

# THE NEWSLETTER

Special  
Double Issue

A Mariposa Folk Festival Publication

FEBRUARY '76

## Editorial

Issue number four of The Newsletter was due during the mail strike, and then issue five about now. Rather than put out two in quick succession, we decided to make this a double issue, numbers four and five, but there's one complication: anyone who subscribed at the beginning is due to re-up with issue number five. So you're honour bound either to send us another \$3.00 for issues four, five and six, or else to tear off the last half of this double issue and mail it back to us.

This is a fine issue, we think. We've got an interview with Buell Kazee, Grit provides some Tips on Buying Lumber, an article on Male Supremacy from a 1953 Sing Out! Sheila McMurrich talks about crafts in Newfoundland, Kathy Reid teaches dulcimer, 2 finger style, and Cathy Schmidt reports on the Country Dance School in Berea, Kentucky. Plus some dates, schedules, reports, and even a recipe.

We have a new editor this issue, now that Paul Hornbeck has an honest job. Matthew Clark is a recognized expert in the folk art of misspelling and general excuses. He teaches at the Eli Kassner Guitar Academy and the University of Toronto, does some free-lance lying, and is occasionally coherent before noon.

## Mariposa '76

Plans are already well underway for this summer's festival. It will again be held on the Toronto Islands. Dates are June 25, 26 and 27, 1976. As usual, you're well advised to get your tickets well in advance by mail; the early mail order form will be out in March. Tell your friends to get on our mailing list to be assured of receiving early ticket information.

Mariposa elections were held last Fall. The Board of Directors consists of: Jamie Bell, Estelle Klein (Artistic Director), Joe Lewis (Public Relations), Marna Snitman (Managing Director), Ken Whiteley and Ray Woodley. Our Advisory Group includes Leigh Cline, Margot Kearney, Terry Stephen, Daryl Thomas, Bill Usher and Joyce Yamamoto.



Owen McBride at Mariposa '75.  
Photo by Mark Berman

# The Cast

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Editor.....Matthew Clark  
Managing Editor.....Marilyn Koop  
Artwork & Layout.....Stew Cameron  
Committee.....Tam Kearney,  
Grit Laskin,  
Joyce Yamamoto

Very special thanks go to contributing writers and to Mariposa's trusty volunteers who help with mailing.

The Newsletter will accept certain ads dealing with folk music and related events. We reserve the right to okay content, size and layout. Rates available on request.



## Will We Miss You When You're Gone?

If you move and don't tell us about it, it's going to be hard times. You won't be able to learn all these interesting facts and happenings and we will lose a sympathetic ear and a friend of the festival, not to mention the wasted costs of printing and postage. Please, keep us informed of any change of address. It will help us both.



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Mummers Play with the Friends of Fiddlers Green at Mariposa '75.  
Photo by Keith Buck

# MALE SUPREMACY

## and Folk Song



BY IRWIN SILBER  
(Edited and Abridged)

Margot Kearney directs our attention to the following, from the March 1953 issue of *Sing Out!* with the comment that "this article is as relevant today as it was 22 years ago."

(Silber begins by remarking on the male supremacist ideology and cash box emotion of American pop music. He concludes that there is "a deliberately planned approach designed to help carry out the basic program of war, violence, and national chauvanism which are the cornerstones of monopoly-controlled culture." In contrast, though there are some traditional songs influenced by male supremacist ideology, folk music by and large comes from the real lives of real people, and are therefore a part of the "general democratic expression of our proud history of struggle for equal rights and genuine brotherhood.")

...Our folk heritage includes scores of songs which defy the ruling class standards of their times. The classic

example is the Irish street ballad, known extensively in this country, "The Bonnie Laboring Boy". In the song, the mother tells her daughter to give up her true love:

Perhaps some man might fancy you,  
With riches in great store,  
So do not throw yourself away  
On that bonny laboring boy.

To which the young woman replies:

Stop, oh stop, dear mother,  
Your talk is all in vain,  
I'd sooner wed the laboring boy,  
This whole world to gain,  
I'd sooner wed the laboring boy,  
No riches to enjoy,  
But in peace and confident prospects  
With the bonny laboring boy.

This is only one example of many such songs which deal with the theme of true love as opposed to a forced marriage for riches. The traditional English ballad, "Matty Groves" tells of the lord's wife who loves the stable boy--and "Raggle Taggle Gypsies" and "Gypsy Davy" have a similar story.

Many of these songs, performed on a stage today, serve to further the ideas of male supremacy. But in their historical context, many of these songs are also expressions of protest. We must remember that free choice in marriage, for women particularly, is comparatively recent. And many of the love songs of folk literature assume a great significance when we realize that the right to marry for love was an important social issue in the period during which most of these were created.

Even many of the cuckolding songs, which sung today become an insult to women, in their origin were forms of protest against the drunken husband ("Four Nights Drunk") or the cruel, rich squire or lord ("Matty Groves").

In addition there are a number of songs like "Little Phoebe" and "Old Man In The Wood"--obvious barbs at 'male supremacy', showing the boastful husband who challenges his wife to change jobs for a day. Naturally, he bungles all the household chores while she does quite

well in the fields with the plow and horses.

There ARE songs which reflect male supremacist ideology. It would be surprising if there were not. But these represent only one small portion of the folk expression of our country--and of folk music throughout the world.

The singer of folk songs today must use great care in assembling a repertoire of material. It is not enough to say, as some do, "these are genuine expressions of the people--and so there can be nothing wrong in singing them." No matter when a song was written, its public performance today, with rare exceptions, must be assessed in terms of today's standards. And on that basis, many folk songs which can only undermine the emerging role of women as leaders and participants in the battle for human rights and peace have no place today.

...Our job must be to find the most positive, direct expressions of equal rights which are a part of the over-all struggle for peace and human dignity. In doing this, we will firmly express the basic human character of the people's movement generally, and the struggle for women's rights particularly, which is demanding in increasingly outspoken terms:

As we come marching, marching,  
We battle too for men,  
For they are women's children  
And we mother them again.  
Our lives shall not be sweated  
From birth until life closes,  
Hearts starve as well as bodies:  
Give us Bread, but give us Roses!

Margot adds this personal comment:

The British Tradition, like it or not, is almost completely chauvinist (with both male and female chauvinists represented). Do we eliminate a complete tradition to satisfy the few who are too insecure to laugh at themselves? These songs can be very funny if sung the right way; it is the performer's interpretation, not the content, which can make them hurtful. Many performers today tend to try to use this type of song to "get at the other side." Peggy Seeger's "I Want to be an Engineer" (though it's not traditional) illustrates the point: when performed by Peggy it is a very witty and humorous comment on today's world. Unfortunately it tends to be portrayed as a "Battle Hymn."



## incidentally:

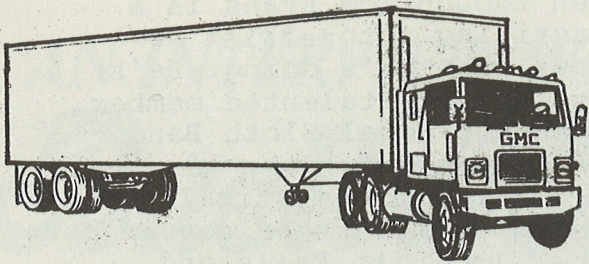
A fine new book has just been published by the National Library of Canada. It's called Roll Back the Years and is a history of Canadian recorded sound from the beginnings up to 1930. The book is nicely printed, well illustrated and includes some very detailed material. There is even a small record included in the book. The price is \$12.95, a little high perhaps, but it is certainly worth it to any serious scholar of Canadian music and history.

Michael Cooney says that Folk Music of North America by Alan Lomax is finally available in paperback.

## Toronto Folklore Centre *Sunday Workshops*

- Feb. 22 - Slide Guitar  
with Ken Whiteley, Dave Essig and Colin Linden
- March 7 - Macrame  
with Margot Kearney and Marsha Bevan-Pritchard
- March 21- The Folk Process (Songs and how they changed from Britain to America) with Margaret Christl, Stew Cameron and Cathy Schmidt
- April 4 - Dobro and Steel  
with Frank Barth and Ron Dann

Workshops start at 8 p.m. Admission \$1.00.



# ANOTHER MAN'S HAIR ON MY RAZOR

Words & Music by Adam Mitchell ©

**A**  $\sharp\sharp$   $\frac{4}{4}$

**E** **A** **E**

I WAS ROL-LIN MY RIG ALONG THE HIGH — WAY. I WAS

**B7** **E**

THINKING BOUT MY WIFE AND KIDS AT HOME, I WAS THINKING EVERY-

**A** **E** **F** **B7**

THING WAS GOIN MY WAY. BUT AS I ROLLED ALONG I DIDN'T KNOW,

**B** **B7** **E**

THERE WAS ANOTHER MANS HAIR UP ON MY RA — ZOR, AN-

**B7** **A**

OTHER'S FACE WHERE MY FACE OUGHT TO BE. OH MY DARLIN HAD HIM

**E** **B7** **E**

STAY THINKIN I WAS FAR AWAY. BUT THE LAST STROKE OF THE RAZOR FELL TO ME.

I was rollin' my rig along the highway,  
I was thinkin' 'bout my wife and kids at home,  
I was thinkin' everything was goin' my way,  
But as I rolled along I didn't know--

## Chorus

There was another man's hair on my razor,  
Another's face where my face ought to be,  
Oh my darlin' had him stay thinkin' I was far away  
But the last stroke of the razor fell to me.

Well I walked through our door kinda happy  
Feelin' sure my wife would be surprised,  
But when I heard them voices from the bathroom  
I got that funny feelin' inside.

Well I bust through that door and grabbed the razor,  
I was swingin' crazy yellin' that they'd pay  
And now there's no more voices from the bathroom,  
And now I got to face my judgement day.

# INDEPENDENT RECORDINGS

(A how-to-do-it guide on producing your own record)

BY TOM EVANS

Even though Tom Evans is a practising optometrist he knows what he's doing. He's also a multi-talented member of the Original Sloth Band.

Many performers are now considering recording who previously did not because of lack of commercial viability. The industry itself is changing, though rather slowly, to a less star-oriented system, thus, making an album is becoming more possible for the "average" musician. Also, as an alternative to large company recordings, musicians are producing their own. How, then, does one go about making a record?

First, find a small or independent studio. There are many in southern Ontario. In Toronto, Thunder Sound has an eight track studio at around \$50.00 an hour. MSR Productions near Hamilton (416-648-4864) has an eight track studio of quality equal to Thunder's at less than half the price. Technical assistance for recording and mixing is generally available at or through the studio.

Second, once the master tape has been prepared (properly mixed and edited) it's time to cut the laquer or master record. RCA in Toronto does this for most of the large companies and will for you as well. The price for this is usually included in that of the first print of albums. There is a minimum run which depends on the type of record, i.e. LP or 45. The print is generally done in Smith Falls but all can be arranged in Toronto at RCA.

Third, and most nerve racking, the cover. This takes the most time of all and should be begun even before the studio date. Someone with experience and expertise in graphic and photographic arts is much needed. The largest actual album cover printer in Toronto is Shorewood Packaging on Bellamy Ave. They will also help in the layout and have consultants for this purpose. My experience with this company has not been blissful. The cover generally ends up costing more than originally estimated,

through strange and mystical added procedures. The finished covers can be shipped to Smith Falls and the record print run started when they arrive.

The whole process can take as little as two months:

Recording	2 - 3 days
Mixing	2 days
Cover	2 - 3 weeks
Record printing	1 - 2 weeks
(cannot be begun until covers completed and delivered).	

The total cost for a minimum print run can be as little as \$1000.00:

1. Cover	\$300.00
2. Studio	\$300.00 - \$500.00
3. Records	\$400.00 - \$500.00

Our first album (The Original Sloth Band - Whoopee After Midnight - Sloth Records) was recorded at Meniscus Sound on Mt. Pleasant Rd. in Toronto. It was done on a 2-track Revox machine live from the studio and mixed therefore as we went along. While this gave us an uncluttered live feel it also limited our possibilities musically. None of us are great businessmen but we did break even after some financially anxious moments.

Our second album was recorded for Woodshed Records. It's called Hustlin' and Bustlin' and will be released (or allowed to escape) in February '76. Woodshed offers the best alternative to large company recording. At Woodshed we can produce an album of musical and technical quality equal to that of the large companies. This speaks to our energy, dedication, and expertise. It also contrasts the often uninspired and far too commercially oriented approach of the multinational recording corporations. In short if you want to record, do it. You don't need the corporate recording machine as much as it needs you.



## AN INTERVIEW WITH

# Buell Kazez

BY PAUL HORNBECK

(transcribed by

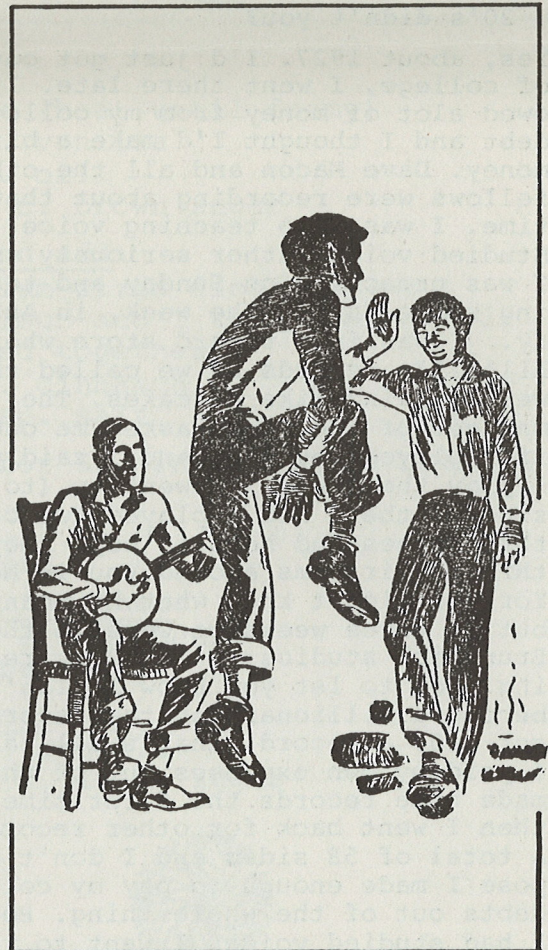
Marilyn Koop)

Buell: Well the banjo picker wasn't too well thought of. I came in with the century if you want to know how old I am. I don't know that anyone thought a banjo picker was wicked or anything like that, they just thought he was...they said over there in the mountains of Kentucky, they said he was "no account". That meant he'd never amount to anything, never be a millionaire or anything like that you know. And he wasn't the kind of man that liked to plow and hoe corn and all that kind of thing. Course they didn't know if he went to school and studied music he might become pretty well fixed in that department.

A banjo picker wasn't well thought of for another reason. He was associated with a kind of revelry that was contrary to the concept of moral and order and I think nearly everywhere you go to festivals someone may have told the story which demonstrates what I'm talking about:

My father told me about a judge by the name of Patton who lived in the next county - he lived in Morgan county, Kentucky. And Judge Patton was a rugged judge and he gave instructions to the jury. He chewed tobacco and spat somewhere on the bench and he said one time - did you know gentlemen of the jury, we can take up a lot of time on cases that don't matter. He said the creeks come up and the roads are bad and people can't get to court and it's hard to hold court in this county. He said--I'd rather you just take the cases that are important. If two fellows get into a fight, knock each other around and don't kill each other, why I wouldn't bring them into court, we don't have to worry about them. After a little shootin' goes on and they don't hit anybody, why I wouldn't bring that in. And he mentioned a great many cases that he thought wouldn't be worth bothering the court with. Then he grew very serious and spat over in the corner and said--gentlemen of the jury, if you see a feller going up the creek with a banjo under his arm and a hound dog followin' him, indict him. If he ain't done something he's affixin' to.

When I first heard Buell Kazez on the Folkways Anthology singing "The Butcher's Boy", I was instantly attracted to his smooth singing and the sparse, perfect banjo style. I had no idea he was still performing until Mariposa 1975. At that time, I had the chance to talk with Buell about his music and tradition. He was gracious, articulate and full of wonderful stories. It had been a long time since those old 78's for Brunswick in the 1920's, but during the interview, I learned a lot about the man and his memories. I'm glad he consented to publication of our conversation.



from Jack Tales , H&M Co.

That was told in my father's time and characterizes what people thought about it. Well we just never thought a banjo picker would amount to much. However some of us hung on until we conquered, you know. Of course religion crossed up with it because the religious concept was rather serious and the crowd that the revelry and banjo and fiddle drew was not always orderly. A good deal of drunkenness and swearing and sometimes a fight and all that kind of thing associated with it that Christian people stand off from, and they didn't think much of it. That's what put the banjo in the red. But I struggled with it until I got to college and I got along alright after that. It's always been a hobby with me, haven't made any money out of it much but I just do it as a hobby and I'm up here just that way. I don't know whether you care to know this or not but I've been preaching for fifty eight years and that's a very serious matter to me. I never mix banjo pickin' and preachin'.

- Buell, you started recording with the Brunswick Co. in the 20's didn't you?

Yes, about 1927. I'd just got out of college, I went there late. I owed alot of money from my college debt and I thought I'd make a bit of money. Dave Macon and all the other fellows were recording about that time. I was also teaching voice. Studied voice rather seriously and I was preaching on Sunday and teaching voice during the week, in Ashton, Ky. I was in a record store where hillbilly records as we called them were selling like hotcakes. The manager of the store asked me one day if I played anything and I said yes, I play the banjo. We went up (to my studio) there and I played two or three tunes and he said 'boy, they 'll throw their arms around you in New York.' I didn't know what he meant, but in three weeks we were in the Brunswick studios in New York recording. Now to let you know I didn't become a millionaire on that score, I got \$40. a record, that's all, and I paid my own expenses out of that. I made nine records the first time and then I went back for other recordings. A total of 58 sides and I don't suppose I made enough to pay my college debts out of the whole thing. Because I had studied voice, I want to tell

you this--I made the records exactly as I sang them as a boy and I didn't change anything. I don't ever do that. I play them exactly like they're supposed to be played and sung and it amused me when I got into the recording session that I had to make a record over sometimes six or seven times because it was too good. They'd say that sounds good but it won't make the cash register ring--it has to be a little more corny and a little more countrified, and you gotta get the voice out of the upper chambers and down into the throat. So I had to get back singing the way I sang before I studied any voice. But I never have tried to put an operatic tone in a folk song. I keep it down where it belongs and sing it true.

The depression came along about 1930 as you remember and I had 58 sides recorded but some of them have never been released. Decca owns them I think and the Brunswick Co. went out of business. Maybe I helped on that. They make billiard tables but they don't make any more records. But these records got revived as true representation of folk music. Some of the collectors and scholars like Alan Lomax picked them up and they got distributed all over the world as folk music, true folk music. And that's how I became so famous.

- Was your family a musical family?

Well I had two sisters and three brothers, father and mother, and all of us together made pretty much a singing family and even though we lived on the head of a creek--lots of people lived on those creeks and over the hills--our place, because we had two pretty girls there, became a sort of social centre especially after we developed a banjo picker in the house. And people who played banjo stopped with us and then we had occasion on which the banjo was played and the songs sung. And lots of young women and men came there on Saturday nights and during Sundays and we had quite a social centre there. Well I heard others pick the banjo and I wanted to do it myself so I got an old banjo that my aunt had across the hill. Her boys had made it. It was entirely home made with a hoop made of an old white oak splint just bent around like an old fashioned sieve, nailed together with carpet



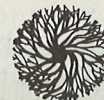
tacks and on that was stretched a cat hide. Every time I needed a new hide there'd be one less cat in the country. We'd dress the hide and while it was soft we'd tack it on there and when it dried out we found it very good, like a drum. The neck was whittled out of walnut. Everything about it was home made. Even the holes that we bored in the neck for keys. We didn't have an auger. We heated an iron and burned the holes through. The keys didn't stand very well when you turned them up--we whittled them out of wood of course--they'd get loose, and when they did that we'd spit on them, put the key back in and it'd stick alright for awhile. If the banjo got so it didn't sound very well we'd warm it up around the fire and it'd be alright. So I learned to play on that. Down on the neck where we fretted it, without any frets of course, there were deep trenches worn by the finger nails from sliding on there. The best banjo I knew was a Sears Roebuck special. It cost

\$5.95. That was the best banjo they had. It had 31 brackets. We judged the quality of a banjo by how many brackets it had on it. Didn't care whether it had frets on it or not because they got in the way. We'd take a file and file them all right down.

But I learned later on that the Sears Roebuck banjos weren't very good because the neck begins to come in and it didn't hold. My banjo is a Gibson and it cost me \$115. in 1927. I don't know what it's worth now. It originally had a calf skin head and it wore out and I got a plastic head six or seven years ago. But I don't like it because it gives you a loud tone but its a 10¢ store tone. It's not the genuine mellow tone that the calf's skin gives you. Everything is better but worse now.

● I'm afraid it's about time to go.

Well I'll just take up a collection and leave.



## **FOLKFOODS** by Marilyn Koop

Eating is most everybody's favourite folk art, so we've decided to make this column a regular feature of the Newsletter.

This column can't lure you with coloured glossy photos of the results you can expect (and probably won't get), but I do plan to include good basic tried-and-true recipes that are suited to the season to keep costs down. And hopefully it'll be a pleasant glimpse into the 'foodways' of other cultures.

### APPLE CAKE

I may still run into somebody who doesn't like this cake. Stranger things have happened. It's an Old Mennonite recipe that I know by heart since I've written it out for so many people who wanted to try making it themselves.

2 eggs (beat until foamy)  
2 tsp. vanilla  
3/4 c. oil  
1 1/4 c. brown sugar

mix and add:

4 medium-sized diced apples  
1 c. flour and 1 tsp. baking soda  
mixed together  
2 tsp. cinnamon  
1/4 tsp. salt

Bake for 50 min. or until done at 350°.

Frosting

cream together:

3 oz. cream cheese  
3 T. butter

mix in:

1 tsp. vanilla  
1 1/2 c. icing sugar



# FINGER-PICKING THE DULCIMER

## TWO FINGER STYLE

BY KATHY REID

This picking style uses the right hand thumb and index finger. The index plays the bass string only and the thumb alternates between the treble strings. The tune I use as an example is Ginny's Gone to Ohio, available on the record Five Days Singing, Vol. 1 by the Golden Ring on the Folk Legacy label.

To play this tune your dulcimer should be tuned to an Ionian mode--tune the bass to C and all the treble strings to G. In this tuning the bass string fretted at the fourth fret should sound the same as the treble strings open (that is, unfretted.)

In the tablature, the bottom line indicates the melody string or outside treble. The middle line is the middle string, which in this tune is always played open. The top line is the bass string. A number on a line indicates where your finger frets the string. Play the notes, in order, left to right.

This is an alternating style--that is, you will always play thumb finger...the thumb plays either a melody note on the first string or a fill-in note on the middle string. The index always plays a drone note on the bottom string.

Where there is a treble note directly below a bass note both should sound at the same time. The treble will be played not by the right hand thumb, but by a left hand finger either hammering on or pulling off. To hammer on, pluck the first note with the right hand thumb, then, while the string is still vibrating, hit the second note with the left hand finger. You will always hammer on from a lower fret (or open string) to a higher fret. To pull off, start with a left hand finger down. Pluck the note with your

right hand thumb, then, while the string is still vibrating, pull your left hand finger sideways off the string. You will always pull off from a higher fret to a lower (or to an open string). When pulling off, it's a good idea to have both the higher and lower fingers on at once--otherwise you will likely mute the tone when you drop the lower finger onto the string. In the tablature hammering on is indicated by a line over two notes: 0 1. Pulling off is indicated by a line below two notes: 4 3.

It might help stabilize your right hand to rest your ring finger and/or your little finger on the far side of the fret board--but keep away from the bass string, so you don't mute it.

First line of tablature for "Ginny's gone to Ohio". It shows three strings: C (top), G (middle), and G (bottom). The melody string (C) has notes 0, 1, 3, 4, 4, 3, 1, 0. The middle string (G) has notes 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0. The bass string (G) has notes 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0. The lyrics "Ginny's gone to Ohio" are written below the notes.

Second line of tablature for "Ginny's gone a-way". It shows three strings: C (top), G (middle), and G (bottom). The melody string (C) has notes 0, 1, 3, 4, 1. The middle string (G) has notes 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0. The bass string (G) has notes 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0. The lyrics "Ginny's gone a-way" are written below the notes.

Third line of tablature for "Ginny's gone to Ohio". It shows three strings: C (top), G (middle), and G (bottom). The melody string (C) has notes 1, 4, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 1. The middle string (G) has notes 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0. The bass string (G) has notes 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0. The lyrics "Ginny's gone to Ohio" are written below the notes.

Fourth line of tablature for "Ginny's gone a-way". It shows three strings: C (top), G (middle), and G (bottom). The melody string (C) has notes 0, 5, 5, 4, 3, 3. The middle string (G) has notes 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0. The bass string (G) has notes 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0. The lyrics "Ginny's gone a-way" are written below the notes.

Repeat last 3 lines for chorus.

ADDITIONAL VERSES:

2. Ginny's a pretty girl don't you know,  
Ginny's gone away,  
Ginny's a pretty girl don't you know,  
Ginny's gone away.

Chorus (between each verse)

3. Ginny's dressed in strings and rags
4. Ginny's gone down the lonesome road
5. Ginny's gone with a tear in her eye
6. Ginny's gone and I'm going too

IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE DULCIMER, KATHY TEACHES AT THE TORONTO FOLKLORE CENTRE.



# mariposa in the schools

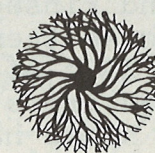
BY CAROL KEHM

MITS has really skyrocketed since September! The phone has been ringing constantly and the wall calendar shows three and four bookings for each day in November and most of December. The first part of October we put a '75-'76 catalogue together and sent it out to every school in Toronto and all the surrounding areas, plus a long list of individuals who specially requested it. There are still lots available so if you're interested in having one for your school, library, community centre, etc. please let

me know. Any programme involving children or young people, from junior kindergarten through college, is eligible to use MITS. The high school teachers' strike has meant we haven't had many requests from secondary schools, but hopefully that will change now the strike has ended. Our list of performers has grown from ten to twenty-two this year. We've included three ethnic dancers and hope to be able to expand these into an ethnic and native people's programme for schools that are especially interested in this sort of thing. We also hope to provide workshops to schools that are outside the Toronto union boundaries. The performers are willing to travel and we already have several bookings to far away places (well, not really that far away, but we certainly are reaching schools outside of Toronto).

In November MITS sponsored a children's concert featuring Bessie Jones and members of her family. It was held at University Settlement House and we are happy to tell you that the room was overflowing with enthusiastic people. Feet were tapping and hands clapping as Bessie led groups of children through songs, games and dances of her native Georgia. As a matter of fact, Bessie, herself, was having such a good time that we had a hard time getting her to stop singing! The afternoon was very successful and we would like to try having other children's concerts in the future.

The MITS programme is extremely flexible, offering a great variety of workshops for all age groups, in town and out, during the day or in the evening, even to teacher groups on Professional Development Days. Give me a call at 922-4871 and let's see what can be arranged for your group.



Sheila headed East to Newfoundland after winding up a two year term as Mariposa's Managing Director. She settled in St. John's and got a job slinging drinks. Then her original interest in handcrafts took over. The Festival gave her a grant to undertake fieldwork in both Newfoundland crafts and music. This research culminated in a Newfoundland Corner at last summer's festival.

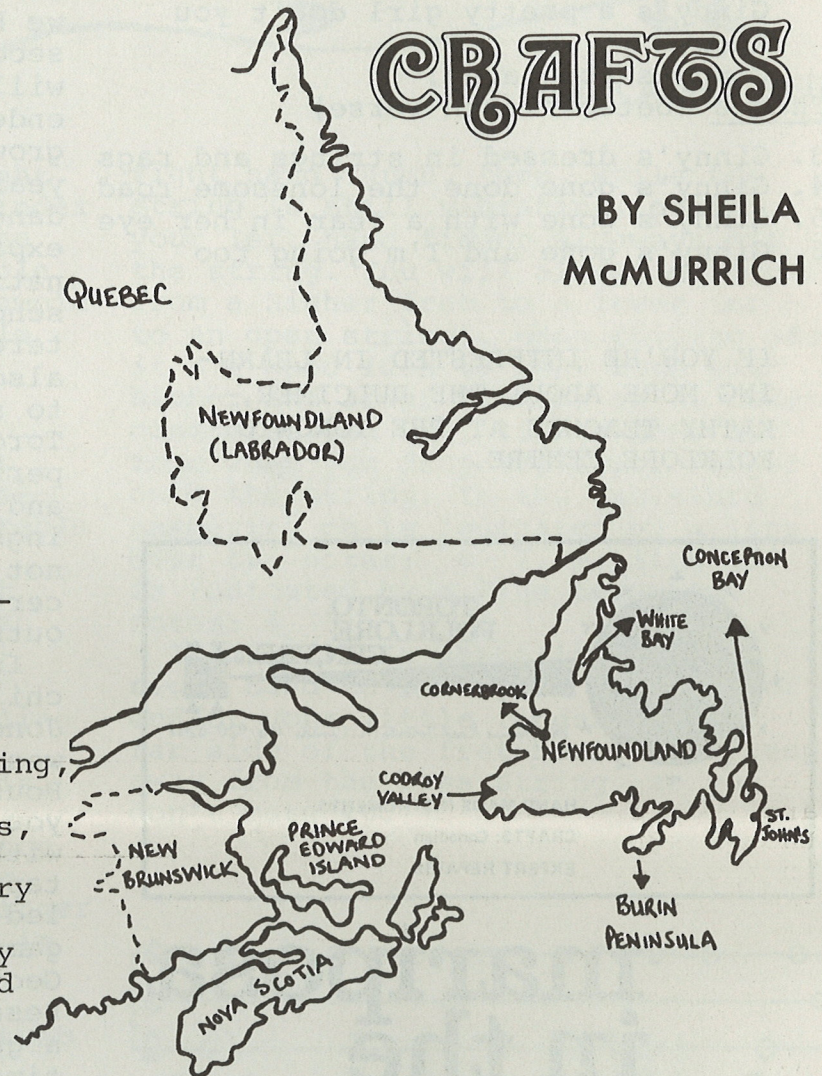
# NEWFOUNDLAND

## CRAFTS

BY SHEILA  
McMURRICH

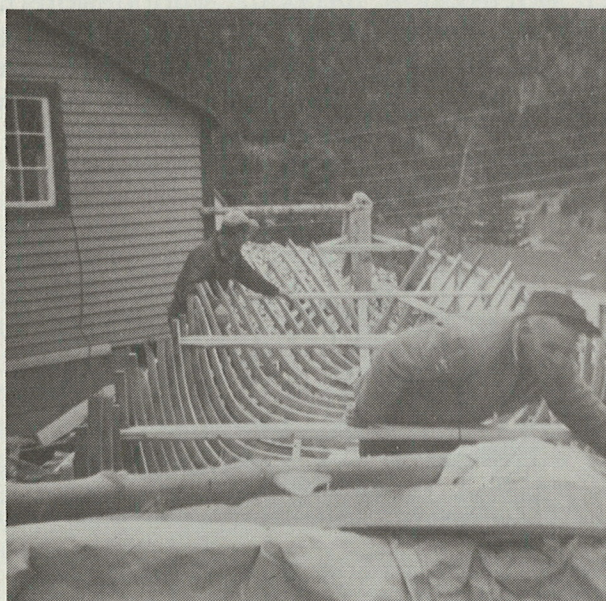
It is a rare experience these days to talk with someone in his mid-fifties who can describe growing up in a time when he had to raise sheep and shear the fleece to spin up yarn for his winter clothing; a time when the whole family was involved with the fishing, hunting, and vegetable gardening; a time when building boats, houses, furniture was a part of the day to day routine. City life and industry have led us far from the days of rural subsistence living--yet only twenty five years ago Newfoundland was just beginning to know the luxuries the rest of Canada had been enjoying for years. When Confederation ended the extremely high duties on imported goods, the Islanders saw an influx of commodities. These could make life easier but simultaneously damage the strong resourceful spirit that was the foundation of Newfoundland life.

"I wonder how the women found the time to do all the sewing, washing and ironing, especially when one remembers the water had to be heated in large boilers on the stove. Nearly everyone boiled their white clothes in washing soda and rinsed them in blue water to make them white. Those were the days of wood or coal stoves, sad irons, and oil lamps. Lots of homes had at



least one dozen lamps to be attended to every day. Still with all the inconveniences, mother found time between the "jigs and reels" to visit a sick neighbour, bring a nourishing drop of soup, or some other delicacy, and serve meals to anyone who happened to visit the home. How is it that with all the modern conveniences, time-saving devices, frozen foods, as well as baker's bread and cake mixes, life seems to be one mad rush, with no leisure for the simple enjoyments we had?"<sup>1</sup>

The skills now commonly called folk arts or handicrafts were for Newfoundlanders chores that just had to be done. When Confederation brought new conveniences, life began to change. People came to regard the skills as backward and old-fashioned, dropped them, and hid away their products. Spinning wheels were chopped up as "junks" for the fire; hand made furniture was thrown out to make way for the new chrome kitchen sets; home salted and dried fish was abandoned for new quick foods. These were the immediate effects of Confederation. But hundreds of years of living off the sea and the woods are not so quickly wiped out. There is a persevering spirit among Newfoundlanders which defies the "progressive" push of the mainland. There are fishermen who know that they won't have a strong boat unless they build it themselves--without blue prints--with just the knowledge and experience passed down from their fathers and grandfathers. And there are knitters who realize that, although synthetic yarn is available in the stores, there is nothing like a skein of your own handspun for durability and warmth.



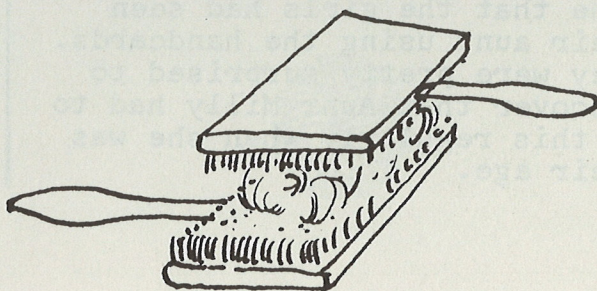
Mr. John Small working on his boat. The timbers for construction of the boat were all cut in the woods around Wild

Cove. "Steaming" timbers is not traditional in Newfoundland boat building. Rather, the builder goes to the woods and seeks out a "knee" or "elbow" of wood shaped suitably for various parts of the vessel.

"When it came to the longer boats, these were built by several members of a family, especially in the case of schooners which ranged in size from 15 to 40 tons. There always seemed to be a man in every family who could design these crafts and supervise the construction. Blueprints were unknown. Most builders worked from a small scale model which they made, while those who could not read or write, and there were many at the time, built by sheer instinct."<sup>2</sup>

"Even though I was young and just learning to sew, I gathered with my sisters in front of the open fireplace in the dining room, and with my mother instructing us, we mended the sheets. All the work was done by hand; even the patches were herringboned or featherstitched in place. One would not think of using the machine for patching in those days, although I have often done so since."<sup>3</sup>

"The spinning wheel was a permanent piece of household furniture at that time and the girls would all learn the art of spinning from their mothers who were invariably expert. In every home knitting needles and spun yarn were always in evidence and even the smallest of the girls would have a sock or a mitt 'in the knit' at all times."<sup>4</sup>



It seems a contradiction to speak, on the one hand, of the erosion of tradition by Confederation, and on the other, of the indestructible spirit of Newfoundlanders. But this contradiction really captures the uniqueness of the Island. In my travels I had the opportunity to meet and work with a variety of age groups through workshops involving handcrafts in their traditional and contemporary contexts. There was so much to learn from those who were grandparents--who had been born not Canadians but Newfoundlanders. Their stories were about days filled with fishing, gardening, building boats, knitting nets, baking bread, making soap, furniture and spruce beer, hooking mats, sewing clothes, shearing sheep and spinning and dyeing the wool to knit--to mention only a few activities. And with every skill went a tale of the tools and the methods employed.



Mrs. Mildred Pardy carding with her nieces. It was the first time that the girls had seen their aunt using the handcards. They were pretty surprised to discover that Aunt Milly had to do this regularly when she was their age.

I had the opportunity to talk with women who had grown up around sheep and spinning wheels on the Burin Peninsula, Conception Bay, Whitebay, the Codroy Valley, and the north shore of the Humber River (near Cornerbrook). Each woman had her own way of shearing and preparing the fleece and of spinning the yarn. Some would simply pick the wool off the skin of a killed sheep, others would shear with scissors when the weather got warm; there were various ways to hold the handcards, to put the fleece on the cards, and to make the "rolls" of wool to spin with; some had worked only on the big old high wheels made with large cheese rounds, others had learned on the smaller treadle wheels (especially in the Codroy Valley where the traditions came mainly from Cape Breton.) So much could be learned by watching a woman work, by listening to her talk about learning from her mother and about her own feelings about the old lifestyle.

In any outpost that I happened to visit there always seemed to be a skill I had not previously heard tell of and the chance to see how it was done. There was a man in Moreton's Harbour who demonstrated making barrels, containers for the pickled herring they sold to the merchants. His years of patience and experience were so evident in his work.



Generally pride and respect for skills and the simple life was strong; there seemed to be a feeling that the young people these days weren't interested in this "old stuff".

The spinning workshops that were held in the schools dealt with the basics of spinning using handcards and drop spindles. But an integral part was talking about and trying to encourage research of local traditions. In one class in Fortune (on the Burin Peninsula), a little girl described the big high wheel her grandmother still used for spinning. That same evening at a spinning display at the Lion's Club fair in a neighboring town the girl's grandmother came forward to talk about picking wool and carding and spinning. It was no time before she had picked up the handcards and was giving us a lesson. Later on in the week she brought her high wheel to the display and started to spin. The younger kids would watch for hours and compare it to what they had been learning in school--most of them were dying to try the wheel. The older folks would often participate. They said they thought that things like spinning really were gone forever. What a pleasant revelation to find that the young people were interested. The older folks were so eager to tell about their own families and homes, to go home and dig around for old tools and information. With the willingness of the older people to discuss and demonstrate their skills and the curiosity of their grandchildren there seemed to be a spark that might lead to a valuable revival of some of the tradition. This sort of revival has only begun to expose what is a vital part of Newfoundland's heritage as well as of her development. For too long unique Newfoundland skills have been ignored--there should be a thriving handcraft industry in the province based on the incredible resourcefulness and ingenuity of a generation still alive to pass their knowledge on. It is a complicated process which involves the redirection of government attitudes and spending. But essential also is the form of the teaching process. It's exciting to find rapport between a grandmother, for whom spinning was simply a

part of life and thereby second nature, and a granddaughter, who wants to learn and develop what to her is a handcraft. In Newfoundland the hope is the great potential for this type of learning.

"Indoors if you were a mother you had to know how to look after your children, you had to cook, make clothes for the family, sealskin boots, and often you had to act as a doctor or nurse and I am not ashamed of it because that kind of life fit our country at the time. There was no other way out. I will go anywhere and be proud to talk about it."<sup>5</sup>

"I thought back over the years about myself and the things I had learned with my brain and my hands. I could do anything from embroidery work to chopping wood without a book, but I was happy and thankful I had a healthy body to do it with. We live differently now and I hope it's for the best. I hope we will soon have peace on earth where everybody can enjoy themselves and it's up to us to do our best to bring it about."<sup>6</sup>

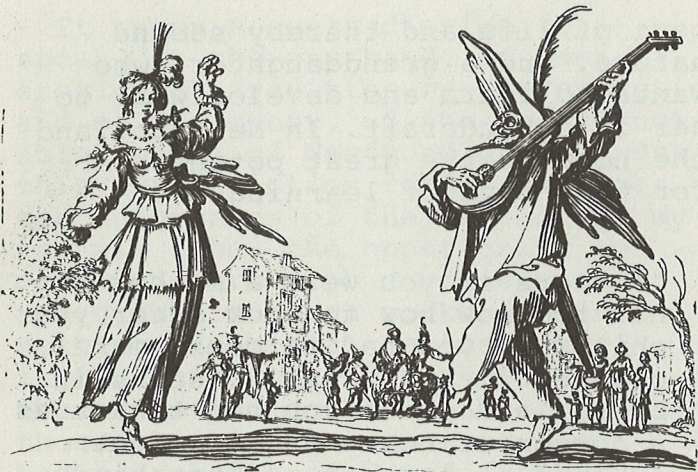
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#### Sources:

1. Memories of Life on the Labrador and in Newfoundland, by Florence Grant Barbour.
2. A Newfoundland Outport, by Harold Squire.
3. See # 1.
4. Don't Have Your Baby in the Dory, a biography of Myra Bennett by H. Gordon Greene.
5. Woman of Labrador, by Elizabeth Goudie.
6. See # 5.

Photos taken April '75 in Wild Cove, Whitebay, Newfoundland.





Puppetry, Dulcimer Making and Dulcimer Playing. Several of these were subdivided into various levels, which made for a smoother flow of programme.

The staff was knowledgeable and patient, the students were enthusiastic, so a great deal of progress was made during the week. Many of those attending were already involved in other aspects of folk culture--instrument building, playing traditional music, weaving, pottery, and so on. The eagerness to share the knowledge and joy we had all had found both in our own areas of interest and in those we were just discovering added a warmth that made the week unforgettable.

For those of you who missed the Christmas Country Dance School--don't despair!--plans are in the works to start some country dancing in Toronto. At the moment, we're planning dances on a regular basis--once or twice a month, depending on the response. If you are interested, please leave your name and address at the Toronto Folklore Centre, 284 Avenue Road, (Phone 920-6268), and we'll contact you as soon as all the arrangements have been made. By the way, no previous experience is necessary. If you find yourself tapping your foot whenever you hear old-time fiddling, you're custom-made for country dancing.

-Cathy Schmidt



## Country Dancing

Cathy Schmidt was one of the 200 students at the Christmas Country Dance School, held at Berea College, Kentucky.

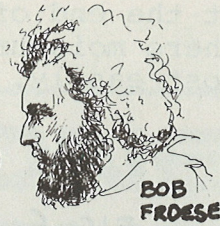
The Country Dance School, now in its 37th year, was filled to capacity for the five day intensive session of dancing, singing, picking...Berea College provided excellent facilities for dances, seminars, and performances. Some of the courses offered were: English Country, Appalachian Square, Morris, Rapper, Dance Leadership, Simple Dances & Singing Games, Shape Note Singing, Western Square, Danish, Early American, Clogging, Storytelling,

## HELP!

Help improve Canadian folk-communications. The Mariposa office staff is compiling a list of Canadian folk performers and clubs, pubs, festivals, concerts and other gigs. It will help both performers and prospective employers to find what they're looking for. We invite all contributions to such a list.



# Grit's Workshop

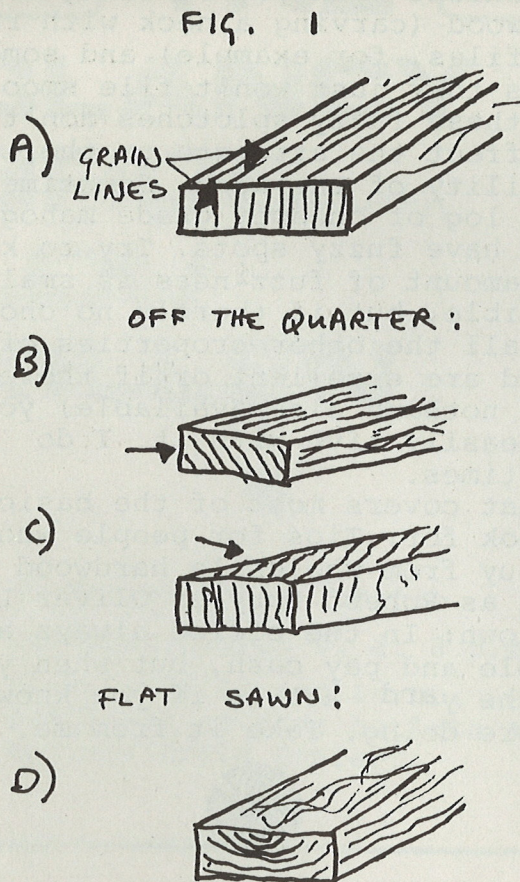


## BUYING LUMBER

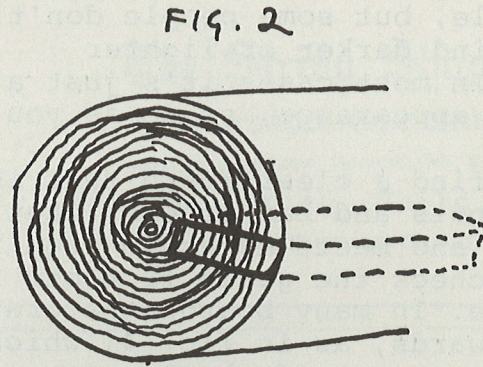
by Grit Laskin

Choosing suitable lumber for making instruments seems to be a problem for many people, so I thought I would describe some of the things I check when I go searching.

Most instrument wood should be quartered (quarter cut, quarter sawn and on the quarter all mean the same thing.) This means that the grain, as much as possible, is at right angles in both directions (fig. 1 a) rather than off the quarter or flat sawn (fig. 1 b, c, d).



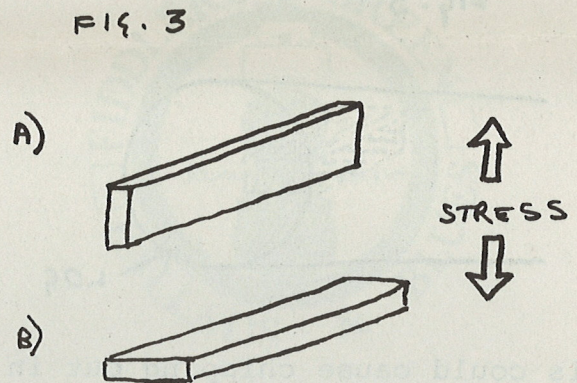
Quartered wood comes out of the log something like this:



Quartered or very nearly quartered wood is necessary for the top, neck, and strutting of most instruments. It is desirable but not absolutely necessary for other parts.

Why quartered? you might ask.

First of all a piece of wood is stronger when the stress is on the quarter edge of the grain, just as the steel bar in fig. 3 a is stronger than the steel bar in fig. 3 b.



Second, if quartered wood were to warp, it would warp evenly, and so would be easier to repair than wood twisted every which way (and I've seen some wildly warped necks in my time.) Lastly, it is believed that sound vibrations can be transferred more readily in a quartered piece of wood. I've yet to see that proved conclusively, but it's a nice theory and it seems to make sense.

Next, in the case of wood for the top or for bracing, I check the width and evenness of the grain. It's nice to have a very tight grain but to me it's a little more important that the width between the grain lines be

as even as possible. Another thing to check at this time is colouring. I personally like as uniform a colour as possible, but some people don't seem to mind darker or lighter streaks. In most cases it's just a matter of appearance, so do as you like.

When I find a clear board that is free of knots and bad cracks, that's quartered and meets my grain requirements, I check the grain from one more angle. In many boards the grain runs downwards, as in fig. 4, which means it came out of the log something like as indicated in fig. 5.

FIG. 4

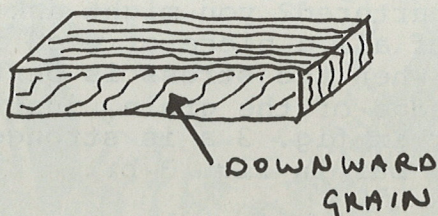
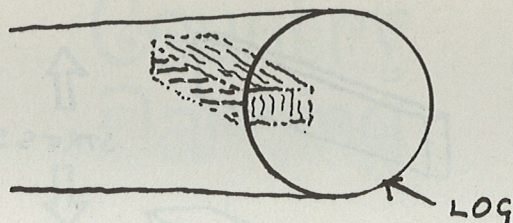


FIG. 5

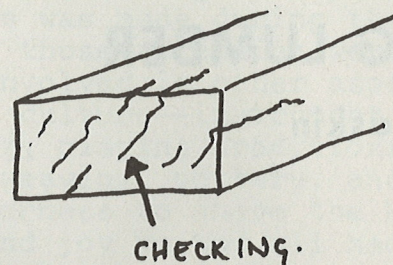


This could cause chipping out in one direction if you intend to plane or chisel the wood. If the angle is extreme it affects the strength of the board, but if the angle is slight you'll be O.K. If you can't tell by looking, run a jack knife across one edge of the board, first one way, then the other. If it chips out one way and not the other then you'll know the grain runs downwards; if you can whittle a strip cleanly from both directions you're O.K.

In addition to large obvious cracks, there are small ones, sometimes an almost invisible hairline. These are known as check cracks or checking, and they occur during the drying process. Most commonly they will be

at the end of a board (the end grain) where moisture can get in and out most easily.

FIG. 6



It's to prevent checking that boards are either painted or wax coated, as a moisture seal. Checking can also occur along the sides of the board. If the board is rough and the light in the lumber yard is bad, checking can be hard to spot. Usually check cracks don't extend too far into the board and you can usually ignore them (especially in the end grain) and avoid them during building.

Some wood (especially mahogany) has fuzzy blotches. These are inconvenient when you're using tools on the wood (carving a neck with rasps and files, for example) and sometimes they just won't file smooth. But these fuzzy splotches don't seem to effect the strength or the stability of the wood. Sometimes most of a log of cheaper grade mahogany will have fuzzy spots. Try to keep the amount of fuzziness as small as possible, but if there's no choice (if all the other properties of the board are excellent or if there's just nothing else available) you can easily live with it. I do sometimes.

That covers most of the basic things I look for. Tips for people who want to buy from wholesale hardwood yards such as Robert Bury or Oliver Lumber in town: In the office always act humble and pay cash, but when you're in the yard act as if you know what you're doing. Take it from me.



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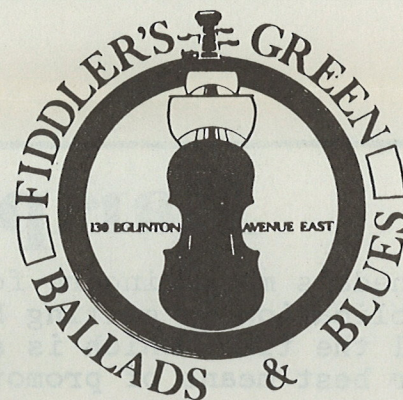
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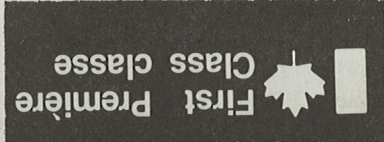
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