

## MARIUS BARBEAU MEDAL AWARDED TO A TRADITIONAL SINGER

In 1985 the executive of the Folklore Studies Association of Canada decided to institute a Marius Barbeau medal to be awarded to a person who had made an important contribution to Canadian folklore. That year the medal went to Edith Butler, the well-known Acadian folksinger. The following year it was given to Father Germain Lemieux, whose remarkable collection of Ontario's French-Canadian lore has been documented in numerous books and forms an important archive at the University of Sudbury.

In 1987 the executive awarded the medal to LaRena LeBarr Clark, a remarkable traditional singer who has a repertoire of some five hundred songs. Although many of these are not what are generally thought of as folk — vaudeville, music-hall, and American popular songs — she learned them all orally, from members of her family, and most of them show interesting variations from the originals.

LaRena's unusual background makes her repertoire particularly interesting. Nine generations on LaRena's father's side have been born in Canada. The LeBarres were French colonists who came out to Acadia early in the eighteenth century. Her grandfather, John Edward LeBarr, moved to Ontario from Grand Anse, New Brunswick, and married Martha Ann Moore who was of Pennsylvania Dutch stock.

John LeBarr obtained a land grant near Lake Simcoe and built a cedar-shingled house on the shores of the Black River at Pefferlaw, near Beaverton, Ontario. There he and his wife raised fourteen children, one of whom was LaRena's father, Benjamin LeBarr. In 1917 LaRena was born in the house her grandfather built.

Her maternal great-grandfather, Edward John Watson, came out to Canada from northern England early in the nineteenth century and married Margaret Landau, the child of an Indian woman and a French fur trader. Their son, LaRena's Grandad Watson, married Annie O'Neill, the daughter of George O'Neill, an Irish Catholic who was an early settler in Pefferlaw. Thus LaRena's ancestry mingles English, Irish, French, Pennsylvania Dutch, and Indian strains, and her repertoire benefits from this mosaic.

Most of her English songs came from her Grandad Watson, most of her Irish songs from her grandmother Mary Anne Moore LeBarr, and most of her Canadian songs from her father.

LaRena's life as a child was particularly suited to the learning of songs. Her grandfather and her father were hunters and guides, working in the woods and rivers of Northern Ontario, and as a child she often went with her father when he was hunting or fishing or following a trap-line. In the evenings at home the family's main pastime was singing.

She knows nine Child ballads, of which her versions of "Fair Annie" (Child 62) and "Lord Gregory" (Child 76) are the only versions so far

reported in Canada. She has some seventy British broadsides, including several not previously reported in North America. Some of her old English songs are either unique or very rare: "The Old County Fare," "Thyme, 'Tis a Pretty Flower," "The Rifle Boys," "The Banks of Inverness," "I Once Loved a Lass," and "Rattle on the Stovepipe." She also knows several Ontario lumbering songs that are quite uncommon: "Fine Times in Camp Number Three," "The Roving Shantyboy," "Hurry Up, Harry," and "The Raftsmen's Song."

In addition to minstrel, vaudeville, and Irish music-hall songs, her repertoire includes songs from the American Civil War, the Boer War, and World War I, a number of children's play-party songs, and an unusual song version of a widespread neck riddle which she calls "King Henry Has Set Me Free."

LaRena performed at various folk festivals and sang for many different groups. She has been interviewed on radio and television, and a number of articles about her were published in the 1960s. She composed many songs which she sang along with her traditional family groups. She has made nine records, and some of her songs have appeared in books, and been performed and recorded by contemporary singers.

The surprising wealth of her repertoire has enriched our Canadian folklore heritage and fully entitles her to receive the award named for Canada's great pioneer folklorist.

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*Resumé: L'article de David Ennis traite des styles des joueurs de violon de Lanark County, et examine l'influence des immigrants irlandais, écossais, et canadiens-français sur la tradition musicale de l'Ottawa Valley. En employant des catégories «micro», «moyenne», et «macro», Ennis analyse la performance de Colin J. Boyd et Dawson Girdwood par rapport aux airs traditionnels et modernes.*