A Different Strummer

Start the New Year Right: Hear Halfway Home in Concert !

by Bill Cohen

One of Ohio's top Americana bands is Halfway Home, and it's the featured act at the January 31 Columbus Folk Music Society's FolkSide Coffeehouse.

With Americana's unique mix of folk, country, rock, blues, and even Cajun music, the band tells heartfelt stories of lost loves, down-and-outers, prisoners, ramblers, gamblers, and just plain folks, grappling with the highs and lows of life. If you're in the audience, one minute you're laughing, and the next, there's a lump in your throat and a tear in your eye.

2013 group Photo of Halfway Home members (from left to right: Patti Ramsey, Brian Szuch, Renilda Marshall, Pat Casey, and Mike Hale

Halfway Home consists of Renilda Marshall, Patrick Casey, Mike Hale, Brian Szuch, and Patti Ramsey. They got together more than a decade ago, delighted audiences for about 9 years, broke up, and then re-united a few years ago.

Why did they get back together? "We missed the music. We missed doing a lot of songs we all loved," says Patrick.

"We all appreciate and respect each other's talents and strengths, and shore up each other's weaknesses," says Renilda. "We

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North Central Ohio Folk Music Before the Folk Revival

by Marji Hazen

Long time CFMS member and at one time collector of indigenous N. Central Ohio folk music, Marji Hazen, who grew up in North Central Ohio, recounts some personal memories of Ohio traditional musicians and folklore collectors who preceded the Folk Revival.

There may be some very good reason why the indigenous folk music of North Central Ohio doesn't catch the ear of collectors. The local speech seems so "plain vanilla", that is until you read Louis Bromfield's *The Farm* and realize we do have our own local dialect. Bromfield caught it perfectly in that book.

Then you listen to the songs of Captain Pearl Nye, who grew up on the canals of Ohio and spent his life capturing that fleeting time in his songs, most with well-known tunes borrowed from traditional or popular music of his day (a perfectly legit folk tradition in itself). His singing is the plain vanilla of the Ohio country where he lived; his

Photo of Captain Pearl Nye

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really are like a family. It's probably the most fun I've ever had."

"There is a magic moment when the band is in sync with something bigger than the sum of its parts, and the song seems to lift and fly on its own," says Patti. "Truly, it's the best thrill ride I've ever had."

Halfway Home has performed more than 100 times to rave reviews all across Ohio – from one of their first venues, Cheshire Bait and Pizza at a rural crossroads near Galena, to regular annual appearances on the town square in Berlin's Amish country, to the Central Ohio Folk Festival, and to many other spots across Ohio and beyond.

The band features tight vocal harmonies, plus a wide array of instruments – acoustic guitar, electric guitar, slide guitar, bass, mandolin, accordion, bouzouki, drums, and more.

What can the audience at the January coffeehouse expect to experience?

In Patti's words: "…a living-room, family reunion atmosphere: laughter, tears, hugs and great songs, from all corners of our hearts and minds." Patrick puts it this way: "There will be lot of instruments on the stage, and lots of smiles all around. There will be moments of high energy, and quiet reflection as we move through our repertoire, and we're going to mean every word we sing and note we play."

Date: Saturday, Jan. 31

Place: FolkSide Coffeehouse held at *The Columbus Mennonite Church*, 35 Oakland Park Ave., Columbus, OH

Time: 8 p.m. (further details on pg. 5)

Halfway Home released their first full length CD, "Better Days," in 2007. The recording includes five tracks written by group members, and an assortment of songs by some of their favorite songwriters that have been crowd favorites over the years.

If you want to get a preview of the type of music you'll hear in January, visit: http://www.cdbaby.com/cd/halfwayh.

Musicians perform for Columbus Marathon Runners

The Columbus Folk Music Society was invited to play music once again at this year's Columbus Marathon held on October 19. The weather was good; the runners were committed and the day was beautiful. Below are some photos from the event. Thanks to all the musicians who came out for the event!

Local Ohio Folk - from page 1

turn of phrase is pure Ohio. Some describe his singing as "not very good". I call it natural, unassuming, and the essence of what I expect of Ohio music. Nye was not a show-off. He was a man with a story to tell. He told it in plain language making the words more important than the music. That is one of the major characteristics of native Ohio music of this area. As Burl Ives, whose guitar chording "was just to keep the time" said of Glenn Campbell's breathtaking guitar accompaniments: "It's not necessary to work that hard to sing a good song."[1]

A contemporary of Captain Nye's was Mary O. Eddy who spent most of her life collecting folk songs from indigenous singers in Ohio, especially in the North Central Ohio area. She published her Ballads and Songs of Ohio in 1936, but had been working at collecting along with several different mentors and fellow collectors since the early 1920s. Like most of the collectors in those days, she was focused on finding evidence of Childe ballads and other Old Country artifacts, but along with evidences of contemporary culture influences in her collection were many unique items that had the stamp of Ohio originals. Carl Sandburg encouraged her work and used some of her material in his own publications. Mary became the mentor of Anne Grimes whose father was at one time the minister of a church at Paradise Hill, a small community about five miles west of Ashland, Ohio where I live. She told me that finding her first mountain dulcimer in the attic at the Paradise Hill parsonage was the start of her interest in that instrument. Anne too became a "song catcher" in the manner of Mary O. Eddy and left quite a legacy of music of Ohio,

> Ohio fostered at least two very different traditions [in folk music] (New England in the North and Virginia in the South, [and] Appalachian which is related to but not necessarily Virginian), plus all those ethnic donations from many immigrant populations, the post-Civil War refugees, the thousands of young women shipped here from Kentucky and Tennessee to work in the WWII defense plants, [amongst others].
>
> -M. Hazen

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though much of her collecting was done in Southern Ohio and her performances of the songs are influenced by the Virginia tradition as opposed to the more straightforward New England tradition that dominates in the Northern region. The songs she collected from ordinary back-porch singers in her lifetime numbered in the thousands. She also left a legacy of recordings of her singing, some of which are now available for listening on line. One of her best received and most significant performances was "The Lovely Ohio" which is included in Eddy's collection and which Mary O. Eddy taught her. It dates from the 1700s and is an example of the "singing commercials" created to attract Eastern settlers to the western lands.

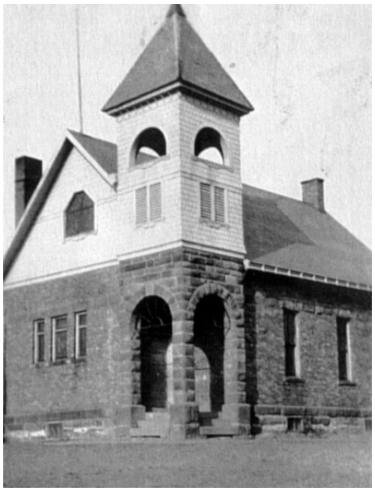
From pioneer times, memorized family repertoire passing from parent to child to grandchild enriched the musical life of every Ohio community. Whether it was the unaccompanied harmonies of Anabaptist families, the jolly German folk songs of the "Dutch", the fiddle tunes and waltzes that accompanied Saturday night

Music being played for a square dance in an American home circa 1940

square dances, the venerable Thomas Moore and Stephen Foster standards of community singing, the four-part harmonies of church worship, or the spontaneous song circles that gathered neighbors together of an evening on somebody's porch, music was shared, learned, passed on, remembered from generation to generation.

As time passed, of course, radio favorites such as "I'm Looking Over a Four Leaf Clover" and "Mairzy Doats" vied for time with "Buffalo Gals" and "Red River Valley" during back porch sings, dishwashing harmonization, and all-the-car-windows-open country drives.

From around the 1850s in Ohio, when one room schools became ubiquitous, those little buildings were not just daytime study spaces for the



Hiller School building, Ashland County. Each township was responsible for building its own one room school.

In this area, these little schools were strong, well-designed permanent buildings that went far beyond the minimum requirements and long outlasted their original intended use. They stood up well under hard use such as square dancing and regular community gatherings of typically 50 to 100 people. This was not true in all other areas of the State.

children. They were also central gathering places for the whole community, especially on Friday or Saturday nights. Friday nights often provided entertainment which might include a carry-in dinner, entertainment by the children or adults who might recite poetry, sing songs, play instruments, even present a play, and usually ended with somebody playing the piano for community singing. Saturday nights were often taken up with a square dance with traditional music supplied by the local multigenerational family band. The music for square dances more often than not was based on fiddle tunes brought over from Scotland or Ireland by a grandparent or great-grandparent, now played in an undecorated straightforward (square as opposed to syncopated) style in Northern Ohio. The calls were a specific set of standard figures that everybody in the community knew and could follow. There was no necessity for lessons. This type of square dancing was not for exhibition. It was social dancing like the round dances that interspersed the more strenuous square dances.

As one-room schools consolidated in Ohio, local school boards donated the little old buildings with their remaining contents (usually an upright piano and a stack of community song books, a supply of folding chairs, and a minimal kitchen) to their home townships to be used as "community centers". From about 1936 to as late as 1980, community clubs based in the one room schools and in Grange halls flourished in the rural areas of North Central Ohio. The regular local square dances provided employment for the family bands that still survived and helped to perpetuate the performance of traditional music as well as the golden oldie round dance favorites of the '30s and '40s until the Era Of Rock And Roll, universal automobile ownership, and aging of community club members worked their changes on the local culture.

You might expect that this was the end for homemade music. But no. For just in the nick of time in the late 1950s, the folk revival which had begun quietly with union songs in the 1920s finally surfaced over the cacophony of competing genres to remind young folks that, yes, lessons or no lessons, they could still make their own music. They could write and sing their own songs, say what their hearts needed to say in music, be the whole band or part of it or just sing along if that was where they were at. And so the homemade music goes on.

For links to further information on items mentioned in this article, please visit: http://users.zoominternet.net/~grannyemm/CFMSarticle/. Information on AU Archives Hazen Collection can be found on the Ashland University website.

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[1] More information on Captain Pearl Nye can be found at: http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/nye/index.html.

Memorial Gathering for Fred Bailey Draws Many

by Steve Hopkins

More than 50 people gathered at the Rambling House on Saturday afternoon, November 15, for the Memorial get-together/jam in honor of Fred Bailey, who passed away in September. There were a few tears shed in the more personal moments, but overall it was a joyful celebration not only of Fred Bailey and Nancy, but of friends, life, and folk music.

Fred would be happy that people had fun, reminisced about good times, raised glasses, shared good food, and played folk music. People came from all over Central Ohio and some returned from more distant cities. It was great to see old friends who are no longer in the area.

There was a nice display by Diane Boston, with articles about and photos of Fred. There were also some wonderful photos on the tables documenting periods in Fred's life and past folk music gatherings.

Pam Raver gave a toast in memory of Fred. She recited it first in the original Gaelic and then, again, in words we understood, that raised every glass in the room. Individually, and sometimes in front of the whole gathering, people related favorite stories of Fred or testimonies to the impact he had on our lives. One couldn't help but be impressed by the influence he had on so many of us.

The Hardtackers gave a rousing tribute performance to their founder and were called back for an encore. Members of Halfway Home enriched the jam. The sound of voices, guitars, banjos, drum, harp, dulcimer, and accordion filled the air as the mic was passed around. There was a special emphasis on songs of protest and change, as these were dear to Fred's heart.

Many thanks are in order for the members of the Columbus Folk Music Society who organized this event. It was fitting that the wonderful turnout included young children who are so important to the future of the music.

Fred would be pleased that the folk music torch is burning bright and lighting the way for the next generation.

Public Domain Info – A Site You Don't Want to Miss

When ASCAP presented the 1985 Ashley Apple Butter Festival with a bill for royalties that was more than the profit the folks in Ashley made from selling the apple butter that year, Marji Hazen saw it was time to help out by creating the Public Domain Information Project to help charitable and non-profit groups find music that didn't require royalties. Enough of this "secret knowledge" being hidden behind a smokescreen so fancy lawyers could make a huge profit from corporations who didn't have time to hunt for what was free if you knew where to look. It was time to share the secret she'd discovered back in the '60s that made her welcome to so many low-budget music spots.

She spent a few weeks on a very uncomfortable little stool in the dusty, dim copyright section of the State Library copying titles to augment the list of songs she already was sure were solidly in the public domain. For a number of years after that she published a list of songs she knew to be in the public domain, presented public domain music workshops at music festivals, and helped set up public domain venues for small businesses (including Nickleby's in Columbus) that couldn't afford the escalating price of a music license, and even helped the inventor create the PD list for a computer music program that is still being used in Casio keyboards.

But when the copyright laws were profoundly changed in November of 1998, she decided enough was enough. She wanted to play more music and do much less research. So the project, its web site, and collection of antique music books was passed on to a younger, more energetic person. Lynn has grown the project to be what Marji envisioned and more. It's still alive and well and, yes, growing at http://www.pdinfo.com/.

SAVE THE DATE. . .

The **Saturday Music Jam** at the **Worthington Farmers' Market 9:30 - 11:30 a.m**. – every Saturday at *The Shops at Worthington* mall (the location of the market and jam during the winter months). All are welcome to play. Consider bringing a chair.

No FolkSide Coffeehouse in December – See you in January!

Saturday, January 31:

FolkSide Coffeehouse – featured performer **Halfway Home**
6:00 p.m. Open Jam
7-8 p.m. Open Mic
8-10p.m. Featured Performer: Halfway Home. Held at the *Columbus Mennonite Church,* 35 Oakland Park Avenue (just East of High St. & one block North of E.N. Broadway), Cols, OH. $7.00 donation; Students $5.00; CFMS members $5.00; under 12 free.

The January 31 coffeehouse will also host our annual silent auction benefiting the Central Ohio Folk Festival and a Bake Sale.

Saturday evening, Feb. 7 – Save the Date for Bill Cohen's annual Valentine's Concert

ANNOUNCEMENT: Please consider contributing some baked goods for the Bake Sale at the January 31 Coffeehouse.

Annual CFMS Silent Auction at January Coffeehouse.

Now is the time to start putting to the side those items you think would make a good contribution to the Silent Auction in January. A little rule of thumb? The items should be better than what would be found in a garage sale. If they are really nice items, then please save them for the live auction in March. Silent auction items can be dropped off at the home of Linda McDonald, 444 Oakland Park Avenue.

You might also consider this year an "intangible" auction item; auctioning some type of service you are willing to provide. For example: a dinner at your home, a "how-to" lesson, etc.

Keep in Mind. . .

our annual Live Auction at the March Coffeehouse is for the better quality items. In the past we have had some great musical instrument contributions. If you have items for the live auction, you need to contact Sharon Mittenbergs @ rbaron49@aol.com. You also need to arrange to get the items to us at least two weeks before the March coffeehouse.

THIS AIN'T NO MOUSE MUSIC!

– is a 92 min. documentary on American roots music icon Chris Strachwitz and his indie label. Opening at the **Gateway Film Center on Dec. 5 (playing until Dec. 11),** the film features bluegrass artists such as No Speed Limit and the White Top Mountain Band; Zydeco king Clifton Chenier; Cajun band The Pine Leaf Boys amongst others, not to mention cameos by Bonnie Raitt, Ry Cooder, Taj Mahal and Richard Thompson. Described in the **NY Times** as "Engrossing . . .I dare you not to tap your feet" and in the **LA Weekly** as "Lively, colorful and often hilarious, full of astonishingly beautiful music."

More information with a trailer and description: **http://www.argotpictures.com/nomousemusic.html.**

FOLLOWING OUR OWN. . .

Saturday, December 13: Grassahol – 8 p.m. – Moe's Original Bar B Que, 128 E. Broadway, Granville, OH. No cover.

Saturday, December 20: The Folk Ramblers – 7-10 p.m. – Java Central Coffee House**,** 20 S. State St., Westerville, OH. No cover.

Thursday, January 15, 2015: The Folk Ramblers – 7-8 p.m. – Grandview Heights Public Library, 1685 W. First Ave., Grandview, OH.

Friday, January 16, 2015: Grassahol – 7-9 p.m. – *Byrnes' Pub,* 1248 West 3rd Ave., Cols, OH**.** No cover.

Saturday, January 17, 2015: The Folk Ramblers – 7 p.m. – *Benefit for Habitat For Humanity,* Gethsemane Lutheran Church, 35 East Stanton Ave, Columbus, OH.

Sunday, January 25: Social Action Song Swap – 1- 3 p.m., (hosted by Joanie Calem) – Northwood High Building, 2231 N. High St, Artspace Rm. 100. Questions? Call 614-208-6731.

Music *IS* Good Medicine

Interview by D. Boston

The following interview is conducted with CFMS member, Carl Yaffey, who has been volunteering his time playing music through the MusicCare Program at the James Cancer Center. The MusicCare program operates on a daily basis and they are looking for more volunteers. We hope Carl's story might serve as an incentive to others to try something either like this or like the "Heather Pick Memorial Concert Series" program currently in development by the James (see additional details at the bottom of this page).

Diane: You've been involved in the MusicCare Program at the James Cancer Center for awhile. Can you tell us how long you've been doing it and what you do exactly?

Carl Yaffey: I've been volunteering there for 10 years.

Diane: Can you share with readers any stories of your experiences there and how much the simple sharing of music can mean to folks who are there?

Carl: [One story] is I was playing near a nurses station one afternoon when a woman brought her obviously very ill husband out and had him sit down near me. He had his head down and didn't seem to know where he was. But I noticed his foot tapping along to my playing. After a few minutes he began to cry. His wife and a nurse comforted him and then his wife took him back to the room. A little later his wife came out and thanked me for playing and said he used to play a fiddle.

[Another story] is while playing in the James lobby, a man walked up with a big smile. I asked him if he liked the music, and he pointed to his ear and shook his head, indicating he was deaf. I pointed to his hand and then to my banjo head and nodded. He reached over and placed his hand on the head while I played. His grin got bigger and bigger.

Diane: How long has the MusicCare Program being going on at the James? How often does it happen and where all do the musicians play?

Carl: Not sure how long the program has been operating. Volunteer musicians come at all times of the day and night. We can play at the James, at the Martha Morehouse Tower, at the Stefanie Spielman Comprehensive Breast Center, and at the OSU hospital East.

Diane: How can interested musicians sign up for the program?

Carl: [They can] contact Katie Keine, Program Manager-Volunteers at kathleen.kiene@osumc.edu or call her at: 614-293-8884.

Diane: The James is also in the process of developing a concert program. Can you tell us more about this?

Carl: They are just getting the program organized. As I understand it, there will be weekly concerts by lots of different musicians, some MusicCare volunteers, some not. The bands will be volunteers (no pay). The concerts will be recorded and streamed throughout the hospital.

Diane: Is there a contact for the concert program or a website that interested musicians can go to to get more information?

Carl: A contact person would be Terel Jackson, Music Therapist at: Terel.Jackson@osumc.edu or 614-293-1761.

Diane: What would you say to musicians who are considering becoming involved somehow?

Carl: This an excellent way to volunteer and "give back". You would be welcomed and very much appreciated by the folks at the James.

Even if you can't do it on a regular basis, the hospital may welcome you to perform. And if you end up joining the performance roster for the "Heather Pick Memorial Concert Series" you'll end up being video-taped so the performance can be replayed many times. That's part of a new expanded musical project, and it might even include national acts that come through Columbus.

Below you'll find some additional details that The James provides for those interested in becoming involved in the Concert Series.

"The Heather Pick Memorial Concert Series"

Musical performances in this series are provided to help support a calming ambiance for cancer survivors, caregivers, visitors, and staff at The James. Here is some useful information:

- "The Heather Pick Memorial Concert Series" will begin after Dec 15, 2014. The series will involve one concert per week.
- Musicians and ensembles will coordinate with the JamesCare for Life music therapist to join the series roster, and to select their performance date(s). To be considered for the series roster, musicians and ensembles will be asked to share a digital recording to demonstrate their musicianship. Examples of digital recordings include MP3 files, website links to audio clips, and/ or recordings posted through internet platforms such as YouTube.
- All concerts (not to exceed 90 minutes) will take place between 11a.m. and 4.p.m. and will take place in areas that have excellent acoustics.
- Performances will be streamed live throughout The James, and then archived electronically to allow admitted patients to enjoy the performances on demand, from their hospital rooms.

To join the concert series roster or to ask additional questions, please call the JamesCare for Life music therapist at 614-293-6428 or write to jamescareforlife@osumc.edu.

Photo by John Clear

WELCOME TO OUR NEW AND RETURNING MEMBERS:

Mike Hale
Wilson Brinkley
Mary Lynne Carr

Q: How many folk musicians does it take to change a light bulb?
A: Seven; one to change the bulb and the other six to sing about how good the old one was.

HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE COLUMBUS FOLK MUSIC SOCIETY AND/ OR IT'S EVENTS?

Visit us at:
www.columbusfolkmusicsociety.org

OR you can join us as a member. Benefits include: camaraderie with the folkies in town, discounts on certain admissions, this monthly newsletter and the comfort of knowing that all events are family friendly! A membership form is provided on the last page of this newsletter. Note: your membership is tax deductible.

The Staff of "A Different Strummer" wish you and yours the best during the coming holiday season. We will "see you again" with the February issue (a polite way of saying there will be no January newsletter).

SEASONAL NOTES

REMINDERS . . .

The Columbus Folk Music Society now has its 13-month full-color 2015 folk calendar available. Please consider getting calendars either for yourself or for your family or friends for a Christmas gift or for any kind of gift for that matter. You can check out the calendar on our website at: www.columbusfolkmusicsociety.org/calendar_2015.html. Its really just a way to help support our Central Ohio Folk Festival (and you get a calendar to boot). Suggested donation of $10. They are also for sale at: Guitar House Workshop; Rambling House; Bluegrass Musicians Supply and Wholly Craft. For mail order, please make a check payable to The Columbus Folk Music Society (please add $2.00 S&H) and send to: The Columbus Folk Music Society, P.O. Box 20735, Columbus, OH 43220. Thank you for your support!

Also, if you're looking for a Christmas gift with a folk music twist, please check out the CFMS "FolkSide Shop" on the web at Cafe Press. Click on http://www.cafepress.com/folksideshop. Clothing, mugs, tiles, totes and more – all with our logo and a saying. Its also a great way to "spread the word" about the CFMS!

THE COLUMBUS FOLK MUSIC SOCIETY OFFICERS AND TRUSTEES

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Next Issue in February

We're on the web!
www.columbusfolkmusicsociety.org

BECOME A MEMBER OF THE COLUMBUS FOLK MUSIC SOCIETY

Date: _____ ☐ I'm new to this ☐ I'm back for more

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Membership renewals are due annually by September 30th. For new members, please check one of the membership levels listed below & pro-rate the amount of your check as indicated. If joining during the month of:

Feb-April: Your membership level amount x .5
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☐ Yes! Please contact me regarding volunteer opportunities within the organization.

Please send completed form and payment to:
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P.O. Box 20735, Columbus, OH 43220

In an effort to be both fiscally and environmentally responsible, we will send a full-color, interactive newsletter via e-mail unless you request a hard copy be mailed to you.

I enjoy the annual Central Ohio Folk Festival (early May): Lots 5 4 3 2 1 Not (please circle one)