fitting that one of his compositions, "Ann MacNamara's Strathspey", graced this first ever Cape Breton fiddle recording nominated for a Grammy.

The renewed visibility of fiddle music within Canadian popular culture has made even the average Canadian aware of the longstanding tradition of Scottish fiddling in Cape Breton. Though Ashley MacIsaac, Natalie MacMaster and The Rankin Family have brought Cape Breton fiddling to an increasingly wider audience, few people are aware of the role played by Dan R. in influencing and expanding the scope of the

⁵ Though never rich, Dan R. was also far from destitute. He worked most of his life and according to John Donald Cameron once showed them his bank book and he had a respectable amount of money in his account for the time.

⁶ Natalie MacMaster, *My Roots are Showing* (Cambridge: Rounder Records, 2000). #7033.

tradition during what will be recognized as the Golden Age of Highland Scottish Fiddling in the new world.

Despite this renewed interest in Cape Breton fiddling, little written material exists that places the music in the historic and cultural new world context within which it flourished following the Highland Clearances. Extant studies of Cape Breton fiddling often overemphasize the importance of a direct unbroken link with the Scottish Highlands, placing significantly less focus upon the changes that occurred within the tradition since that time. The reality though, is that the 21st Century Cape Breton fiddling tradition owes as much of its style, repertoire and practice to these changes, as it does to its Highland roots.

What has occurred within the Cape Breton tradition since the Highland Clearances has resulted in the building of a new world tradition upon an old world foundation. Dan R. MacDonald, as both an agent of change and agent of tradition, played an integral, albeit often unrecognized, background role, in shaping this new tradition. A review of his life sheds considerable light upon the cultural milieu within which his compositions flourished and also increases our knowledge surrounding the role of individual creativity and change within that tradition.

Creativity and change remain a core component of the Cape Breton tradition, as does the shaping of the traditional building blocks of musical code into new compositions. Composers like Jerry Holland, Kinnon Beaton, Dougie MacDonald, Joey Beaton and John Campbell continue to compose and introduce new material into the tradition.

As was the case with Dan R. not all of the compositions of today's composers enter the tradition. According to ethnomusicologist Kate Dunlay, within the Cape Breton tradition,

The process of shifting through new ideas and old material has always occurred; participants in the tradition and informed audience members select what they like and what seems correct. In this manner, the mainstream of the tradition is steered by consensus (Dunlay and Greenberg 5).

The present mainstream consensus within the Cape Breton fiddling tradition clearly illustrates the central role that Dan R. MacDonald's compositions will continue to play for some time.

When Dr. Edward D. Ives began pioneering the study of individual song makers in the 1960's he wrote, "we need to know a great deal more individual folk composers before we can make any meaningful generalization about them" (Larry Gorman 2). The study of individual folk composition within an instrumental context is presently at the same crossroads. Despite the increase in material and interest, at the onset of the 21st century only a handful of scholarly studies (e.g., Hornby, Garrison, MacKinnon) exist which focus specifically upon the Cape Breton fiddle tradition.

For this and other reasons, the island remains an area of abundance for future academic discourse regarding its instrumental folk music traditions. The depth of the tradition and limited success of efforts in the 1900s to document Cape Breton Island's fiddling tradition ensures that the 21st century will offer fertile research avenues for those with an interest in and willingness to conduct interviews, dig through archives, and use

the work of others as a springboard to the creation of additional knowledge about the genre. An understanding of, and an appreciation for, the values, experiences, and aspirations of the local artists will remain an essential ingredient to successful documentation of the tradition.

With this in mind, this thesis has focused less on breaking new ground with regards to theory, and more on providing future researchers with a deeper appreciation for, and understanding of, how an individual interpreter of tradition creates within an instrumental folk music context and contributes to the evolution of the tradition. Through parallels with other regional fiddling traditions and individual fiddlers I sought not only to establish similarities, but also to challenge future folklore researchers to begin giving instrumental folk composers the more in-depth coverage they deserve. It is my hope that further research will increase our presently limited understanding of: 1) how creativity influenced the genres in which individual contributors fashioned new material, 2) how the traditions dictated what was acceptable and influenced what became amalgamated into the tradition versus what fell by the wayside, and 3) how individual composers and musicians within the 20th century contributed to the vibrancy of instrumental traditions through their presence within the rural community social infrastructure.

In the Cape Breton tradition today, one can directly trace much of the music 'as old as the hills' to the influence and pens of Dan R. and an extremely close-knit group of fiddling friends. Dan Hughie MacEachern, Gordon MacQuarrie, Donald Angus Beaton, Elmer Briand, John Campbell and Wilfred Gillis along with Dan R. combined to produce the vast majority of newly composed tunes injected into the tradition for the better part of

sixty years. At the same time, the books Dan R. sent from Scotland to Nova Scotia, made the rounds, going from fiddler to fiddler, resulting in a tremendous impact on the tradition.

Dan R. rode the wave of Scottish Highland fiddling from its early Gaelic roots in Cape Breton into an urban industrial context following World War II and finally back to Cape Breton when the cornerstone for the tradition's present state of popularity was set. Dan R's contributions to Cape Breton fiddling during the twentieth century represent a key element in what remains one of North America's most vibrant regional fiddling traditions.

Geographically, Dan R's impact included the Sydney area in Northern Cape Breton Island and along the southwest coast of the island from Port Hawkesbury to Margaree. Appendix A outlines numerous tunes that support his deep connection to these areas. A quick jaunt up the west coast of the island takes you past the towns of Judique ("The Judique Polka"), Mabou ("Mabou Bridge Jig") Glencoe ("The Glencoe March"), Glenora ("The Glenora March"), Strathlorne ("Strathlorne March") and Pleasant Bay ("Pleasant Bay Clog").

Numerous fiddlers, recognized as some of the best in Cape Breton today, emerged from these same villages and all profess a respect for Dan R. and the influence he had on them. This influence came through a variety of means including personal contact and mentoring, sharing of his compositions, and via familial connections. These connections have helped Dan R's influence be passed on to the younger generation by uncles, aunts, and/or grandparents who had direct contact with him.

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Intro to Appended Charts

Appendix A was begun prior to beginning fieldwork during the summer of 1995. Its main intention has always been to keep as complete a list of Dan R's compositions as possible. The first draft of Appendix A included only tunes from the two posthumously published collections of Dan R's compositions. Revisions were made when additional tunes were found during fieldwork. John Donald Cameron would provide me with a list of an additional forty one compositions in the Fall of 2002.

Soon after starting to compile Dan R's extant compositional output, I realized the importance of tune titles in telling his life story. Every one of Dan R's tune titles is named for a specific person, place or event in his life. The notes accompanying each Dan R. tune within Appendix A have been provided in order to establish this extra musical association Dan R. made titling his compositions. Tune titles also helped identify the period within which Dan R. likely composed the tune. As an example we know for a fact that Dan R. didn't compose Hurricane Edna Reel prior to September 11, 1954, as that's the date of the Category 3 Hurricane for which Dan R. named the tune.

Appendix B attempts to identify as many of the commercial recordings on which a Dan R. MacDonald composition has appeared. Ian MacKinnon's thesis regarding the history of the Cape Breton recording industry was invaluable in the process of tracking down early recordings upon which a Dan R. composition appeared. I built upon the foundation built by MacKinnon by regularly jotting down Dan R. compositions when I came across one on commercial recordings. Appendix B continued to evolve as the thesis progressed due to continued popularity of Dan R's compositions. The most recent recording of Cape Breton fiddle music I received prior to submitting this thesis,

Smithsonian Folkways produced *The Heart of Cape Breton: Fiddle Music Recorded Live Along the Ceilidh Trail*, includes two separate recordings of Mrs. Norman McKeigan's Reel as well as the perennial Dan R. favorite Tom Rae Reel.

Appendix A:
Compositional Index

<u>Tune Title</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Published In</u>	<u>Notes</u>
1314 Crawford	Jig	Trip To Windsor Collection (TTW)	
Abergeldie Bridge	Hornpipe	TTW	
Abergeldie Castle	Slow- Strathspey	TTW	According to John Donald Cameron this is a slow strathspey. John Donald would also add that Dan R. composed a regular strathspey of the same name.
Abergeldie Castle	Strathspey		
Aboyne	Hornpipe	Heather Hill Collection (HH)	Area in Scotland where Dan R. worked during W.W. II
Afton, The	Reel	HH	
Albany, The	Jig	Winston Fitzgerald Private Manuscript Collection (WF)	
Albert	Clog	HH	
Albert Bridge	Reel	TTW	Community situated on the south side of the Mira river between Sydney and Louisburg.
Albert Finley	Reel	TTW	
Alcide Aucion	Hornpipe	Privately Held by John Donald	

		Cameron	
Alex MacDonell's Favorite		Privately Held by John Donald Cameron	
Alex Francis MacKay's	Jig	TTW	Dan R's First Cousin. Born 1922. One of Cape Breton's only remaining Gaelic speaking fiddlers. See pg. MacGillivray 130-131
Alexander Campbell's Wedding	Reel	TTW	
Alpin Road	Reel	TTW	
Alpine Ridge	Reel	TTW	Community four miles South S.E. of Mabou
Alpine Ridge	Jig	TTW	Community four miles South S.E. of Mabou
Amelia, The	Jig	TTW	
Andrew Fulton	Reel	Privately Held by John Donald Cameron	
Andrew MacIntyre	Reel	TTW	
Ann MacFarlane's Favorite	Jig	HH	
Ann MacNamara	Strathspey	HH	
Ann MacNeil's Favorite	Jig	TTW	
Ann Small's	Jig	TTW	
Anthony's Bridge, The	Jig	TTW	

Antigonish Highland Society, The	Reel	Privately Held by John Donald Cameron	
Arbuckles	Jig	WF	Possibly titled for a brook which flows into Northumberland strait near Malignant Cove
Arisaig	Jig	TTW	A settlement near Northumberland Strait north west of Antigonish.
Arisaig Cairn	March	TTW	
Arlington	Reel	HH	
Arlington	Hornpipe	TTW	
Arlington Castle	Reel	HH	
Athol Banks	Strathspey	HH	Athol is an area of Scotland where Dan R. likely worked during WW II
Back Street	Reel	HH	Road where Dan R. lived with his sister Katie Annin Mabou. Dan R. didn't have a name for the tune so his nephew D.A. Cameron suggested Back St.
Ballatar Castle	Reel	TTW	Castle in the town of Ballatar near where Dan R. was stationed in WW II
Balogie's	Reel	HH	Ballogie was where one of the Canadian Forestry Corps district headquarters was located in Scotland

Balogie's	Strathspey	HH	
Barber of Spring Park Road, The	Reel	TTW	For fiddler/barber Paddy Leblanc
Barra Falls	Hornpipe	HH	
Barren Road, The	Jig	HH	Composed for Winston Fitzgerald who lived on The Barren Road (the old Road between Sydney and North Sydney)
Barhead, The	Clog	HH	
Barrhead	Jig	TTW	Scottish Community
Beatty Wallace's Piano	Jig	TTW	Noted Cape Breton Pianist (1915-79) Noted for her work with Winston Fitzgerald. [See pg. 202 A Cape Breton Ceilidh]
Big Meadow, The	Strathspey	HH	Community about ten miles south-south-west of Whycomagh. Also known as Big Marsh.
Birch Tree, The	Reel	HH	
Black Spool, The	Jig	TTW	
Blockade, The	Jig	HH	
Bob Laney's	Reel	HH	
Bob Laney's	Strathspey		
Bonar Bridge	Hornpipe	HH	Place in Northern Scotland where stories about CFC members are

			still told "such as heaving their bicycles from the bridge into the Kyle of Sutherland at Bonar Bridge" (Wonder, 90)
Bonny Boy, The	Reel	TTW	
Bonny Lorraine	Jig	TTW	
Boomerang, The	Jig	TTW	
Boys of the Lake, The	Jig	TTW	
Bridgeport	Reel	TTW	An area within the town of Glace Bay
Broad Cove Concert, The	Jig	HH	One of Cape Breton's premier and longest running parish sponsored outdoor concerts. Dan R. can be seen playing at this concert in Ron MacEachern's Vanishing Cape Breton fiddler documentary.
Brookland	Jig	TTW	Pictou Co. Community
Brooks	Hornpipe	TTW	
Brookside	Jig	TTW	
Brookside	Reel	HH	
Brookside	Strathspey	HH	
Brook Village Concert, The	Jig	HH	Concert in a community about six miles south-south-east of Mabou at which Dan R. often played.
Bryde Kelly's	Reel	HH	

Buddy's Favorite	Reel	TTW	
Burbank	Reel	TTW	
Cambridge	Jig	HH	
Cameron Chisholm	Reel	TTW	Margaree fiddler who played with Dan R. on the Ceilidh Television show
Cameron Wedding, The	March	HH	
Campbell's Hill	Reel	HH	An area in Inverness Co. Cape Breton where fiddler Dan J. Campbell lived.
Campbell's Road	Jig	HH	
Camus O' May	Hornpipe	HH	
Cape Breton Ceilidh	Reel	HH	
Carron Lodge	Strathspey	Privately Held by John Donald Cameron	
Caribou Barren	Jig	TTW	An area in Inverness Co.
Caroline's Fancy	Jig	HH	
Caroline Favourite	Jig		
Carron Bridge	Reel	TTW	Camp just north of Thornhill, Dumfries-shire, Scotland where many CFC members were sent for further training once they arrived in Scotland
Carron Bridge	Strathspey	TTW	See above

Castle Bay	Reel	HH	Community on the north side of the southern end of East Bay, Cape Breton.
Castle Bay	Strathspey	HH	Community on the north side of the southern end of East Bay, Cape Breton. Fidd
Castle Hill	Jig	HH	
Castle Hill	Reel	HH	
Catherine and Annie's	Strathspey	TTW	
CBC, The	Strathspey	HH	
Celtic Ceilidh	Reel	HH	Composed in the 1930's
Chanter, The	Jig	HH	
Charles Crowley	Hornpipe	HH	
Charles MacKinnon	Reel	HH	Singer from East Bay area of Cape Breton
Charles Reynolds	Reel	TTW	Composed to ease temper of early 1970's CBC TV "The Ceilidh Show" producer. (See The Cape Bretoner V.3 #5 March/April 1995 p.13)
Cheyne	Strathspey	TTW	
Cleveland, The	Jig	HH	Community between West Bay and Port Hawkesbury along the boundaries between Richmond and Inverness Co.
Clifford Dillon	Reel	TTW	

Clowater's	Reel	TTW	
C.L. Wright	Jig	TTW	Music Co. (?)
Colindale	Hornpipe	HH	Community three miles south-west of the entrance to Mabou Inlet
Colin MacIntosh	Reel	TTW	
Concert, The	Reel	TTW	
Concert, The	Jig	TTW	
Concert, The	March	HH	
Condon's	Clog	Privately Held by John Donald Cameron	
Crandall Road	Reel	HH	About two miles north of Port Hawkesbury
Crooked River, The	Jig	TTW	
Cross Roads	Jig	HH	A settlement S.W. of the town of Antigonish
Cyclone, The	Strathspey	TTW	
Cyril Cameron's	Reel	HH	Dan R's Nephew who's now an RCMP officer in Missisauga, Ont.
D.J. MacInnis	Reel	TTW	Composed for fellow fiddler and friend of Dan R., Dan Joe MacInnis. See p.122TCBF
Dan R. MacDonald's	Jig	CBCSM	
Dark Fiddle, The	Reel	TTW	Dan R. had a dark fiddle and which heused to

			praise
Daylight, The	Reel	HH	
Dennet Castle	Reel	HH	Likely composed for a castle in Dinnet, Scotland where CFC was stationed
Devils Delight (Dismal, The)	Reel	HH	Originally called The Dismal Reel but after the tune was sent to J. Murdoch Henderson he thought it was too good to have such a name and told Dan R. to rename it Devil's Delight.
Dipper's	Hornpipe	HH	
Dr. Robert Frederick Hand	Clog	HH	
Doctor's Brook	Reel	HH	Doctor's brooks can be found in Cape Breton and Antigonish Co.
Doctor's Road	Jig	TTW	Road in Judique
Dolbin	Jig	HH	
Dolbin Street	Reel	CBCSM	A street in Sydney where Dan R once lived.
Dolmar	Reel	HH	
Donald Angus Beaton	Jig	TTW	Noted Mabou fiddler and Friend of Dan R. See p.80-81 TCBF.
Don Leo Rankin	Reel	Appears on David Greenberg & Dougie MacPhee Recording	Composed with Fiddler Elmer Briand
Doreen Castle	Jig	HH	

Doug MacPhee's	Jig	TTW	Noted Cape Breton Pianist(See A C.B. Ceilidh 196-8 also C.B.'s magazine #43 p. 31-40)
Doug MacPhee's Double Clog	double Clog	TTW	See Above
Dream of the Lost Fiddle, The	Reel	TTW	
Dudley Street	Jig	TTW	Area of Roxbury Massachusetts that was frequented by down-Easters and other musicians in the Boston area
Dundee	Jig	HH	Richmond Co. Area
Dundren Castle		TTW	
Dunsmore Road	Jig	HH	
Earl Street	Reel	James W. Sturrock	
Early Morning	Hornpipe	HH	In honour of Dan R's favorite timeto compose
Eddie Irwin	Reel	HH	Piano player from Boston area who played and recorded with Cheticamp born fiddler Joe Cormier.
Elmwood, The	Hornpipe	HH	
Endinburgh Reel, The	Reel	TTW	
Elmer Briand	Reel	TTW	One of Dan R's friends who was a fine composer and fiddler himself See MacGillvary C.B.

			Fiddler p. 84
Estwood Davidson	Strathspey	TTW	Guitar accompanist for Winston Fitzgerald. See C.B.'s Magazine #
Evelyn's Favorite	Strathspey	TTW	Composed for Evelyn MacDonald
Fancy Jig, The	Jig	WF	
Ferry Street	Reel	TTW	Street Dan R. lived on in Sydney
Ferry Street	Jig	TTW	See above
Festival, The	March		
Festival, The	Reel	HH	
Fiddler's Daughter, The	Reel	TTW	
Fiddler's Green Road, The			Only reference to the tune is from Dave MacIssac p. 129 of TCBF
First of Spring, The	Jig	TTW	
Five Fiddlers, The	Reel	TTW	The Five MacDonald Fiddlers, consisting of John, Hugh, Bernic, Allan, Dan and Joan MacDonald on piano are all former Inverness County, Cape Bretoners. The group met in Detroit for the first time and after several meetings at dances and house parties decided to form a group. Since that time they have played many concerts, benefits, weddings and entertained

			at private parties.
Florence MacDonald	Reel	HH	
Forbes Mill	Jig	TTW	
Free as the Wind	Reel	TTW	
Garmont Smiddy's	Reel	WF	
Gilbert, The	Jig	HH	
Glasgow	Jig	TTW	
Glebe Reel, The	Reel	TTW	Likely written for Father John Angus Rankin, Glendale Parish Priest. The Glebe House was the residence of the parish priest in Glendale.
Glen, The	Jig	HH	
Glen, The	March	HH	
Glencoe Hall	Jig	HH	Famous Inverness county dance hall.
Glendale Festival, The	Reel	HH	Popular Cape Breton festival at which Dan R. was a frequent performer.
Glens March, The	March [Marching air]	WF	
Glen Cluny	Strathspey	TTW	
Glencoe	March	TTW	Community about eleven miles west of Whycomagh
Glenora	March	HH	Community six miles

			N.W. of West Bay
Glenora Bridge	Jig	TTW	
Glenville	Strathspey	HH	Community two and a half miles west of Loch Ban. Winston Fitzgerald regularly played the dance there in the mid-fifties.
Glenville	Jig	HH	
Glenwood, The	Jig	HH	
Gordon Castle	Reel	TTW	
Gordon's Dance	Hornpipe	HH	Composed in 1936
Gordon Graham's Favorite	Jig	TTW	Danny Graham's Brother
Gordon Quigley's	Jig	TTW	Inverness
Gordon's Trip to Sydney	Jig	CBCSM	
Graham River, The	Reel	TTW	Inverness Co. river
Grand Narrows Bridge	Jig	TTW	Bridge in the community of the same name. Located on the east side of the Barra Strait at the southern end of Great Bras d'Or.
Grant Golden	Hornpipe	HH	
Great Fiddle, The	Clog		
Greenough, The	Jig	HH	Composed for fiddler Bill Lamey who lived on Greenough St. in Massachusetts. See TCBF,

			p. 110
Green Banner, The	Hornpipe	TTW	
Green Fields of Low Point, The	Reel	TTW	In personal correspondence with John Donald Cameron he notes that he feels Dan R. may have meant to title this tune The Green Fields of Long Point. According to John Donald, Low Point is in Cape Breton County and "is of a more craggy nature."
Green Tree, The	Jig	HH	
Green Velvet, The	Jig	HH	
Happy Go Lucky	Reel	TTW	
Happy Go Lucky	Jig	WF	
Harbour View	Reel	HH	Area three miles south of Port Hood
Harlem	Reel	TTW	
Harrow, The	Jig	WF	
Harper, The	Jig	WF	
Harry Harper	Hornpipe	HH	
Hartley's	Reel	TTW	
Hartwell Pinkerton	Jig	TTW	Fiddler who live in New Waterford in the Sixties. Subsequently moved to Boston.
Harwood's	Jig	HH	

Heather (on the) Hill	Reel	HH	<p>Composed in Scotland and supposedly notated on a tree stump for lack of another writing surface. According to the liner notes for the 1979 CBC LP, Atlantic Fiddling: "Dan R composed this very popular Reel in 1943 while on duty in Scotland, and called it <i>Heather Hill</i>. The name describes Dan R's location when he composed it and is not, like many tune titles, a salute to a woman. The tune has entered the repertoire of many fiddlers on the Island and elsewhere as Heather on The Hill and is generally considered traditional."</p>
Henry B. Briggs	Strathspey	Privately Held by John Donald Cameron	
Herbie MacLeod	Strathspey	HH	Music enthusiast from Boston.
H.F. Nichol's	Reel	TTW	
Highland	Jig	HH	
Highland Heather Hills, The	Reel	Privately Held by John Donald Cameron	
Highland Park	Strathspey	WF	
High Bridge	Jig	HH	
Hillaire Gallant	Reel	HH	

Hillsborough	Jig	TTW	Area three miles east of Mabou
Hillsdale Road	Jig	TTW	Road in Judique
Hills of Caledonia	slow Strathspey	HH	
Hispano's Hall	Jig	TTW	
Hugh Douglas	Strathspey	HH	
Hugh Jim Paul's	Strathspey	HH	Friend of Dan R's from Windsor, Ont
Hugh MacDonald	Hornpipe	HH	
Hugh MacDonald	Jig	TTW	Composed for fellow fiddler and member of The Five MacDonald Fiddlers
Hugh MacKenzie's	Jig'	TTW	
Hughie MacMaster's	Jig	HH	Composed for Hughie MacMaster, who visited John Donald Cameron's home in 1946 with Dan R. John Donald believes Hughie MacMaster was in the military with Dan R.
Huron Line	Hornpipe	TTW	
Hurricane Edna	Reel	HH	Category 3 Hurricane-September 11, 1954
In a Hurry	Jig	TTW	
Indian Point	Reel	HH	Likely titled for the Inverness Co. area
Inver Bar, The	Reel	HH	

Invershire	Reel	TTW	
Irish Road, The	Reel	TTW	
J.D. MacKenzie	Strathspey	Privately Held by John Donald Cameron	
Jamaica Plains	Hornpipe	TTW	Massachussetts Community
James Granville	Reel	HH	
Jerry Holland	Strathspey	HH	Fiddler/Composer who was a member of The Cape Breton Symphony. See 106-7 TCBF.
Jessie O'Handley MacDonald	Jig	HH	Composed for Dan R's cousin and former landlady Mrs. John A. MacDonald
Joey Beaton	Hornpipe	HH	Mabou Pianist See A C.B. Ceilidh p. 169- 170)
John A. MacDonald	Reel	TTW	(Fiddler) John Archie
John MacDougall	Jig	TTW	Inverness Co. Fiddler (See Scotia Sun Feb./14/73 p.11-12)
Judique, The	Polka	WF	Community in which Dan R. was raised.
Judique Hall	Jig	HH	
J. Harper	Jig	HH	
J. Murdoch	Reel	HH	Scottish fiddler who was

Henderson			greatly admired by Dan R.
J.W. Campbell	Jig	HH	
J.W. Harding's	Jig	TTW	
Karen Ann MacNeil	Hornpipe	HH	
Kelly's Mountain	Reel	HH	Mountain in Victoria Co., Cape Breton
Kelvin Glenn	Reel	HH	
Ken Bett's Favorite	Hornpipe	HH	
Kenneth Harbison	Strathspey	TTW	
Kenneth MacLean	Reel	TTW	
Kildonan Hall	Strathspey	HH	Old Parish Hall in Judique recently demolished.
Kildonan Hall	Jig	HH	Old Parish Hall in Judique which was recently demolished.
Killarney Castle	Reel	TTW	
Kilmarnock	Reel	Privately Held by John Donald Cameron	
Kineardine O'Neill	Strathspey	TTW	Scottish community in which dances were held for the men of the Canadian Forestry Corps.
Kingsville	Clog	TTW	Community in which Dan R. spent a winter at the house of his first cousin Alec Francis MacKay.

Kingsville Bridge	Reel	HH	
Kinnon Beaton's	Jig	HH	Mabou Fiddler See TCBF p.82-3
Kirkwood	Jig	TTW	Community near the N.E. shore of LakeAinslie two miles south of Scotsville
Lady Behind the Wheel, The	Jig	TTW	
Lady Jean MacGregor	Jig	HH	
Lakevale, The	Jig	CBCSM	Community north of Antigonish
Langlois, The	Reel	WF	
Larry Smith's	Jig	HH	
Lassies of Campbell Street, The	March	TTW	
Leaves of Spring, The	Hornpipe	CBCSM	
Legion	Jig	HH	
Lime Hill	Strathspey	HH	Inverness County community on the north shore of West Bay, between West Bay and Marble Mountain.
Little Betty's	Jig	TTW	Appears in Winston Scotty Collection as Little Betty's Fancy Jig.
Little Bird, The	Reel	HH	
Little Buckie, The	Hornpipe	HH	

Little Eddy	Reel	TTW	
Little Fiddle	Jig	HH	
Little House by the Pond, The	Jig	CBCSM	Composed in honor of Johnny MacDonald's house on the shore Rd. in Judique. Johnny MacDonald was married to Dan R's aunt Katie.
Little Iain's	Jig	TTW	
Little Red Mill, The	Jig	TTW	
Livingstone's Pond	Jig	HH	Inverness Co. Pond bellow Collie Livingston's house.
Loch Lane, The	Hornpipe	HH	
Loch Lane, The	Clog	HH	
Lochnagar	Reel	HH	
Lockwood, The	Jig	TTW	
Lombard	Hornpipe	TTW	
Long Point	Reel	TTW	Community six miles south of Judique on the western shore of Cape Breton.
Long Point	Jig	HH	See Above
Long Point	Hornpipe	HH	See Above
Lorne Street	Jig	TTW	
Lou's	Jig	TTW	
Louisdale	Clog	HH	Cape Breton Community

Lyceum	Reel	CBCSM	Sydney theatre in which several early 78's were recorded for Bernie MacIsaac's Celtic Records Label [See p. 97 MacKinnon]
Mabou Bridge, The	Jig	HH	Village where Dan R. lived with his sister Katie Ann
Mabou Dancers, The	Reel	HH	Named for eight hand Reel dancers from Mabou.
Mabou Hall, The	Jig	TTW	
MacAskill's Bridge	Jig	HH	
MacDonald Bridge	Reel	Newspaper article	Named after "the bridge which received its name from two residents who lived on opposite sides of it-John A. MacDonald and Ranny MacDonald."
MacDonell's Bridge	Reel	HH	
MacNamara	Reel	WF	
MacKinnon Wedding, The	Reel	TTW	
MacLellan's Strathspey, The	Strathspey	TTW	
M4T Ranch, The	Hornpipe	TTW	
Maidstone	Hornpipe	TTW	
Maidstone	Jig	Privately Held by John Donald Cameron	

Malcolm MacLeod	slow Strathspey	HH	
Marble Hill	Jig	TTW	Area on the North shore of West Bay five miles from the mouth of the bay and ten miles from its head.
Marcella's Favourite	Hornpipe	HH	
Margaret MacInnis	Jig	TTW	
Marguerite MacNeil	Reel	TTW	Pianist who often accompanied Dan R. she now resides in Antigonish Co.
Maria and Theresa	Jig	TTW	Composed for the MacLellan sisters, two thirds of the MacLellan trio. The trio featured Theresa on fiddle and Marie on piano along with the fiddling of their brother Donald. Their father, Big Ranald was one of Dan R's favorite fiddlers.
Marie MacLellan	Jig	HH	Likely Dan R's favorite Piano accompanist
Marion Bridge	Strathspey	HH	Community on the Mira River eleven miles south of Sydney
Marion's Wedding	Clog	HH	
Marsh Brook Road, The	Reel	TTW	Road leading to community of Marsh Brook which is five miles north of N.E. Margaree

Mary Janet MacDonald's Wedding	Reel	HH	
Mary MacLean	Hornpipe	TTW	Mary Gillis ... piano player and teacher from North Sydney
McLouth's	Hornpipe	TTW	
Memel, The	March	HH	
Memories of Joe MacInnis	March	HH	Singer from Port Hood
Memories of John MacKinnon	Reel	Privately Held by John Donald Cameron	
Michael A. MacLean's	Reel	HH	Michael Anthony MacLean, Washabuck (Brother of Fiddler Joe MacLean)
Micheal Campbell	Reel	TTW	
Middle Bridge, The	Jig	TTW	
Mike Ellsworth	Clog	TTW	
Mira	Jig	TTW	Cape Breton Co. area
Miss Agnes Campbell's Favourite (WF)	Reel	HH	
Miss Alma Beaudry's Fancy	Hornpipe	TTW	
Miss Ann Campbell	Jig	TTW	CB Pianist (now Ann Brown)
Miss Ann	Reel	Privately Held by	

MacCormack		John Donald Cameron	
Miss Ann MacNamara's	Strathspey	WF	Lived in Windsor, Ontario Formerly from Judique
Miss Ann MacNeil	Strathspey	Privately Held by John Donald Cameron	
Miss Anna MacDonald	Strathspey	Privately Held by John Donald Cameron	
Miss Annie MacFarlane's Favourite	Jig	WF	Annie John Dougal from S.W. Margaree who was piano player who lived in Boston
Miss Betty Finn	Reel	TTW	
Miss Betty Stewart	Reel	Privately Held by John Donald Cameron	
Miss Buckley's	Clog	TTW	
Miss Catherine Campbell	Jig	HH	Now Catherine MacDonald (Judique) who grew up in Mabou and served as Dan R's 'secretary'.
Miss Catherine Lamey's	Jig	HH	
Miss Deanie Monroe	Jig	TTW	Now deceased Piper from Antigonish
Miss Doris MacNeil	Jig	Privately Held by John Donald Cameron	
Miss Elaine Witty's	Hornpipe	HH	

Miss Eleanor Stewart	March	HH	
Miss Florence Campbell	Jig	TTW	
Miss Genivieve MacMaster	Jig	TTW	Buddy's Sister now Genevieve Whelan
Miss Genivieve Marie Rankin	Jig	HH	John Morris's Sister
Miss Gustave MacInnis	Hornpipe	TTW	
Miss Helen Glar	Reel	HH	
Miss Helen MacGregor	Jig	TTW	
Miss Ivory Dickie	Reel	Privately Held by John Donald Cameron	
Miss Jean MacLeod	Strathspey	Privately Held by John Donald Cameron	
Miss Jeanette Beaton	Reel	HH	
Miss Jeanie MacMaster			
Miss Joan Beaton	Jig	TTW	Composed for Joan Beaton from Glencoe
Miss Joan MacDonald	Reel	TTW	(Pianist) Played and recorded with Dan R. as member of the five MacDonald Fiddlers. See CBC p. 172-3.
Miss Joan	Strathspey	TTW	See Above

MacDonald			
Miss Joy Hawley	Reel	TTW	Daughter of Earl Hawley (b. Mabou)
Miss Loretta Beaudry	Jig	HH	Pianist from the Sydney's
Miss MacCormack	Jig	TTW	
Miss Margaret Beaton's	Jig	WF	
Miss Margaret Chisholm	Jig	TTW	Sister of Cameron and Maybelle. Fiddler
Miss Margaret MacDougall's	Reel	WF	
Miss Marie MacEachern	Reel	TTW	
Miss Marion Lamey	Hornpipe	TTW	
Miss Marion MacDonald	Reel	HH	
Miss Mary Beaton	Jig	TTW	Mary Beaton was a local Mabou area merchant and Donald Angus Beaton's sister
Miss Mary Elizabeth MacMaster	Reel	HH	(Pianist/fiddler) Judique
Miss Mary Kennedy's	Jig		
Miss Mary MacDonald	Jig	HH	
Miss Mary MacPherson	Strathspey	HH	

Miss Mary White's	Jig	WF	
Miss Neil R. MacDonald's	Strathspey	WF	(Pianist) Mary Beaton MacDonald. Daughter of Mabou fiddler Iain Alasdair Bhain and Mother of Joan MacDonald-Boes. (see p. 172-3 CBC)
Miss O. Banchory	Reel	TTW	
Miss Pushie	Clog	HH	
Miss Rita Maureen Rankin	Jig	HH	Composed for Archie Rankin's daughter. The Rankin family lived next to Dan R. on back street.
Miss Ruby Findley's	Reel	WF	
Miss Sharon Ann Hawley	Jig	HH	
Miss Smith's	Jig	HH	
Miss Theresa Beaton	Jig	TTW	
Miss Theresa Morris of Colindale	Reel	HH	Fr. Angus Morris sister married to John Van Zutphen. They reside in Port Hood
Miss Wilson's	Jig	HH	
Miss Winnie MacMullin	Hornpipe	TTW	Cape Breton Fiddler Winnie Chafe (See p.94 TCBF)
Monte-Vista	Clog	Privately Held by John Donald Cameron	

Morrison's Ridge	Jig	HH	Jig composed at Angus MacDonald's home. According to John Donald Cameron the tune didn't appear until the 1960's
Morrison's Ridge	Reel	HH	Reel composed at Lawrence MacDonald's home after they spent a day working in the woods
Moxhan's Castle (Moxham)	Strathspey	HH	A castle in Sydney, Nova Scotia which was destroyed by a fire in 1966. The only remaining part of the original castle is the gatehouse located on Kings Road in Sydney now the site of the Cabot House Apartments.
Moxhan's Castle	Reel	HH	
Moxham Castle	Jig	HH	
Mount Forest	Jig	TTW	
Mountain, The	Jig	TTW	
Mr. Adam George	Reel	TTW	
Mr. Ambrose Beaton	Reel	TTW	
Mr. Andrew MacIntyre	Reel	Privately Held by John Donald Cameron	
Mr. Bernie MacNeil	Reel	HH	
Mr. Donald Angus Beaton	Reel	HH	(Fiddler) see p. 80 TCBF
Mr. Dow	Reel	HH	

Mr. George Wallace	Reel	TTW	
Mr. Hugh Douglas	Strathspey	WF	
Mr. Hugh Shorty's	Reel	WF	From Inverness town. Collected tapes of fiddlers. Northside Irish style fiddler Johnny Wilmot also composed a Reel for Hughie.
Mr. Hugh Youngs	Reel	WF	
Mr. James Stuart	Reel	TTW	
Mr. James W. Sturrock	Reel	Privately Held by John Donald Cameron	
Mr. John Campbell	Reel	TTW	Fiddler from Glenora Falls, Cape Breton. Since the late 1950s he has lived in the Boston area. See p. 90 TCBF
Mr. Kenneth Harbison	Strathspey	WF	
Mr. Ron Anderson	Jig	HH	
Mr. Thomas Sinclair Rae	Strathspey	HH	Conductor of the Glasgow-Caledonia Strathspey and Reel Society
Mr. Thomas Sinclair Rae	Reel	Privately Held by John Donald Cameron	
Mr. William R. Campbell's	Reel	WF	
Mrs. Allan	Strathspey	TTW	Composed for the wife of

MacDonald			five MacDonald fiddler Allan MacDonald.
Mrs. Ann MacNeil	Strathspey	HH	
Mrs. Augustus Murphy	Reel	HH	
Mrs. Beatty Wallace (Mrs. Wallace)	Jig	TTW	(Pianist) see p.202 CBC
Mrs. Beatty Wallace	Reel	HH	
Mrs. Briggs	Reel	Privately Held by John Donald Cameron	
Mrs. Dow	Reel	HH	
Mrs. Evelyn Fitzgerald	Reel	TTW	Composed by Dan R. for Winston Fitzgerald's first wife.
Mrs. Evelyn MacDonald	Jig	HH	
Mrs. Evelyn MacDonald	Strathspey	HH	
Mrs. Gerorge Taylor	Strathspey	TTW	George Taylor owned the Rodeo Record label.
Mrs. George Wallace	Reel	TTW	
Mrs. Gordon Ladd	Strathspey	HH	
Mrs. Grace Tait	Reel	TTW	
Mrs. J. Perkin's	Jig	TTW	
Mrs. J. Walker	Jig	TTW	
Mrs. James D.	Strathspey	Privately Held by John Donald	

MacDonald		Cameron	
Mrs. John Fraser	Reel	HH	
Mrs. Joseph Gillis	Jig	TTW	
Mrs. Joseph MacLean	Hornpipe	HH	
Mrs. MacAuley	Hornpipe	HH	
Mrs. MacDonald	Strathspey	TTW	
Mrs. Michael Campbell	Strathspey	TTW	
Mrs. Neil R. MacDonald	Strathspey	TTW	
Mrs. Norman MacKeigan	Reel	HH	Composed for the wife of violin repairman Norman MacKeigan.
Mrs. Ranald Campbell O'Windsor	Jig	Privately Held by John Donald Cameron	
Mrs. Sarah MacPhee's	Reel	WF	
Mrs. Sidney Quinn	Jig	TTW	
Mrs. Winston Fitzgerald	Reel		Alternate title for Mrs. Evelyn Fitzgerald Reel
Mull River	Reel	HH	Community four miles South S.E. of Mabou
Mull River	Jig	HH	Community four miles South S.E. of Mabou
Mullin Court	Reel	TTW	
Murdock C.	Strathspey	TTW	

MacPhail			
Murphy's Bar	Reel	TTW	
My Brothers Record	Reel	Privately Held by John Donald Cameron	
My First Polka	Polka	WF	
Nagolean Chant	Jig	TTW	
Neil R. MacDonald	Strathspey	HH	Father of Joan MacDonald-Boes. See p. 172-3 CBC
New Academy, The	Reel	TTW	
New Bow, The	Hornpipe	TTW	
New Fiddle, The	Jig	HH	
Newfoundland, The	Jig	HH	Composed for Dan R's nephew John Donald who was living in Newfoundland in the 70's while he worked for the Royal Bank.
New House, The	Jig	TTW	
New Spring, The	Reel	HH	
New Spur, The	Hornpipe	Privately Held by John Donald Cameron	
Norman MacKeichan	Reel	HH	
North River	Reel	HH	Victoria Co. area
Norton, The	Reel	HH	

Oakwood, The	Reel	WF	
Ohio Hornpipe, The	Hornpipe	TTW	Antigonish Co. area
Omega, The	Strathspey	TTW	
Over the River	Reel	Privately Held by John Donald Cameron	
Paddy the Barber	Hornpipe	HH	Composed for Dan R's friend, East Margaree Fiddler Paddy Leblanc who was also a barber. It was on Dan R's recommendation that Leblanc recorded for the Celtic music Label
Peggy's Mountain	Reel	HH	
Peter Chiasson	Jig	TTW	P.E.I. Fiddler who was highly influenced by CB fiddlers
Petrolia Reel, The	Reel	TTW	Composed for the Ontario town of Petrolia
Picnic, The	Jig	HH	
Pitt Street	Jig	HH	Port Hawkesbury, Nova Scotia Street
Pleasant Bay	Clog	HH	Area twenty-five miles N.E. of Cheticamp near Pollet's Cove
Pond's Road Reel, The	Reel	Recorded by Buddy MacMaster on the 1979 LP, Atlantic Fiddling	
Prestwick, The	Reel		

Quarry Brook, The	Reel	Interview with A.F. MacKay	
Quarry Brook, The	Strathspey	Interview with A.F. MacKay	
Queensville	Jig	Privately Held by John Donald Cameron	
Quincy	Hornpipe	TTW	
Rattle your bottles at Wallace Gate	Jig	WF	
Ravenswood, The	Jig	HH	
Ravack Lake	Reel	HH	
Red Bridge, The	Jig	TTW	
Red Feather, The	Clog	HH	
Red Hill, The	Jig	TTW	
Red Robin	Jig	TTW	
Red Shoes, The	Reel	CBCSM	Dan R's first composition which remains a classic of the genre. Mabou pub was recently named after this composition.
Reeds, The	Reel	TTW	
Reichswall Forest	Reel	TTW	Composed for an area in West Germany where Dan R. worked during WW II
Riverside	Strathspey	TTW	Area about three miles North N.W. of Cleveland, Cape Breton

Riverside	Jig	TTW	
River Bend, The	Jig	TTW	According to Oct./2/1974 article this tune was "named after the bend of the river near his home". The river in question is in Judique
River Centre	Jig	HH	Inverness Co. Community
River of No Return			First found a reference to this tune in an article in Cape Breton's Magazine #53. Named for the 50's movie of same name starring Marilyn Monroe and Robert Mitchum it has not yet been published but is in the repertoire of John Donald Cameron.
Roache's Road	Strathspey	HH	Home of Doug and Margaret MacPhee was situated on Sharpes Lanes adjacent to Roaches Rd.
The Road to Red Deer	Reel	Privately Held by John Donald Cameron	
Roadside Polka, The	Polka	WF	Composed along the roadside in Kingsville, Cape Breton
Robert MacNeil	Reel	TTW	
Robert Willis	Strathspey	TTW	From Saskatchewan married to Marie MacInnis of Little Judique
Rockwood, The	Reel	TTW	

Rocky Ridge	Jig	TTW	Area two and a half miles N.E. of Port Hood
Ron Gonella	Jig	TTW	Scottish Fiddler who was friends with Dan R.
Roseburn	Jig	HH	Community six miles N.W. of Whycocomagh
Rosebush, The	Jig	WF	
Rosewood	Reel		Only reference to this tune is from fiddler Dave MacIsaac (see p. 129 TCBF)
Rossini, The	Reel	TTW	
Roxbury	Hornpipe	TTW	Boston, Massachusetts community which was a haven for Cape Bretoner's during 1940's-50's.
Royal Tour, The	Jig	WF	
Saginaw	Reel	TTW	
Salem Road	Reel	TTW	Area just North of Lake Uist about five miles east of Irish Cove
Sand Hill, The	Reel	TTW	
Sand Pit, The	Reel	TTW	
Sandy Boyd's Pipe	Reel	HH	Well known itinerant piper from Scotland who traveled around eastern Canada for a number of years
Sanford MacLellan	Reel	TTW	From Inverness Dan R.

			likely worked with him in Windsor
Scholar's Road, The	Jig	TTW	
Scotten's	Hornpipe	TTW	
Scotland's Bonny Hills	slow Strathspey	HH	
Scotty Leblanc	Clog	HH	
Scotty's Favourite	Reel	HH	
Sharpes Lane	Jig	TTW	Doug and Margaret MacPhee lived on Sharpes Lanes
Shepherd O' the Hills	Strathspey	HH	
Shepherd O' the Hills	Reel	HH	
Skidoo, The	Reel	HH	Composed after Dan R. was given a Skidoo ride in Mabou by John Gerard Rankin.
Snake Dancer, The	Reel	TTW	
Soldier's Cove	Hornpipe	HH	Community on south shore of the Bras d'Or Lake nine miles N.E. of St. Peters
Southwest Bridge, The	Reel	TTW	See Wilson p.34 Sing Out v.26 #2 (1977)
Springwell	Jig	TTW	
Spring Reel, The	Reel	TTW	

St. Vincent's Pipe Band, The	Hornpipe	TTW	
Steel Brig, The	Hornpipe	TTW	
Stornaway, The	Jig	HH	
Stornaway, The	Reel	HH	
Strathlorne	March	HH	Community two and a half miles South S.E. of Broad Cove Banks was known at one time as Broad Cove Interval
Strathlorne Lodge	Jig	TTW	
Sudbury	Hornpipe	HH	Ontario city where many Cape Breton miners went for work.
Summer Camp, The	Jig	Privately Held by John Donald Cameron	
Swivel, The	Hornpipe	HH	
Sydney Fiddlers, The	Jig	TTW	
Sylvia O'Neil	Jig	HH	
Third Figure, The	Reel	TTW	
Thomas Huntley	Jig	TTW	
Thomas J. Ward	Reel	TTW	
Thomas Rae of Barrhead	Strathspey	TTW	
Thomas Reid	Reel	TTW	
Thomas Shannon			Composed for an individual Dan R. met in

			Detroit. See Cape Breton's Magazine #55
Thornbush	Hornpipe	HH	
Three Bridge, The	Hornpipe	HH	
Tommy McQueston's	Reel	TTW	Scottish/Cape Breton style fiddler from King City, Ontario
Tom Rae	Reel	HH	
Tower O'Scolty, The	Hornpipe	HH	
Tower of Scolty, The	Strathspey	TTW	
The Toy Pong	Hornpipe	Privately Held by John Donald Cameron	
Travelling Musicians, The	Reel		
Triplet	Clog	HH	
Trip to Dudy's	Jig	HH	
Trip to Glenora	Jig	TTW	Community six miles N.W. of West Bay which Dan R. frequented
Trip to Windsor	Reel	TTW Also appears in Don Messer book as a traditional tune	Composed 1947
Tudor House, The	Jig	HH	
Tunnel, The	Reel	Privately Held by John Donald Cameron	

Twin's Delight	Jig	HH	
Victoria Bridge	Jig	TTW	Community located at the upper (south) end of the Mira River
Victoria Park	Reel	TTW	
Walker's Cove	Strathspey	HH	Inverness Co. area
Walker's Cove	Reel	TTW	
Walker Road	Jig	HH	Composed for the Hiram Walker Whiskey distillery on Walker road in Windsor, Ontario
Waverly House	Hornpipe	Privately Held by John Donald Cameron	
Wedding, The	Jig	HH	
Wedding Day, The	Jig	TTW	
Westmount	Hornpipe	TTW	Area located on the west side of the Sydney River opposite Sydney. Fiddler Howie MacDonald hails from Westmount.
West River Road, The	Reel	TTW	Community in Antigonish Co.
West Vernor, The	Reel	HH	A highway in Detroit/Windsor area. Many Cape Bretoner's lived off the West Vernor highway.
Whirling Brook, The	Reel	HH	
Wilfred Gillis	Jig	TTW	Dan R's cousin and Antigonish Co. fiddler.

			Dan R. spent a few summers with the Gillis family in Arisaig.
Wilfred's fiddle	Jig	HH	Composed in honor of Wilfred Gillis's main instrument
William Crawford's	Reel	TTW	
Windermere	Strathspey		
Winslow, The	Jig	TTW	
Winston Fitzgerald	Clog	HH	Cape Breton Fiddler and Dan R's Friend
Wizard, The	Hornpipe may also be played as a Clog	HH	
Wizard Fingers, The	Jig	HH	
Woodmere Reel	Reel		
Wurburn, The	Reel	TTW	

(CBCSM) The Cape Breton Collection of Violin Music

(WF) Manuscript from Winston Fitzgerald Collection

(HH) Heather Hill Collection

(TTW) Trip to Windsor Collection

Appendix B:

**Discography of Recordings on which Dan R.
MacDonald compositions have appeared**

<u>TUNE</u>	<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>Record Label</u>
Afton, The	Various Artists (David Greenberg)	A Tribute to Dan R. MacDonald [Cranford Pub.-R3]
Alex MacDonell's Favorite (J)	Raymond Ellis Buddy MacMaster	Dedicated to Mom & Dad [Raymond Ellis Productions] The Judique Flyer
Anthony's Bridge	The Cape Breton Symphony Cape Breton Symphony	A Salute to Scotland [Brownrigg BRG-012] A Souvenir Album [Brownrigg BRG-013]
Arlington (R)	Various Artists (Carl MacKenzie) Bobby Brown and the Cape Breton Symphony Fiddlers	A Tribute to Dan R. MacDonald [Cranford Pub.-R3] The Great Cape Breton Fiddle Company
Balogie's (R)	Various Artists (Natalie MacMaster)	A Tribute to Dan R. MacDonald [Cranford Pub.-R3]
Barra Falls (H)	Dan R. MacDonald Tara Lynne Tousenard	Maritime Dances [Alldisc ADC-4614] Bowing the Strings [Independent]
Bonar Bridge (H)	Various Artists (Wilfred Prosper)	A Tribute to Dan R. MacDonald [Cranford Pub.-R3]

<u>TUNE</u>	<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>Record Label</u>
Boys of the Lake (J)	Dave MacIsaac	Nimble Fingers [Independent]
Brookside (R)	Donny Leblanc	Rosining Up the Bow [Independent]
Brookside (R)	Various Artists (Wilfred Gillis)	A Tribute to Dan R. MacDonald [Cranford Pub.-R3]
Brookside (S)	Various Artists (Kyle MacNeil)	A Tribute to Dan R. MacDonald [Cranford Pub.-R3]
Bryde Kelly's (R)	Dan R. MacDonald	NoTitle [Celtic 78rpm #040]
Buddy's Favourite	John A. MacDonald	Scottish Fiddling [Celtic CX-11]
Campbell's Road (J)	Various Artist (Hector MacKenzie)	Tribute to Dan R. MacDonald [Cranford Pub.-R3]
	Dwayne Cote	Introduction [Independent]
Cambridge (J)	Ashley MacIsaac	Close to the Floor [Independent]
Cape Breton Ceilidh (R)	Paddy Leblanc	The Fiddling French Canadian Scot [Celtic CX-29]
Casa Loma Castle (R)	Bill Lamey Natalie MacMaster	Fit as a Fiddle [Rounder Records]

<u>TUNE</u>	<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>Record Label</u>
Castle Bay (R)	MacInnis & MacNeil	Fosgail an Dorus [Gigs and Reels Productions]
	Chris Norman	The Beauty of the North [Dorian DOR 90190]
Castle Hill (J)	Various Artist (Buddy MacMaster)	Tribute to Dan R. MacDonald [Cranford Pub.-R3]
CBC, The (S)	Kinnon Beaton	Sprig of Ivy [Independent]
Celtic Ceilidh (R)	Jerry Holland	Fiddlesticks
	Tom O'Keefe	Beyond the Dawn [Independent]
	Various Artists [Carl MacKenzie]	Atlantic Fiddles [Atlantica/EMI]
	Carl MacKenzie	Celtic Ceilidh [Independent CLM-1006]
	Various	Highland Village Ceilidh [World WRC1-618]
	Buddy MacMaster	Appears on video "The Master of the Cape Breton Fiddle" [Seabright /Murphy Video]
	Dougie MacDonald	Cape Breton Times [Solar Audio]

<u>TUNE</u>	<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>Record Label</u>
Chanter, The	Joe Cormier	Old Time Wedding Reels and Other Scottish Favorites [Rounder]
	Various Artists	Glendale '77 [C.C.B. Press 1001]
Charles MacKinnon (R)	Various Artists (Jerry Holland)	A Tribute to Dan R. MacDonald [Cranford Pub.-R3]
Cleveland, The (J)	Carl MacKenzie	Tullochgorum [CLM Records 1001]
Colin MacIntosh	Joseph Cormier	The Cheticamp Connection [HitRecordsPLP-1012]
	Carl MacKenzie	Welcome to Your Feet Again [Rounder 7005]
Concert, The (M)	Glengarry Strathspey and Reel Society	The Violins of the Glengarry Strathspey and Reel Society [World Records]
	Various Artists	Glendale '77 [CCBP-1001]
Crandall Road (R)	Various Artist (Carl MacKenzie)	A Tribute to Dan R. MacDonald [Cranford Pub.-R3]
Dan Hughie's	Winnie Chafe	The Bonnie Lass of Headlake [Intermedia WRC1-1546]

<u>TUNE</u>	<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>Record Label</u>
Dan R. MacDonald's (J)	Dougie MacPhee	Cape Breton's Master of the Keyboard [MacPhee Records DMP6-27-3]
Daylight, The (R)	Various Artists (Lucy MacNeil)	A Tribute to Dan R. MacDonald [Cranford Pub.-R3]
Devils Delight (R)	Carl MacKenzie	Welcome to your Feet Again [Rounder 7005]
Devils Delight (R)	Cape Breton Symphony	Cape Breton Symphony [Glencoe GM1-001]
	Winston Fitzgerald	Its New [Celtic CX-40]
	Seannachie	Devils Delight [Foot Stompin Records]
Doctor's Brook (R)	Various Artists David Greenberg	A Tribute to Dan R. MacDonald [Cranford Pub.-R3]
Dolbin (J)	Various Artists (Dwayne Cote)	A Tribute to Dan R. MacDonald [Cranford Pub.-R3]
Dolmar (R)	Carl MacKenzie	Welcome to Your Feet Again [Rounder 7005]
Doreen Castle (J)	Dan R. MacDonald	Dan R. MacDonald [Celtic CX-28]
Dundee (J)	Kinnon Beaton	Cape Breton Fiddle-2 [CCR-9067]

<u>TUNE</u>	<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>Record Label</u>
Dunsmore (J)	Carl MacKenzie	A Cape Breton Classic [CLM 1007]
Early Morning (H)	Various Artists (Carl MacKenzie)	A Tribute to Dan R. MacDonald [Cranford Pub.-R3]
Eddie Irwins (R)	Dan R. MacDonald	Maritime Dances [Alldisc ADC-4614]
Elmwood, The (H)	Various Artists (Kyle MacNeil)	A Tribute to Dan R. MacDonald [Cranford Pub.-R3]
Festival, The (M)	Various Artists (Paul Cranford)	A Tribute to Dan R. MacDonald [Cranford Pub.-R3]
Florence MacDonald (R)	Kinnon Beaton	Cape Breton Fiddle-2 [Independent]
Garmont Smiddy's (R)	Jerry Holland	Fiddlesticks Coll. [Green Linnet]
	Carl MacKenzie	Tullochgorm [CLM 100-4]
Glen, The (M)	Various Artists (Gordon Cote)	A Tribute to Dan R. MacDonald [Cranford Pub.-R3]
Glencoe (M)	Cape Breton Symphony	Cape Breton Symphony [Glencoe GM1-001]
	Richard Wood	Cutting The Bow [Independent]

<u>TUNE</u>	<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>Record Label</u>
	The Chiasson Family	Road to Rollo Bay [Independent]
	Various Artists (Joe Burke)	Gaelic Tradition in Cape Breton v.1 [Topic Records]
	Various Artists	Down Home-Vol 2 [Lismor LIFL-7012]
	Ken Perlman (tune listed as traditional) Ashley MacIssac	[Marimac] A Cape Breton Christmas [Independent]
	Donald Black	Westwinds [Greentrax Cd 091]
	Glengarry Strathspey and Reel Society	The Violins of the Glengarry Strathspey and Reel Society [World Records]
	Joe Cormier	Informal Session [Rounder]
	Fiddlers 5	Fiddle Music from Scotland [Temple Records]
	John Allan Cameron	Glencoe Station [Independent]
	Joseph Cormier (recorded as Glencoe Bridge March)	Scottish Violin Music from Cape Breton Island [Rounder 7001]

<u>TUNE</u>	<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>Record Label</u>
	Boys of the Lough (recorded as Glencoe Bridge March)	Live at Carnegie Hall [Lough Records 004CD]
Glencoe Hall (J)	Various Artists (Kinnon Beaton)	A Tribute to Dan R. MacDonald [Cranford Pub.-R3]
Glenora (M)	Various Artists (Dan Joe MacInnis)	A Tribute to Dan R. MacDonald [Cranford Pub.-R3]
Glenville (J)	The Beatons of Mabou	The Beatons of Mabou: Jigs, Strathspeys, and Reels of the Highland Scots (Rounder 7011)
Glenville (S)	Various Artists (Wilfred Gillis)	A Tribute to Dan R. MacDonald [Cranford Pub.-R3]
Gordon Graham's (J)	Various Artists	Celtic Music of Cape Breton – V. 1 [UCCB Press-1007]
	Raymond Ellis	Dedicated to Mom & Dad [Raymond Ellis Productions]
Gordon Quigley's	Mike MacDougall	Mike MacDougall's Tape for Fr. Hector [C.B. Magazine]
Grand Narrows Bridge (J)	Carl MacKenzie	Cape Breton Fiddle Medleys [CLM 8]
Green Tree, The (J)	Howie MacDonald	The Ceilidh Trail [Independent]

<u>TUNE</u>	<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>Record Label</u>
	Howie MacDonald	A Taste of C.B [Independent]
	Carl MacKenzie	Celtic Ceilidh [Independent]
	Buddy MacMaster	The Judique Flyer
Harbour View (R)	Dan R. MacDonald	Maritime Dances [Celtic-CX 42]
Harry Harper (H)	Various Artists (David Greenberg)	A Tribute to Dan R. MacDonald [Cranford Pub.-R3]
Harwood's (J)	Various Artists (Carl MacKenzie)	A Tribute to Dan R. MacDonald [Cranford Pub.-R3]
Herbie Macleod's (S)	Kinnon Beaton	Cape Breton Fiddle-2 [Independent]
Herbie Macleod's (S)	Various Artists (Lucy MacNeil)	A Tribute to Dan R. MacDonald [Cranford Pub.-R3]
Highland Hill (R)	Carl MacKenzie	Tullochgorum [CLM Records-1000]
Hills of Caledonia	Various Artists [David Greenberg]	A Tribute to Dan R. MacDonald [Cranford Pub.-R3]
Heather Hill (R) (Often mistakenly titled Heather on the Hill)	Wendy MacIssac	The "Reel" Thing [Independent]

<u>TUNE</u>	<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>Record Label</u>
	Walter MacIssac	Musical Memories of Codroy Valley, Nfld. [Independent]
	Nancy Roach	Footnotes [Independent]
	Various Artists	Tribute to Don Messer
	Various Artists	Country Golden Fiddle V. 1 [Condor CD 501]
	Winston Fitzgerald	House Parties and 78's [CB Magazine-03]
	Eddie Poirier	Fiddler Extraordinaire [Oak Records]
	Eddie Arsenaunt	Piling on the Bois Sec [House Party Productions]
	Ken Perlman	Devil in the Kitchen [Marimac]
	Fred Townsend-Caller	Let's Square Dance [Heritage Music HC 4405]
	Eddie Arsenaunt & Family	Party Acadien [House Party Productions]
	Bill Lamey	Full Circle [Rounder Records]
	Joe Cormier	Informal Sessions [Rounder Records]
	Bugs Green	Newfoundlander's Home for '93 [Independent]

<u>TUNE</u>	<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>Record Label</u>
	Flying Tide	When Striking a Stone [Independent]
	Calvin Volrath	Live from Randy's Kitchen
	Natalie MacMaster	My Roots are Showing [Rounder]
High Bridge (J)	Dwayne Cote	Introduction
	Ron Gonella	Ron Gonnella's International Friendship of the Fiddle
Hillsdale Road	Cape Breton Symphony	A Salute to Scotland [Brownrigg-012]
	Cape Breton Symphony	Pure Cape Breton: A Souvenir Album [Brownrigg-013]
Homeward Bound	Various Artists (Angus MacPhee)	The Old Time Fiddlers of Prince Edward Island [Marimac C-6501]
Hugh Douglas	Various Artists (Buddy MacMaster)	A Tribute to Dan R. MacDonald [Cranford Pub.-R3]
Hugh A. MacDonald	Carl MacKenzie	Cape Breton Fancy [No Label]
Hugh Jim Paul's (S)	Various Artists (David Greenberg)	A Tribute to Dan R. MacDonald [Cranford Pub.-R3]
Hurricane Edna (R)	Carl MacKenzie	Tradition [Independent]

<u>TUNE</u>	<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>Record Label</u>
	Tara Lynne Tousenard	Bowing the Strings [Independent]
Iona Melody (Refers to a set of Dan R. tunes recorded by Fitzgerald consisting of Mrs. Beatty Wallace and The Red Shoes)	Winston Fitzgerald	Winston Scotty Fitzgerald and His Radio Entertainers [Celtic CX-34]
	Winston Fitzgerald	Canadian Cavalcade: The Music of Cape Breton [Rodeo-CCLP 2002]
	Winston Fitzgerald	Canada's Outstanding Scottish Fiddler [Rodeo RLP-1]
	Winston Fitzgerald	Rodeo 78 [RO-51/52]
J. Murdoch Henderson (R)	Carl MacKenzie	Tullochgorum [CLM Records-1000]
	Winston Fitzgerald	Winston Scotty Fitzgerald House 78's and Parties [C.B. Magazine]
Jeanette Beaton (R)	Winnie Chafe	Cape Breton Scottish Memories [Inter Media-759]
Jerry Holland (S)	Various Artists [Jerry Holland]	A Tribute to Dan R. MacDonald [Cranford Pub.-R3]
Jessie O'Handley MacDonald (J)	Various Artists	A Tribute to Dan R. MacDonald [Cranford Pub.-R3]

<u>TUNE</u>	<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>Record Label</u>
John H. Walker	Carl MacKenzie	Tullochgorum [CLM-1000]
Kenneth Macleans (R)	Carl MacKenzie	Tunes Until Dawn [Marquis Classics] Cape Breton Fancy [No Label]
Kildonan Hall	Kinnon Beaton	Cape Breton Fiddle-2 [No Label]
Lady Jean MacGregor (J)	Charlie MacCuspie & Friends	Cabot Trail Ceilidh [No Label]
Lakevale (J)	Kinnon Beaton	Cape Breton Fiddle [No Label]
	Dougie MacPhee	Cape Breton's Master of the Keyboard [MacPhee Records DMP6- 27-3]
Lasses of Campbell St.	Glengarry Strathspey and Reel Society	The Violins of the Glengarry Strathspey and Reel Society [World Records]
Leaves of Spring, The (H)	Various Artists	PEI Fiddler's V. 1 [Sound Ventures Inc.]
	Frank Ferrel & Gilles Losier	Down East...Out West [Voyager-VRCS 329]
Lime Hill (S)	Rankin Family	Fare the Well Love [EMI MUSIC Canada]
	Harvey Tolman	1,000 Miles From Cape Breton [Independent]

<u>TUNE</u>	<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>Record Label</u>
	Jeremiah McLane	Smile When You're Ready [Epact Music CD103]
	Maire O'Keefe	Coisir-House Part [Gael-Linn CEFCD 165]
	Cape Breton Symphony	The Cape Breton Symphony: Fiddle [Brownrigg-BRGCBS-001]
	Eddy Arsenault	Piling on the Bois Sec [House Party Productions]
	The Glengarry Strathspey & Reel Society	A Glengarry gathering [Independent]
	The Calgary Fiddlers	Breaking Down The Barriers [Marshall Crozman Music Ltd. MCM-3]
	Pierre Schryer	The New Canadian Waltz [New Canadian Records]
	Liz Doherty	Last Orders [Foot Stompin Records]
	Liz Doherty & Fiddlesticks Ron Gonnella	Racket in the Rectory [Foot Stompin Records] Ron Gonnella's International Friendship of the Fiddle
Livingstone Pond (J)	Ashley MacIsaac	Close to the Floor
Long Point (J)	Ashley MacIsaac	Close to the Floor [Independent]

<u>TUNE</u>	<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>Record Label</u>
	Ashley MacIsaac	Fine thank you very much [A&M 79602 2002-2]
Louisdale (C)	Dougie MacDonald	Cape Breton Times [Solar Audio]
Mabou Bridge (J)	Kinnon Beaton	Cape Breton Fiddle-2 [No Label]
Marie MacLean's	Cape Breton Symphony	Cape Breton Symphony [Glencoe GM1-001]
	Donald Black	Westwinds [Greentrax Cd 091]
Memories of Joe MacInnis (M)	Various Artists	Glendale '79 Live [World WRC1-1273]
	Winnie Chafe	Highland Melodies of Cape Breton [Rounder-7012]
Michael A. MacLean (R)	Various Artists	16 Great Canadian Fiddlers [Banff RBS-1263]
	Paddy Leblanc	Fiddlin' Scotty LeBlanc [Celtic CX-41]
Michael A. MacLean (R)	Winston Fitzgerald	The Inimitable Winston Scotty Fitzgerald [Celtic CX-44]
Miss Ann Campbell	Howie MacDonald	The Ceilidh Trail [Independent]
	Howie MacDonald	A Taste of C.B. [Independent]

<u>TUNE</u>	<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>Record Label</u>
Miss Ann MacCormack	Winston Fitzgerald	Classic Cuts [Breton book's & Music]
Miss Annie MacFarlane (J)	Carl MacKenzie	... And His Sound Cape Breton [CLM-1001]
(Annie MacFarlane's Favourite)	Frank Ferrel	Boston Fiddle: The Dudley Streer Tradition [Rounder CD 7018]
Miss Ann MacNamara	Various Artists	Traditional Music from C.B. Island [Nimbus Records]
	Various Artists	Glendale '77
Miss Catherine Ann Lamey's (J)	Richard Wood	All Fired Up
	Various Artists [Richard Wood] John Campbell	Atlantic Fiddles
		A Dedication to the Gathering of the Clans [Independent]
Miss Jeanette Beaton (R)	Various Artists	Atlantic Fiddling [CBC LM-470]
Miss Jeanette Beaton (R)	Winnie Chafe	Highland Melodies of Cape Breton [Rounder-7012]
Miss Joan MacDonald's Favorite (R)...	Dougie MacPhee	Cape Breton's Master of the Keyboard [MacPhee Records DMP6- 27-3]

<u>TUNE</u>	<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>Record Label</u>
Miss Lexie Smith (S)	Raymond Ellis	Dedicated to Mom & Dad [Raymond Ellis Productions]
Miss Marguerite MacNeil's	Doug MacPhee	Cape Breton's Master of the Keyboard [MacPhee Records DMP6- 27-3]
Miss Marie MacEachern	Carl MacKenzie	Tullochgorum [CLM-1000]
	Raymond Ellis	Dedicated to Mom & Dad [Raymond Ellis Productions.]
Morrison's Ridge (J)	Kinnon Beaton	Kinnon Beaton - Cape Breton Fiddle [Dab-3-26-1]
Moxham Castle (S)	Ashley MacIsaac	Close to the Floor
	Kinnon Beaton	Cape Breton Fiddle-2 [Independent]
	Brenda Stubbert	House Sessions [Independent]
Mr. Colin J. Boyd (R)	MacInnis & MacNeil	Fosgail An Dorus [Gigs and Reels Productions]
Mr. Dow's	The Calgary Fiddlers	Breaking Down the Barriers [Marshall Crozman Music Ltd.]
Mrs. Augustus Murphy (R)	Paddy Leblanc	Fiddlin 'Scotty' Leblanc [Celtic CX-41]

<u>TUNE</u>	<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>Record Label</u>
Mrs. Beatty Wallace	Winston Fitzgerald	Winston Scotty Fitzgerald and his Radio Entertainers [Celtic CX-34]
	Winston Fitzgerald	Canada's Outstanding Scottish Fiddler [Rodeo RLP-1]
	Winston Fitzgerald	78 [Rodeo-120 RO-87/88]
	Winston Fitzgerald	Canadian Cavalcade: The Music of Cape Breton [Rodeo CCLP-2002]
Mrs. Beatty Wallace	Jerry Holland	Jerry Holland [Rounder-7008]
	Carl MacKenzie	Cape Breton Fancy [Independent]
Mrs. Dow (R)	Cape Breton Symphony	The Cape Breton Symphony: Fiddle [Brownrigg-001]
	The Calgary Fiddlers	Breaking Down the Barriers [Marshall Crozman Music Ltd.]
Mrs. Evelyn Fitzgerald (R)	Carl MacKenzie	Cape Breton Fiddle Medleys [CLR 8]
Mrs. Grace Tait (R)	Carl MacKenzie	Tradition [Independent]

<u>TUNE</u>	<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>Record Label</u>
Mrs. MacAuley's (R)	Winston Fitzgerald	A Selection of New, Jigs,Reels, Strathspeys, Hornpipes, and Waltzes [Banff RBS-1245] Also released on Celtic Label as: [Celtic SCX-59] Also released on the Rodeo Label as: [Rodeo RLP-101]
Mrs. Marie MacEachern	Dave MacIssac	Nimble Fingers (No Label)
Mrs. Margaret MacInnes	Paddy Leblanc	The Fiddling French Canadian Scot [Celtic CX-29]
Mrs. Norman MacKeigan	Cape Breton Symphony	Cape Breton Symphony [Glencoe GM1-001]
	Various Artists	Festival of Scottish Fiddling1973 [InterMedia WRC-160]
	Eddie Arsenault	Piling on the Bois Sec [House Party Prod.]
Mull River (R)	Chris Norman	The Beauty of the North [Dorian DOR 90190]
Neil R. MacDonald's (S)	Natalie MacMaster	Road to the Isles [Independent]
	Carl MacKenzie	Cape Breton Fancy [Independent]

<u>TUNE</u>	<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>Record Label</u>
	Ashley MacIsaac	Fine thank you very much [A&M 79602 2002-2]
New Fiddle, The (J)	Ashley MacIsaac	Close to the Floor [A&M]
	Jerry Holland	Jerry Holland [Rounder-7008]
	Scotty Leblanc	Fiddlin 'Scotty' Leblanc [Celtic CX-41]
	Various Artists	The Fiddlers of Cape Breton [Celtic SCX-57]
New Waterford (J)	Dave MacIssac	Nimble Fingers [Independent]
	Doug MacPhee	Cape Breton's Master of the Keyboards [MacPhee Records DMP6- 27-3]
Norman MacKeichan (R)	Carl MacKenzie	Celtic Ceilidh [Independent]
Norman MacKeigan (R)	Johnny Wilmot	Scottish and Irish Fiddle Tunes [Point P-324]
	Winnie Chafe	Echoes [Changewind Music 8001]
Ponds Road, The	Various Artists	Atlantic Fiddling [CBC LM-470]

<u>TUNE</u>	<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>Record Label</u>
Position, The (J)	Frank Ferrel	Boston Fiddle: The Dudley Street Tradition [Rounder CD 7018]
Queensville (J)	Buddy MacMaster	The Judique Flyer
Red Robin, The (J)	Carl MacKenzie	Cape Breton Fancy [No Label]
Red Shoes, The (R)	Joe Cormier	Old Time Wedding Reels and other Scottish Favourites [Rounder]
	The Chiasson Family	Road to Rollo Bay [Independent]
	Buddy MacMAster	Appears on Video The Master of the Cape Breton Fiddle [Seabright-Murphy Video]
	Maire O'Keefe	Coisir-House Party [Gael-Linn CEFCO 165]
	Donny Leblanc	Roisining Up the Bow [Independent]
	Winston Fitzgerald	Canadian Cavalcade: The Music of Cape Breton [Rodeo CCLP-2002]
	Winston Fitzgerald	Canada's Outstanding Scottish Fiddler [Rodeo RLP-1]

<u>TUNE</u>	<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>Record Label</u>
	Winston Fitzgerald	Rodeo 78 [RO-53/54]
	Winston Fitzgerald	Winston Scotty Fitzgerald and His Radio Entertainers [Celtic CX-34]
	Jerry Holland	Jerry Holland [Rounder-7008]
	Little Jack MacDonald	Celtic 78 [9745/9746]
	Raymond Ellis	Dedicated to Mom & Dad [Raymond Ellis Productions]
	Various Artists	Glendale '77 [CCB Press-1001]
	Various Artists	The Music of Cape Breton [Canadian Cavalcade]
Reeds, The (R)	Carl MacKenzie	A Cape Breton Classic [CLM 1007]
Reichswall Forest	Jerry Holland	Fiddlesticks [Green Linnet]
	Jerry Holland	Master Cape Breton Fiddler [Boot BOS-7231]
	Mike MacDougall	Mike MacDougall's Tape for Fr. Hector [C.B Magazine]
	Carl MacKenzie	Celtic Ceilidh [Independent]

<u>TUNE</u>	<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>Record Label</u>
	Natalie MacMaster	Fit as a Fiddle [Independent]
	Alasdair Fraser & Tony McManus	Return to Kintail [Culburnie]
River Bend (J)	Richard Wood	All Fired Up [Independent]
	Carl MacKenzie	Welcome to Your Feet Again [Rounder-7005]
	Theresa MacLellan	A Trip to Mabou Ridge: Scottish Music from C.B. Island [Rounder-7006]
	Buddy MacMaster	Appears on Video The Master of the Cape Breton Fiddle [Seabright Murphy Video]
	Glengarry Strathspey and Reel Society	The Violins of the Glengarry Strathspey and Reel Society [World Records]
	Highland Heights	Highland Heights [Independent]
Roache's Road	Dan R. MacDonald	Dan R. MacDonald [Celtic CX-42]
Rockwood (R)	Dougie MacPhee	Cape Breton's Master of the Keyboard [MacPhee Records DMP6- 27-3]

<u>TUNE</u>	<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>Record Label</u>
Sandy Boyd's(R)	Carl MacKenzie	Cape Breton Fiddle Medleys [CLM 8]
Southwest Bridge (R)	Frank Ferrel	Yankee Dreams [Flying Fish]
	Joseph Cormier	The Dances Down Home [Rounder-7004]
Sparrow, The (C)	Carl MacKenzie	Tradition [Independent]
Spring, The	Various Artists	A Salute to Scotland [Brownrigg BRG-012]
	Cape Breton Symphony	Pure Cape Breton: A Souvenir Album [Brownrigg BRG-013]
Springwells, The (J)	Joe MacLean	Rodeo 78 [RO-47/48]
	Carl MacKenzie	Cape Breton Fancy [Independent]
Stephanie Marie MacLean (R)	Various Cape Breton Fiddlers	Early LP's [Breton Books & Music]
	Dan Joe MacInnis	Scottish Canadian Fiddle Music [Banff RBS-1247]
	Dan Joe MacInnis	Dan Joe MacInnis [Celtic CX-36]

<u>TUNE</u>	<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>Record Label</u>
	Various Artists	24 Cape Breton Fiddle Medleys [Celtic SCX-53]
	Joseph Cormier (incorrectly titled Miss Mary Daphne MacLean)	Scottish Violin Music from Cape Breton Island [Rounder-7001]
Stornaway (J)	Kinnon Beaton	Cape Breton Fiddle-2 [Independent]
Strathlorne (J)	Paddy Leblanc	Fiddlin 'Scotty' Leblanc [Celtic CX-41]
Tommy MacQuestion's (R)	The Beatons of Mabou	The Beatons of Mabou [Rounder]
	Mike MacDougall	Mike MacDougall's Tape for Fr. Hector [C.B. Magazine]
	Paddy Leblanc	The Fiddling French Canadian Scot [Celtic CX-41]
	Joseph Cormier	Scottish Violin music from C.B. Island [Rounder-7001]
Thomas Reid's (R)nn	Dougie MacPhee	Cape Breton's Master of the Keyboard [MacPhee Records DMP6-27-3]

<u>TUNE</u>	<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>Record Label</u>
Tom Rae's (R)	Donny Leblanc	Roising Up the Bow [Independent]
	Buddy MacMaster	Appears on Video The Master of the Cape Breton Fiddle [Seabright Murphy Video]
	Various Artists	Traditional Music from C. B. Island [Nimbus]
	Raymond Ellis	Dedicated to Mom & Dad [Raymond Ellis Productions]
	Carl MacKenzie	Tradition [Independent]
	Joseph Cormier	The Cheticamp Connection-Phase 2 [Independent]
	Rodney MacDonald	Dancer's Delight [RMD-CD1]
	Winnie Chafe	Echoes [Changewind Music 8001]
	Various Artists	Glendale '77 [CCB Press-1001]
Tower O'Scolty (H)	Carl MacKenzie	Celtic Ceilidh [Independent]
Trip to Windsor (R)	Winston Fitzgerald	Classic Cuts [Breton Books & Music]

<u>TUNE</u>	<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>Record Label</u>
	Boys of the Lough	Live at Carnegie Hall [Shanachie]
	Richard Wood	All Fired Up [Independent]
	Barbara MacDonald- Magone	The Fiddlers Friend [Culbernie Records 103]
	Winston Fitzgerald	Winston "Scotty" Fitzgerald: 78's and House Parties [C.B. Magazine]
	Childsplay	Twelve-Gated City [Independent]
	Winston Fitzgerald	Canada's Outstanding Scottish Fiddler [Celtic CX-17]
	Denis Encontre	Denis Encontre [HolborneSB55-5511]
	Jimmie MacLellan	The Scottish Side of Jimmie MacLellan [Celtic CX-26]
	Brenda Stubbart	House Sessions [Independent]
	Greg Boardman	Century Reel [Outer Green OGR8912D]
	Cape Breton Symphony	Cape Breton Symphony [Glencoe GM1-001]

<u>TUNE</u>	<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>Record Label</u>
	Roger Wilson	Palm of your Hand [Harbourtown Har C002]
	Highland Heights	Highland Heights [Independent]
	Donald Black	Westwinds [Greentrax Cd 091]
	Capercaillie	Cascade [Etive Records]
	Wake The Dead	A Celtic Celebration of the Songs of the Grateful Dead [Arista/Grateful Dead Records]
	Hullion	Orkney 2000 - Music In Time
	Nicol McLaren & the Glencraig Scottish Dance Band	Clashmadin Vol.1 [SHIELCD011]
	Various Artists	The Fiddle Music of Prince Edward Island [1996 Mel Bay MB9539CD]
	Eddy Arsenault and Family	Party Acadien [House Party Productions]
	Liz Doherty & Fiddlesticks	Racket in the Rectory [Foot Stomp Records]
	Train Journey North	First Tracks [KRL/Lochshore]

<u>TUNE</u>	<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>Record Label</u>
	April Verch	Verchusity [Rounder Records]
	Sharon Shannon	Each Little Thing [Green Linnet Records]
	Sharon Shannon	The Best of Sharon Shannon [Grapevine Records]
	Fiddlers Bid	Around the World [Veesik Records]
	Haines & Leighton	Foot to Floor [Independent]
	Dave Swarbick & Simon Nicol	Close to the White Bear [Woodworm Records]
	Simon Thoumire	Solo 1 [White Label]
	Johnny Mooring	Down East Fiddling with Johnny Mooring and his Melodiers [Banf/Rodeo]
	Jennifer & Hazel Wrigley	The Watch Stone [Independent]
	A Band Named Bob	A Band Named Bob [Independent]
	Alistair Anderson	Syncopace [Black Crow Records]

<u>TUNE</u>	<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>Record Label</u>
	Alasdair MacCuish and the Black Rose Ceilidh Band	Alasdair MacCuish and the Black Rose Ceilidh Band [KRL/LOCHSORE]
	Various Artists	Traditional Music from Cape Breton Island [Nimbus Records]
	The Last Gaspe	Good to the last Gaspe
	Waxies Dargle	After the Gael [Brambus Records]
	Various Artists	A feast of Scottish folk
Triplet	Carl MacKenzie	Tullochgorum [CLM-1000]
	Bobby Brown and The Cape Breton Symphony Fiddlers Tara Lynn Tousesnard	The Great Cape Breton Fiddle Co. Bowling the Strings No Label]
Victoria Bridge (J)	The Cape Breton Symphony	A Salute To Scotland [Brownrigg-012]
Victoria Bridge (J)	The Cape Breton Symphony	Pure Cape Breton: A Souvenir Album [Brownrigg-013]
	Dan R. MacDonald	Dan R. MacDonald [Celtic CX-42]
Walkers Cove (S)	Tara Lynne Tousenard	Bowling the Strings [INDEPENDENT]

<u>TUNE</u>	<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>Record Label</u>
Wedding, The (J)	Paddy Leblanc	The Fiddling French Canadian Scot [Celtic CX-29]
	Dwayne Cote	Introduction [INDEPENDENT]
	Carl MacKenzie	Cape Breton Fancy [INDEPENDENT]
Wilfred's Fiddle (J)	Cape Breton Symphony	Cape Breton Symphony [Glencoe GM1-001]
	John Campbell	Cape Breton Violin Music [Rounder-7003]
	Carl MacKenzie	Welcome to your feet again [Rounder - 7005]
	Ashley MacIssac	Fine thank you very much [A&M 79602 2002-2]
	Various Artists	Vermont Sampler
Marie MacClennan's (R)	Various Artists [Willie Hunter]	Aly Bain & Friends [Greentrax CDTRAX-026]

J=Jig

R=Reel

C=Clog

S=Strathspey

M=March

Appendix C:
Timeline of Dan R. MacDonald's Life

1939	First commercial recording released on the Celtic label
Late 1930's	Introduced to Cape Breton radio audiences on Bill Lameys Sydney radio show
1936	Composes first tune titled "The Red Shoes"
1934	Learns to read music in Queensville
1930	Moves to Glendale Cape Breton with Mrs. O'Hendley
1930	Father passes away as does Hugh O'Hendley
1926	Begins playing the fiddle
1925	Begins working in the Woods
Feb. 2 1911	Born In Judique

1942-45	Works in the Scottish Highlands travelling and playing music on his off time
Sept. 4 1942	Re-Assigned to the #22 Coy of the Canadian Forestry Corps
Dec. 23 1941	Arrives in Gourock, Scotland
Dec. 12 1941	Leaves Halifax on a military convoy bound for Gourock, Scotland
Nov-41	Returns to Nova Scotia prior to shipping off to Europe
Aug/Sept 1941	Posted to Pettewawa, Ontario for advanced training
Jul-41	Goes to New Glasgow for Basic Training
May 7 1941	Enlists in Mulgrave, Nova Scotia and joins the Rooyal Canadian Artillery
1940	First compositions are published in The Cape Breton Collection of Scottish Melodies

Jan. 22 1946	Officially discharged from Military duty and returns to Civilian life in Cape Breton
Dec. 21 1945	Admitted into St.Martha's Hospital in Antigonish w/ Bronchitis
Mid Dec. 1945	Arrives back in Halifax and makes his way to Cape Breton
Dec. 2 1945	Leaves U.K. and returns to Canada
Oct. 22 1945	Returns to England
Sept 1944- Oct 1945	Remains on the continent spending considerable time in the Belgium forests
Sept. 25 1944	Arrives in France
Sept. 24 1944	Leaves the U.K. bound for France
1942-1945	Plays over BBC Scotland on at least two separate occasions

1958-1963	Records 4 Long play records for Rodeo records Label
1957	First Five MacDonald Fiddlers Recording released
1957	Moves to Elliot Lake, Ontario after laid off at Chrysler. Works as cook at Uranium mine.
1947-1957	Works in Windsor at both Ford and Chrysler autoplants
1947	Moves to Windsor, Ontario and begins working at Ford Motor Company
1947	Moves briefly to Hamilton, Ontario.
1946-1947	Shuffles back and forth between Boston and Cape Breton. Likely made at least one trip to Detroit as well.
1946	Records for Justice O'Byrne Dewitt's Copley Records Company based in Boston
1946	Heads to Boston to visit

Sept. 1976	Leg is amputated
Jul-76	Last public performance at Broad Cove Concert
1975	Moves to Port Hood, Cape Breton
1973	Appears at the inaugural Glendale Fiddling Festival
1973	Appears in episodes of his nephew's new CBC variety show, Ceilidh.
Nov. 20 1971	Vanishing Cape Breton Fiddler documentary appears on the CBC's television show Take 30
1968	Moves to Highland St. in Mabou to live with his sister Katie Anne
1959-1968	Travels a circuit in Cape Breton and the mainland of Nova Scotia and to Boston.
1959	Returns to Cape Breton and moves into a boarding house at 7 Ferry St. in Sydney

1994		Trip to Windsor Collection is released
1985		The Heather Hill Collection released
July 23 1977		CBC Radio Programme Dan R.: The Life and Tunes of Dan R. MacDonald Aired on CBC radio's Between Ourselves
Sept. 24 1976		75+ Fiddlers pay tribute to Dan R. at his Mabou funeral
Sept. 20 1976		Dies in hospital in Inverness

APPENDIX D:
DAN R. MACDONALD'S WWII MILITARY MEDALS

Dan R's Military Service Medals:**Canadian Volunteer Service Medal****French German Star****Defense Medal**

