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And if you're up, you may play happy jigs and reels all night. Maybe if you're reminiscing about the old country as the pioneers would, you'd play another type of tune altogether. They were men of extremes. There was one fiddle in the house where Johnny MacIsaac lived in Blackstone. His brother Sandy played it as well as himself. One day Sandy was injured in an accident in the mill that they had on the property, and he died of his injuries not terribly long after. As good a violin player as Johnny MacIsaac was, he wouldn't touch that violin because it had Sandy's tuning on it. Imagine how strong a player he was, but his feelings ran deep in other extremes as well. That violin hung on that kitchen wall for seven years, and as good a player as Johnny was, he wouldn't pick up the violin. Until one day a man--I believe his name was Finlay Beaton--came in, and he knew the condition there. So he grabbed the violin off the wall as if he hadn't known what was going on, and tuned her up and played a few tunes on her. They said, "Oh my god, what have you done--that was Sandy's fiddle!" He said, "Oh well, whatever it is, I've broke the spell now--here, give us a tune." And he handed the violin to Johnny. And Johnny started playing all over again. But it took an outsider changing the tuning on it. He was an outstanding violin player-- he must have felt drawn to just grab that fiddle and play--but no way. Men of extremes, and they carried it to all different levels. Johnny MacIsaac from Blackstone--excellent old-time violin player and a real gentleman. The lady, Agnes Walker, who gave me some information on him said he was the kind of fellow that, if there was a party somewhere, people would come and wake him up in the middle of the night, and he'd get right up out of bed and just grab the fiddle and go. He was one of these bachelor or farmer types that maybe never left home, and always generous with his music. One of his neighbours loved Scotch music, but if there's such a thing as a tin ear, this man had it. He came to Johnny's house one day and asked, would Johnny mind playing a few tunes. Johnny said, "Oh gosh no, I'll play you a couple.-" So he started with a slow strathspey, picked it up to a dance strathspey, went from there into a reel. All the while he was changing the tempo, Johnny was looking at the neighbour's foot--and the neighbour's foot was keeping the same beat all the way through, slow music to fast reels, the neighbour was just plodding along with the same old footbeat all the way through it, no matter the tempo Johnny was going. Until Johnny finished up with a flourish of reels. The medley lasted about 15 minutes, and when Johnny put the violin down, the man says, "By golly, that's the longest tune I've ever heard!" Now Gordon MacQuarrie, whenever he played, he wanted to be listened to. I remember people saying, when he came to MacKays' in Kingsville, of course, word would go out in the community that he was playing. He might be playing with Big Ronald MacLellan--they were good friends. But if you were coming in the house when they were playing in the living room, you'd have to tiptoe. Or if you were tempted to cough, you had to be very careful what noises you made, because Gordon was the sort of fellow that--if the wrong question were asked, maybe a request for a piece he didn't like, that would be enough to put him off playing.



He'd just lock her up--there'd be no way he'd take the violin or the pipes (he was a piper as well) out of the case. Some people, maybe the more noise and the more people were enjoying themselves, they'd get caught up in that spirit and play all the better. Others looked on the violin as something to be listened to, and if they were playing good music, with good distinctive cuts, they'd want to make sure you're hearing them. Pierce Peters, Percy Peters, was telling me something that surprised me. I said, "What were the dances like in the times when you were a violin player with no P.A. Moraff's Yarns n' Crafts Wools, Synthetics & Blends by • Mary Maxim • Palons ASK TO SEE Angora Camel Hair Alpaca Mohair Linen Blends Cashmere • Lopl 'Jaeger Tapestries - Crewel-OecoupageMacrame • White Buffalo • Nomotta Large Inventory of 100% Wool from New Brunswick Craft Supplies and Patterns iPrmce Edward Island-Cape Breton Open daily 9:30a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Threads for Embroidery, Crocheting. Fridays until 9:00 p.m. Weaving, Tatting & Quilting Mail Orders Filled "A World of Yarn at Your Fingertips" 752 Victoria Rd., Sydney, N. S. (Phone 564-8339) Tt#>JSP n/ati-QflS " Featuring the fuel e??Qcient Citation A??0VA w A1M.WAMV • 'y General Motors. 564-6417 "Rates as low as or lower than our major competi? tors in this city Where Canada's . • smart money rents Its cars. Our U.S. affiliate is National Car Rental Cauldron Ftestaurant Our Licensed Dining Room is Open 11 to 7 seven days a week, featuring complete Family Meals as well as Lunches Located on the site of Princess Historic Mitie. in Sydney Mines" FRESH SEAFOOD A SPECIALTY Three Locations in your area ROBIN Cheticamp Main Store 224-2022 Inverness 258-2241 Cheticamp Furniture Store 224-2434 YOUR FAVORITE SHOPPING CENTRE FOR ALL YOUR NEEDS. Founded in 1766. (47)