



These antique violins which Fred Fowler, of Mitchell, Ont., has stacked about him, are not worth \$50,000 each, but he likes them just the same because he collected them for special qualities of tone. These are a part of his collecting hobbies.

## Fiddle Fancier

By Jean Johnston

WHEN Mrs. H. W. Bruysnon of Headingley, Manitoba, was photographed with her "Stainer" violin, and the picture subsequently appeared in newspapers across Canada, many fiddle-owners took a peek inside their instruments, and a few of them discovered the words, "Jacobus Stainer, Adsam proper oenipotum 1665." H. G. Messerschmidt of Stratford found his violin had the date of 1635, whereas Lloyd Thiel, farmer in Perth county found his marked, 1616.

The fiddle owners all had the same story to tell. About 40 years ago the violin had been picked up at a second hand dealer for a few dollars, or "thrown in" when the piano was bought. Now, taking a second look at the old fiddle, thought to be almost worthless, the Thiels and Messerschmidts began to dream dreams of what they would do when and if the fiddle did really prove valuable.

It was a quiet, retired little Bach-

elor of Music and collector of violins, Fred Fowler of Mitchell, Ontario, who pricked the dream bubbles. Fred Fowler and his sister Tillie are collectors by nature. Collectors of fine glass, of cacti, of musical instruments, of rare clocks, and of violins. Of the nine violins they possess, one is a "Stainer," one an "Amati" and two are Russian. Another they discovered had the name of an old-time pioneer fiddler carved into the wood and partially scratched out again. That violin was bought sight-unseen inside its case for 50 cents.

Mr. Fowler's best violin is an "Amati" and the label plainly says "made in Germany, copy of violin by Amati." Amati was an Italian violin maker at about the same time as Stradivarius and Stainer. Mr. Fowler chortled over the "Stainer" violin marked 1616.

"Why," he said, "Stainer wasn't born until 1621!"

Mr. Fowler opened up some of his old music magazines. In the past there had been many hopefuls, even as there are in this year A.D. 1950. To all the inquiries, the comment was the same. "No your

violin is not valuable. It will be a copy from an original model."

It is believed, according to Mr. Fowler, that there might be a dozen Stradivarius originals in the world today. After all a man couldn't do an expert job of making violins and mass produce them. Copies would later be made by factories and labels denoting the inventor's name pasted on. It is said that Stradivarius, himself, helped paste Stradivarius labels on violins made by his pupils.

Stainer was known to be an expert on wood. He went to the forest, selected his tree, which had to have a dead top, and stayed with it until it was cut and trimmed into boards.

## The Vision of David Milne

(By Paul Duval, in Saturday Night)

The death of David Milne early in January brought an end to the work of a rare artist. Born on a farm in Bruce County, near Paisley, in 1882, Milne devoted half a century to recording the tranquil moods of nature. He won the support of a perceptive ge up, but wider general recognition of his work is yet to come. One of Milne's most enthusiastic admirers is industrialist, J. S. MacLean, who owns the original of "Autumn Trees," and has been acquiring the artist's works for the past 20 years. This early (1917) watercolor was painted in the Berkshires after Milne had studied at Manhattan's Art Students' League. In 1913, five of Milne's paintings were included in the explosive "Armory Show" which introduced modern art to America. The artist lived in New York City until 1915, when he moved to Boston Corner in the Adirondacks.

Milne's watercolors and oils were gaining recognition in the United States when the First World War began. After serving as a private overseas, Milne was commissioned to paint the devastation of battle for Canada's Official War Records. The 107 watercolors which he did in Belgium and France are now in Ottawa. With peace, Milne returned again to northern New York State, where he painted the canvas, "River Valley" in 1928. This work belongs to His Excellency, the Rt. Hon. Vincent Massey, Governor-General of Canada. The Massey collection of Milne's is the largest in existence, including many scores of oils and watercolors. Milne portrayed the earth at rest. His art is one of consummate selection and precise economy, and his summary, calligraphic style of painting remains uniquely his own.

In 1928, Milne returned to Canada to live. In the late summer of that year he painted "Water Lilies, Temagami," now in the Hart House Collection. Milne lived the next 25 years of his life mainly on the shores of Ontario's lakes and in the provinces's small villages. From 1932 to 1939 he lived and worked in a tar-paper shack on the Severn River. There, he studied and recorded the changing face of the seasons. He absorbed beauty from whatever was about him and looked upon his world with a tender sensibility. Many things served to move him to paint. Almost anything might capture his fancy: a coal oil lamp, a clump of alien leaves, a stuffed rag doll or homes in a village. Milne had a deep attachment to the minutiae of nature which are so readily missed by the passing crowd. However, he did not ignore the human element, and many of his pictures incorporate working people or children in their composition. Milne also had an uncommon appreciation of fantasy. He sometimes turned his talents to doing light-hearted versions of religious themes. His watercolor of "Snow in Bethlehem," in the collection of the Art Gallery of Toronto, is already on the way to becoming a Canadian classic.

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The Bible was a fond source. Among his other Biblical themes were "St. Francis and the Animals," "Noah and the Ark," "The Ascension" and "Jonah." His last painting was of Adam and Eve on a picnic with the Serpent in the Garden. In 1939, Milne spent the year in Toronto. During that year, his subjects were brewers' warehouses, grain elevators, churches, coal piles and the city's waterfront. "Stars Over Bay Street" was painted as a result of that visit and is in the collection of Douglas Duncan a very close friend of Milne. Duncan has photographed most of Milne's work with a Boswell-like fidelity. A patient perfectionist, Milne did careful pencil sketches of the information booth in Toronto's Union Station before incorporating it into one of his paintings. He did as many as 40 versions of a single subject. His dry-point etchings were executed with the same concern for apt detail

and style. Color etchings by Milne are in most major galleries. The etched line on copper plate proved as fitting to his talents as brush on paper or canvas. David Milne won for himself a secure place in Canadian art history, and no Canadian collection can pretend to be complete without the inclusion of his work.

## WALLACE MEGRAW

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As a member of the family of one of the early district settlers, Mr. Megraw had a great knowledge of pion and names which are linked to earlier times. He was a source of reliable information to many amateur historians, and there were many occasions when his memory furnished the "facts and figures" for reminiscent articles which appeared in The Advocate. For a period prior to the turn of the century, his brother, the late Ainsley Megraw, edited The Paisley Advocate, and on occasion Wallace Megraw assisted in the print shop. Because of this, he had always maintained a friendly interest in the home paper, and rarely a week passed but he visited this office. There are five daughters surviving: (Gertrude) Mrs. R. V. Gedney, Glendale, Sask.; (Irene) Mrs. Neilson Stark, Paisley; Miss Winnifred, Toronto; (Edna) Mrs. Frank Brandon, Drayton, and (Ila) Mrs. Gordon Fraser, Collingwood. A sixth daughter, May, died in 1907. There are eleven grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren. Mr. Megraw is also survived by one sister, Mrs. S. Hamilton of Vernon, B.C., the only living member of a family of twelve children.

The funeral was held on Sunday, Nov. 25th, with services at the Stoddart and Son funeral home, conducted by Rev. E. S. Linstead of Knox United Church. The casket-bearers were three sons-in-law, Neilson Stark, Gordon Fraser and Frank Brandon, and three grandsons, Wallace, Lawrence and Harold Stark. The many beautiful floral tributes were carried by old friends of deceased. Interment was in Stark Vale Cemetery.

One of this community's most respected elder citizens, Wallace Megraw, died in the Bruce County Hospital at Walkerton, on Friday November 23rd, following a two weeks' illness. He was 86 years of age.

Mr. Megraw was born on lot 1, con. 22, Greenock Township, a son of the late Mr. and Mrs. John Megraw, well-known pioneer settlers in the township. As a boy he attended the Paisley school, and after leaving classes, he stayed on the family homestead to assist his parents in farming. He married Christie Brown in March, 1893, and brought his bride to the home farm where they continued to reside until her passing in March, 1947, when he came to live in Paisley. In addition to his farming activities, Mr. Megraw was for nearly 30 years shipper for a farmers' livestock shipping club which operated in the district, and through this medium, the genial Greenock Township resident became known over a widespread area. Mr. Megraw's judgment on livestock, and his integrity, became watchwords of the shipping club, and it was largely through his personal efforts that this early cooperative venture operated so successfully until newer methods were adopted by the purchasing packing plants.

Mr. Megraw was very much interested in his home township and in this village, and was a shrewd observer of the municipal scene. He served for many years as a school trustee, and was an advocate of progressive educational methods, particularly as they applied to the 'little red school houses.' From his earliest youth, Mr. Megraw was a member of Knox Presbyterian Church, and when union came in 1923, he became a member of Knox United Church, and up until his health and hearing deteriorated, he was most faithful in his attendance. He had served his church in many ways, not the least of which was a tenure of office as a member of the board of stewards.