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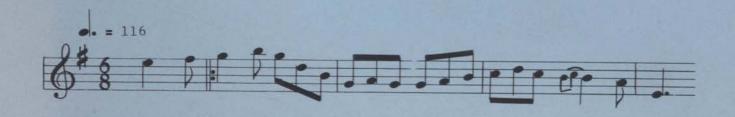
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CANADIAN CENTRE FOR FOLK CULTURE STUDIES PAPER No. 52

CENTRE CANADIEN D'ÉTUDES SUR LA CULTURE TRADITIONNELLE DOSSIER No. 52

FIDDLE MUSIC IN THE OTTAWA VALLEY: **DAWSON GIRDWOOD**

CARMELLE BEGIN



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OBJECT OF THE MERCURY SERIES

The Mercury Series is publication of the National Museum of Man, National Museums of Canada, designed to permit the rapid dissemination of information pertaining to those disciplines for which the National Museum of Man is responsible.

In the interest of making information available quickly, normal production procedures have been abbreviated. As a result, editorial errors may occur. Should that be the case, your indulgence is requested, bearing in mind the object of the series.

BUT DE LA COLLECTION MERCURE

La collection Mercure, publiée par le Musée national de l'Homme, Musées nationaux du Canada, a pour but de diffuser rapidement les résultats de travaux qui ont rapport aux disciplines pour lesquelles le Musée national de l'Homme est responsable.

Pour assurer la prompte distribution de ces textes, on a abrégé les étapes de l'édition. En conséquence, certaines erreurs de rédaction peuvent subsister. Si cela se présentait dans les pages qui suivent, les rédacteurs réclament votre indulgence étant donné les objectifs de la collection.

ABSTRACT

This book presents the music repertoire of an Ottawa Valley fiddler, Dawson Girdwood, as it was recorded by the author in 1977 and 1982. Its purpose is to further the knowledge of traditional folk music. In the Introduction, the reader will discover certain aspects of Girdwood's personality and interests from the very words of the musician himself. Full musical transcripts of Girdwood's repertoire are following, including the variations and embellishments used by the musician as well as his own bowing indications.

RESUME

Ce dossier présente le répertoire d'un violonneux de la vallée de l'Outaouais, Dawson Girdwood, tel qu'enregistré par l'auteur en 1977 et 1982. Les propos du musicien rapportés dans l'Introduction traitent de ses goûts personnels face à la musique traditionnelle, de l'histoire de sa famille et de la vie sociale dans la région de Perth. Suivent les transcriptions musicales du répertoire de Dawson Girdwood comprenant les variations et tous les ornements utilisés par le musicien de même que ses propres indications des coups d'archet.

FORE WORD

The fiddle music repertoire of Dawson Girdwood is eclectic. It presents a number of tunes which were very popular in Ontario and particularly in Lanark County during the last fifty years. At my request, Dawson recorded these tunes for the Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies in 1977. The other part of his repertoire includes French Canadian pieces which he learned from Jean Carignan, Philippe Bruneau and Jos Bouchard, and Irish traditional tunes learned from Sean McGuire and other great interpreters. These tunes have been recorded in 1982.

In the Introduction written from his own narration I, Dawson Girdwood presents his family, the context in which the fiddle music was played in Perth's area, his involvement in musical activities and his own opinion about styles of traditional fiddle music.

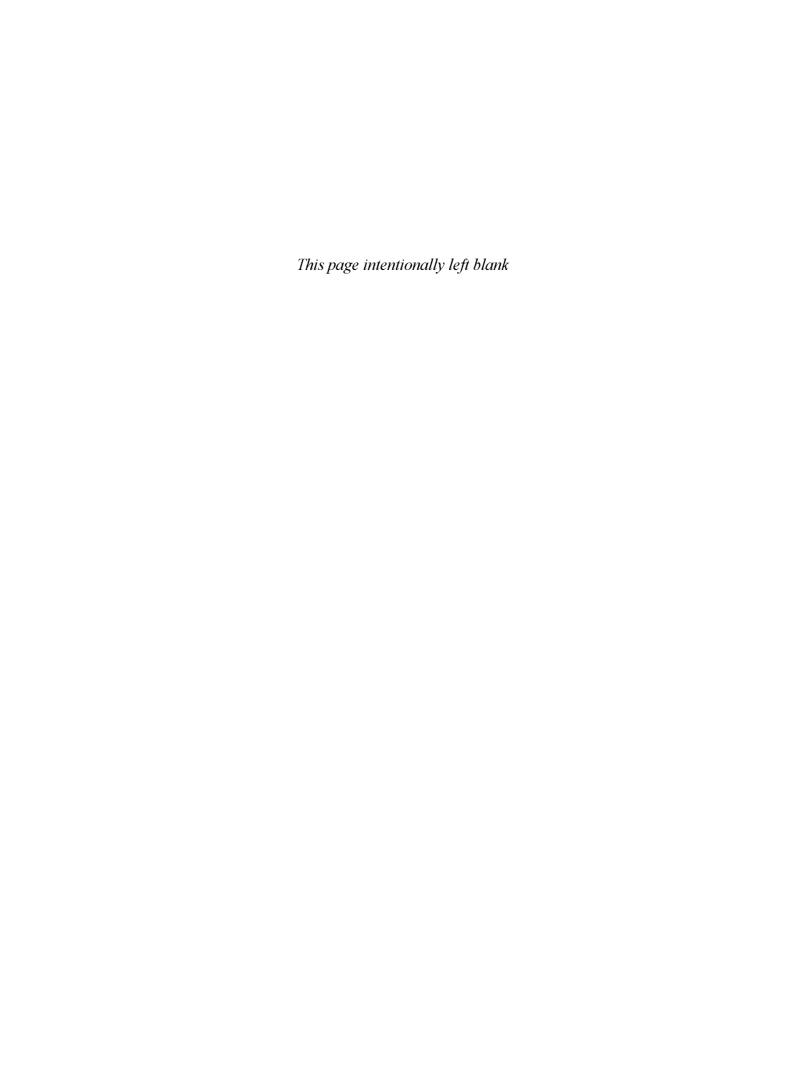
The musical transcriptions of Dawson Girdwood's repertoire include the variations and embellishments used by the fiddler and his own bowing indications. They are presented in this book in the chronological order of their recording.

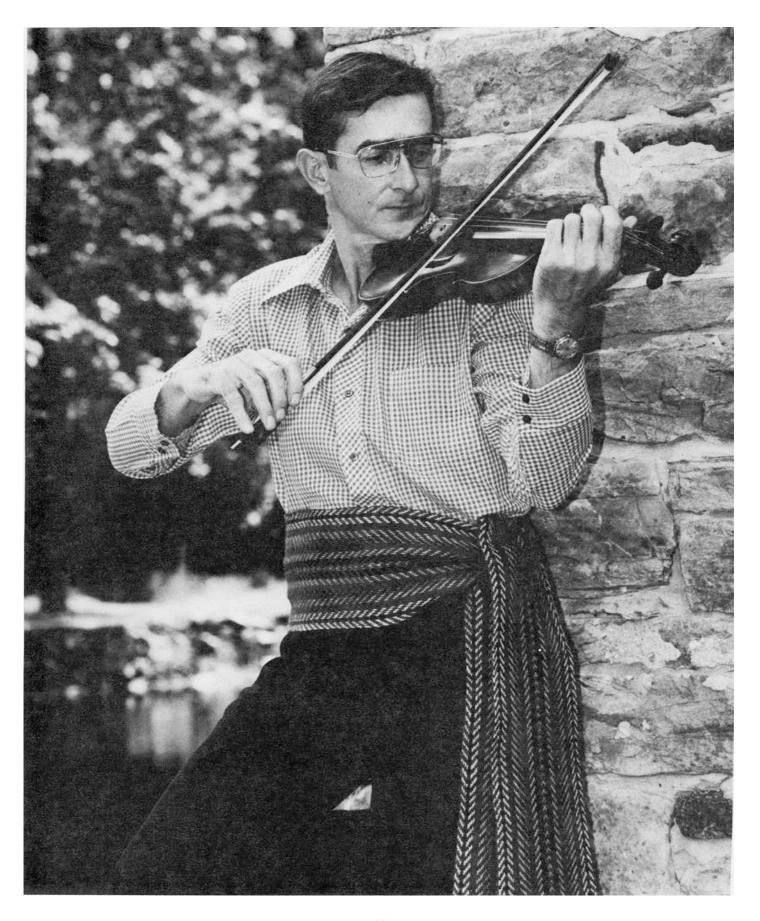
I wish to thank Dawson for his music which he recorded gracefully for the Centre, for his time and his friendship while we worked on this project. I want to thank Betty, his wife who greeted me so many times at their home in Perth. Thanks also to Michael Cass-Beggs for letting me use the recording of his radio program, for the calligraphy and for over-looking the transcriptions and the bowing.

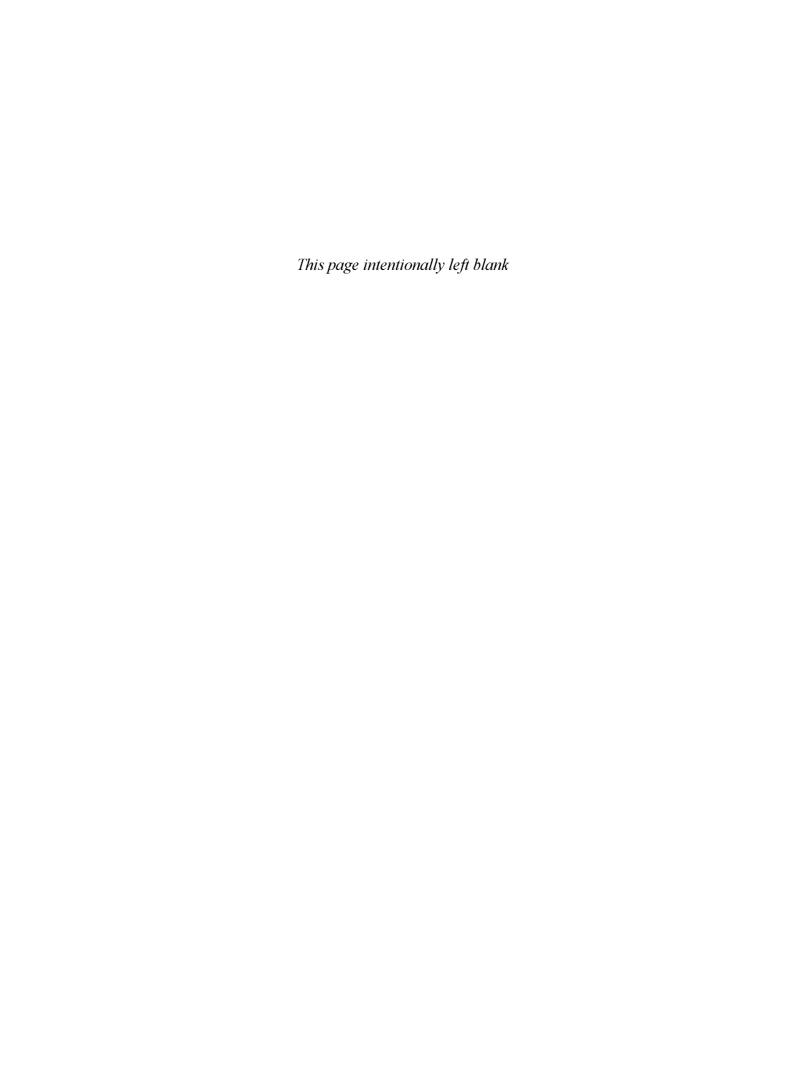
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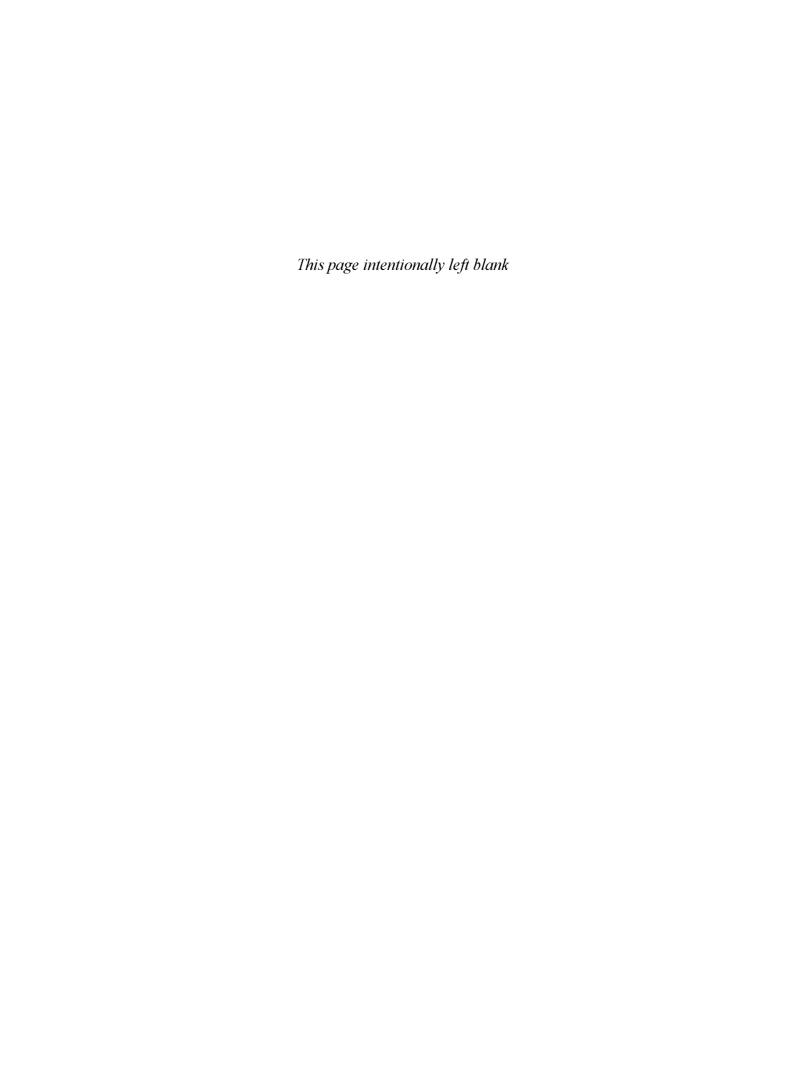
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INTRODUCTION

Family Story

My grand-grand parents on my mother side of the family came from County Cavan in Ireland. My grand-father was born on the boat coming over, which was most of an interesting experience. They settled in this area. My grand-father worked in a grist mill as a miller at a place called Glen Tay, which is about three miles west of Perth. It became a powerhouse and they manufactured just a small amount of power that they did supply for Perth.

My grand-father Girdwood was a pharmacist trained at the University of Toronto. He later had a practice in Sterling in Ontario where he met my grand-mother who was a Spraigge. Her father, my grand-grand father Spraigge originally landed on the Isle of Grand Manan, New-Brunswick. They later came to Sterling after they had been in the States for a certain period of time. They were Empire Loyalists.

My grand-father Girdwood came to Perth in the later eighteen hundred and operated a drug store here; he was succeeded by my father who was also a pharmacist. I have three brothers and three sisters.

My family was a musical family. My father was quite active in his highschool days and at the University. He and several friends around Perth played violin. They played mainly music in school, semi-classical type of music, marches, fox-trots, some of the dance music of the nineteen—thirties. He had his TCM from the University of Toronto, a Teacher Certificate of Music.

We had our own family orchestra: a saxophonist, two trumpetists who also played the violin, two pianists and a drummer. We used to play for church, social event and different things like that. I was about ten years old when I first started to play with the family. We all sang in the church choir, we all played in the school orchestra and the boys played in the school band and in the town band. I played trumpet for a while, baritone and euphonium but I gave up the brass instruments after I got out of the Highschool.

I only played with the family orchestra for two years; the orchestra broke up when my oldest brother went to Toronto and my oldest sister was ill. I was about eleven years old at that time and I didn't have very much interest in the violin. I didn't like the kind of music we were playing so I just quit playing the violin and put it away.

Then, when I was about fourteen, I started to go to some country dances and I became interested in the fiddle music. So I started playing fiddle music and, because I had some classical training from a woman by the name of Miss Allan, I could read music. I had a copy of