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I think that a good violinist, even an average violinist--anybody who made music in those days--I think he was a valued member of the community, no matter how many of them there were. We're looking back to a time when you had families of 9 or 12 people in a family, all played the violin. Well, they certainly couldn't have all been revered. It just shows that if there was an outstanding member in the community, he had to be better than the 12 in that family and the 9 in the next. So when you did pluck heroes out of those numbers, they must have been outstanding players. And that's why you'll get names like Domhnall Iain an Taillear, Donald John the Tailor from Mabou, Donald John Beaton. He died in 1919, and he's still spoken of in many circles as if he's still alive, because of the reverence: "He would have done it this way--I remember the day--He used to go to Paddy Gillis's all the time, and the horses and wagons would be gathered out"--you know, you're talking 60 years ago, and yet people remember the details of this man's life, and tell it to me as if it happened only yesterday. I remember Angus Chisholm saying he heard the Tailor play when he was just a little boy. They lived in East Margaree. When word came that Donald John was coming to visit the area--he had relatives there-- you'd see the wagons going off in every direction. Everyone knew Donald John was sort of a professional fiddler, he just travelled around. As Sister Sarah said, "He seemed to know that music was his calling." So he came to visit these little areas. He knew he was going to play the violin, they knew he was coming to play the violin, and the wagons would gather at the house. There would be no doubt that he'd play; he wouldn't have to be convinced or begged. He'd play as hard the whole while he was there, and he'd leave a string of stories after him when he was gone. And these would be repeated father to son. And fidelity to memory being what it is, we have some great stuff from that era. And it's because he was so highly respected, such a wonderful musician. I dug out the man's obituary from the Casquet, and they go on quite a bit about him as being a great musician. They don't mention anything else. He had a good character, of course, but they put great emphasis on the fact that he was a player, which just shows that in those days, to be Clockwise from top left: "Little Jack" MacDonald, Ned MacKinnon, Angus Chisholm and Dan Allan Red John MacLellan. a good violin player in a community, that was a tremendous thing. Every area that I went into, they had their outstanding players, and it didn't take me very long. If I went to Glenville and said, "Who was one of the greatest players that ever came out of here?"--I think that would be a fair question to ask an old-timer--he'd give me an answer. Now I'd go to another old-timer maybe a mile down the road, there'd be no doubt I'd get the same answer. In Glenville, it was Dan Allan Red John MacLellan. He was an ear player, but a great violin player. Even the note-readers of today who put great emphasis on note-reading, will have to admit that this man was a terrific player. I think he's been dead since 1946, but the area's so proud of him, they speak very highly of him. The same as you'd run up the road a little bit maybe to Black River. They had a man up there called Johnny MacIsaac--he was their superhero, you see. All these little We



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