

the

QUARTER NOTES

Volume 2 Number 2



Spring on the Prairie

"Gresham's Law"

You've heard of "Gresham's Law"—the tendency for the bad to drive out the good. And the person who quotes it need only point to the TV screens, the neighborhood movie theatre, the suburban highway displaying the Great American Adscape.

Nevertheless the folklorist in his very profession sees Gresham's Law refuted in the history of many a ballad. Over the centuries the best verses have been remembered, the poor ones forgotten. The best songs remembered, the poorest forgotten.

When does Gresham's Law win out? I'd say it's when the average person makes a too hasty choice. That's when the good is abandoned, the bad kept. When do prejudiced, fear, ignorance, thoughtlessness, selfishness, prompt someone to make a wrong decision? When that decision is made in haste.

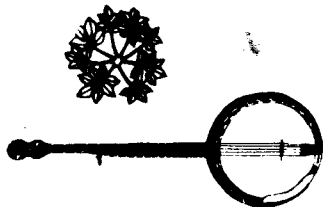
Here is a good argument for letting the folk process not change things too quickly, for not having fads and fashions switch too suddenly. No wonder the bad drives out the good when the average citizen is forced to make too many hasty decisions. No wonder, as Oscar Wilde said, fashion is a form of ugliness so unbearable that it has to change every few months.

An anecdote for folksingers to remember:

A highland Scotsman was once visited by a friend from down in the city of Aberdeen. In the morning they had a big bowl of oatmeal porridge for breakfast. At lunch time, his friend found again they had porridge. In the evening, still again, porridge was the meal. The friend asked cautiously, "Don't you ever get tired of porridge?"

The highlander looked up in frank surprise. "Why, mon, how can you ever get tired of food?"

—from "The Incomplete Folksinger"



COVER ART BY: MARLENE HILL WERNER (THANKS!)

*People who make music together
cannot be enemies,
at least not while the music lasts.*
Paul Hindemith

An Open Letter To The Supporters Of The Old Quarter

Several months ago we began some changes at The Old Quarter which became more of a battle than we had first anticipated. The resistance we have been trying to overcome has been both exhausting and frustrating. Yet in spite of our disillusionment with the local government, our spirit has been renewed time and time again through your help. The people hauling equipment and supplies, all the good friends spreading the news of The Old Quarter, the special items that have been so generously given, these along with the many words of encouragement that mean much more to us than you might realize. The Old Quarter is growing and we are moving forward (through the court system). We owe our thanks to you, the good friends and neighbors we have been blessed with.

Dave & Barb Reynolds

the Wolf Road Prairie

By: Peter Baldo

Back in the 1920's Westchester was a fast-growing 'model city' with it's own 'el' stop, paved streets, and even water from Lake Michigan. So it surprised nobody when Sam Insull, the great steetcar magnate and real estate developer, subdivided an 80-acre parcel at the corner of 31st and Wolf. He poured concrete sidewalks, erected fake street lights, and sold over 600 lots. Then came the Depression and the whole enterprise went bankrupt.

Miraculously Wolf Road Prairie is still with us. True there's a gas station on the corner, and sidewalks mark the imaginary streets. But fields of shooting stars and wild hyacinths still bloom in the spring, and the red indian paintbrushes, the orange hoary puccoons, and the pink prairie phlox shine out from green foliage like traffic lights on a stormy night.

Hundreds of species of rare plants grow in Wolf Road Prairie, as they have for thousands of years. Most live for decades, dying off above ground every fall. In past centuries these dead tops would fuel fires which blew hundreds of miles to the next big river. To the first settlers prairie fires were a scourge, like tornados, blizzards, flocks of passenger pigeons, and clouds of locusts.

What's a prairie plant like? It's tough. Fire can tickle its top, and drought can sear its roots, and it'll laugh the whole thing off. But a prairie plant's also congenial, sharing a patch of ground with lots of other kinds of plants, and hob nobbing with all sorts of insects. It's fun being on Wolf Road Prairie in the summer, with butterflies flopping from one blazing star to another, and big bumblebees wading up to their bellies in the pink thistle flowers, and ambush bugs staking out the rattlesnake masters, waitning to nab the first thing that lands.

When the first settlers arrived in Illinois, 80% of the state was prairie. But the extraordinary fertility of the black soil was the prairie's undoing. Today Illinois' black soil supports the most productive agriculture in the world, but only supports 250 acres of black soil prairie. The largest and best preserved tract remaining of this type of prairie is at Wolf Road.

We have made a start to preserving this area. The Save the Prairie Society has purchased over 30 of the lots, and is working to increase public appreciation of this unique and threatend resource. The State of Illinois and Cook County are in the process or buying 10 acres each. Our goal is the protection of the entire 80 acre site.

If you would like more information about Wolf Road Prairie, and the activities of the Save the Prairie Society, please write:

Save the Prairie Society
10327 Elizabeth Street
Westchester, Illinois 60153



Five tours of Wolf Road Prairie are offered by the Save the Prairie Society this summer.

- Sunday June 3 noon-4:00 p.m. Spring Tour
Continuous tours and refreshments.
Come and see the spring flowers!
- Saturday June 23 9:30 a.m.
- Saturday July 14 9:30 a.m.
- Saturday August 11 9:30 a.m.
- Sunday September 9 noon-4:00 p.m. Prairie Fest
Continuous tours, food and entertainment featuring musicians from "The Old Quarter" coffeehouse.

Wolf Road Prairie is at the intersection of 31st Street and Wolf Road in Westchester, on the north-west corner. Parking is available at the shopping center across the street. Parking for the Prairie Fest will be at the Greek Church, 4 blocks north on Wolf Road. Please stay on the sidewalks when you visit the prairie.

3 "Where Have all the Flatpicks Gone" (Long time Passing) by: Don Buedel

Over the years I've developed a great deal of respect for the finger style guitar player. It's not their technique, so much, that I admire, as it is the fact that they never have to worry about losing flat picks. The truth is that I myself have never been able to hang on to one for more than a few hours at a time, and believe me I've tried!


I remember one time searching my pockets for a pick for a good ten minutes. A friend noticing my problem was good enough to give me one of hers. 'You just need to get organized!', she said to me. 'Why don't you put all your picks in a little box and keep it in your case like I do?'

Well it seemed like a good idea. After all, she always had a flat pick of her own and I'd bet she had the very first one she ever bought! So, I got me a neat little box (Balkan Sobranie cigarette tin) and I went out and bought a bunch of my favorite picks and solemnly vowed to replace the picks in the neat little box every time I was done with them. Every thing went fine after that until a week later when I lost the neat little box with all those brand new picks in it. Now I'm back to putting them in my pockets. At least that way I only lose 'em one at a time.

I know now that I'm not the first person in history afflicted with this malady. I have it from reliable sources that the great Mississippi John Hurt developed his unique finger style, because he could never find his flat picks. Some say it's because he couldn't afford them, but I know that this isn't true. He could have used a match book cover or cut one from a shoe sole that had a hole worn in it.

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I seem to have the same problem with harmonicas too. Once I was asked if there was a way to fix a worn out harp and I had to tell them I wouldn't know cause I've never had an old one. I lost my guitar for two weeks. I had decided to learn to play piano when it turned up in a friends trunk, hidden underneath his sleeping bag. Looking back, I'm really glad I found that guitar cause someone would get real sore if I lost their piano.

All I can figure is that I'm cursed with a negative polarized magnetic energy field that repels objects. Something like the force that attracts flatpicks to the sound hole of a guitar, only in reverse. Either that or I'm being followed by a small black hole that sucks up everything I set down. If that's the case, then there is a parallel universe filled with capos, flatpicks, harmonicas and cigarette lighters floating around in space just waiting to be exploited by some enterprising music dealer.

Meanwhile, as I search for a cure, life goes on. I'm working on my finger picking and I practice flat picking when I can.

Guitar Workshop: The Right Hand

by: Mark Dvorak

In past issues of Quarter Notes, we talked a little about three finger or "Travis" style picking, and some of the techniques involved. In this issue, let's concentrate a little bit on the right hand.

After you realize that by placing the fingers of your left hand in different arrangements on the fret board, various chords or phrases will be produced as you pick. Also realize however, that there are many things you can do with your right hand to alter the sound of a plucked string.

Try this: let the nails of your index and middle fingers grow to a point just beyond the tip of your finger. (nailbiters try to concentrate your nibbling to your left hand) Now the idea is NOT to play with the nail, and NOT with the flesh of your finger, but a combination of both. This may require that you twist your fingers a little bit from "proper" right hand posture, but takes no time at all to become second nature. I have found that this practice gives you good control over the sound made by plucking, and a consistently clearer notes.

Many guitarists find that using a thumbpick will enhance the sound of their bass strings and provide a more driving rhythm. If you've never tried playing with one, they're only a few cents each, and you'll find with practice you can make sounds with your guitar that you never could before. They come in all kinds of shapes and sizes and thicknesses. Buy several different ones and try them all out and see which you like best. I prefer the "National" brand heavy gauge. They are a little hard to handle at first, but I've felt most comfortable with the rigidity, and they seem to last the longest. (Some of the lighter gauges in time will wear out on the tip and become very thin. After a while you'll notice the difference this makes.)

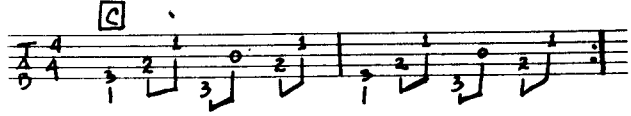
You may at first have difficulty getting used to having a thumbpick clamped around your thumb, and after a time, it may even begin to hurt. If your hands are rather small, you may not have this problem, but if your hands are medium to large, it may cause trouble. Here's an easy solution. Take your thumbpick and hold a match flame about 1/4 to 1/2 inch under the part that wraps around your thumb. Don't hold it too close, or it will catch fire and flare up very rapidly. (remember to buy several picks) After the plastic has become soft, slip it on your thumb in the exact position you intend to wear it. As the plastic cools, it will mold the fit to the size of your thumb.

You can also create a different sound by slipping metal fingertips over your index and middle fingers. They also come in a variety of gauges and are inexpensive. These take a little getting used to, but are invaluable should you break a nail, or desire more volume from your instrument.

The next technique when mastered, will give your playing by far, more distinction than any other. It is a trick made popular by the late Merle Travis. He would often "damp" or "choke" the strings by placing the heel of his right hand across the bass strings down by the bridge. This will require some experimentation, but try this:

Place the heel of your right hand across the strings down by the bridge rather firmly. Now pluck say, the fifth string, over and over again. You'll hear it go thump, thump, thump. Now relax the pressure slightly and you'll get a sound resembling a thump, but with a little tone quality. That's what we're shooting for.

To illustrate the technique, play this pattern against a C chord over and over:



Now play it again, this time with your "muted" bass notes. You'll notice how the treble strings ring out against the steady thumping of the bass pattern. Of course, you may not care to have this sound on every song you play, but it's a nice little trick to keep rolled up in your sleeve, and with practice can really help to clean up your playing.

You may find that some of the things we've discussed are helpful and some not, but I am reminded of a survey taken by a national guitar periodical that asked what % of their readers played their guitars with a) a thumbpick alone, b) thumbpicks and fingerpicks, or c) just plain flesh and nail. They were overwhelmed with responses like this: d) all of the above. It seems that many finger style guitarists change what they are wearing on their fingers according to the song they are playing. So fool around with some of these ideas, and choose the ones that suit you best.

Got any questions for "The Guitar Workshop"? (or any other instrument) Send them to:

p. o. box 181
Brookfield, IL
60513

and we'll find someone to answer them.

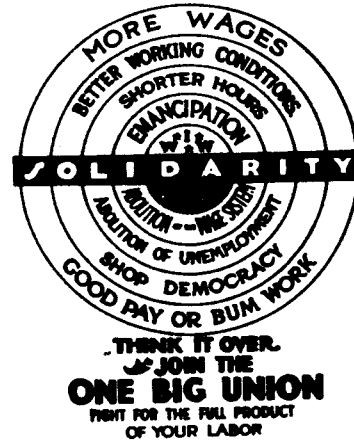
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"Troubadours of Discontent" by: Dave Reynolds

"Sing and fight!" said the Industrial Workers of the World, better known as the Wobblies. They told their members: "Right was the tyrant king who once said, 'Beware of a movement that sings.'... Whenever and wherever the oppressed challenge the old order, songs are on their lips."

The IWW did more than their share of singing and fighting during a period stretching between 1905 and the early 1920's. The Wobblies wrote, published and sang more than two hundred union songs, but only a few of these are still sung today. Most of them are outmoded because their appeal was strongly localized or because their fierce class-struggle content does not fit the modern labor movement (or does it?).

In 1905 the IWW was organized in Chicago. The newly formed organization took a position sharply at variance with the American Federation of Labor. Skilled tradesmen found their place in the unions of the AFL. But large masses of workers, laboring in forsaken centers of industry, had no voice. These included immigrant textile workers in the East, lumberjacks in the Northwest, migratory workers that followed the crops, and miners on the Mesabi Range in Minnesota. The IWW sought "one big union" whose aim was not to patch or reform society but to "abolish the wage system."



The Wobblies knew how to use the power of music and poetry to agitate and organize. In 1908 they published the first edition of their "Little Red Song Book" which went on to sell thousands of copies each year. On its cover it carried the slogan "IWW Songs - To Fan the Flames of Discontent". During most of the years that the IWW was active it was hardly necessary to "fan the flames of discontent" with militant songs and stirring music; wretched economic conditions did the fanning. The heavy hand of government was inevitably on the side of the employer and the right to organize and build unions had to be fought out on the bloodied picket lines.

Some of the best Wobbly poets who shaped their grievances into songs were Harry McClintock, Ralph Chaplin and Joe Hill.

For years "Hallelujah, I'm A Bum" was considered a folk song written by no one in particular—at least no one whose identity was known. Harry McClintock recorded the song in 1926 and claimed its authorship. While hobbing on the open road in 1897, bumming his meals or singing for his supper, McClintock says he put new words to "Revive Us Again", and called it "Hallelujah on the Bum". "Revive Us Again" was a hymn from an English opera dating from 1813.

Ralph Chaplin wrote "Solidarity Forever" in 1915. The idea had come to him earlier while he was in West Virginia helping the coal miners in the great Kanawha Valley strike. Chaplin combined his militant lyrics with the stirring Civil War tune of "John Brown's Body" to produce what has become the anthem of the American labor movement. Chaplin also wrote "The Commonwealth of Toil" which was set to the tune of "Darling Nelly Gray".

According to Ralph Chaplin "It was Joe Hill more than any other songwriter who made the IWW a singing organization". Hill's name became known among unionists when he wrote "Casey Jones," "The Preacher and the Slave" and many other popular union songs. His songs became so popular that the 1913 edition of the "Little Red Song Book" contained no less than thirteen of them.

In January, 1914, Hill was arrested in Salt Lake City, Utah, on a murder charge. Despite the intervention of President Woodrow Wilson, despite the condemnation of the trial as unfair by the APL, despite vigorous protests from public meetings throughout the country and as far away as Austria and Sweden, Joe Hill was finally executed by a five-man firing squad on November 19, 1915.

The day before Joe Hill was executed he sent a wire to Wobbly leader Big Bill Haywood at IWW headquarters in Chicago. Hill's words were to become famous: "Don't waste time mourning. Organize." Perhaps the most important factor in perpetuating his memory is the moving song "Joe Hill" which was written by Earl Robinson and Alfred Hayes some twenty years after his death.

And standing there as big as life
 And smiling with his eyes
 Joe says, "What they forgot to kill
 Went on to organize
 Went on to organize."

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ENTERTAINMENT SCHEDULE

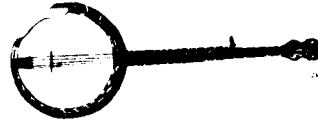
- Friday, March 2 **JANET HIGBEE** -- An outstanding performer from Naperville. Janet was a smash hit when she played at our Halloween party last fall. Her vocals with guitar are heard regularly at the Old Quarter in Brookfield and with the Bell Labs Folk Club. Don't miss!
- Friday, March 9 **DAN ZAHN** -- Dan's songs range from jazz to country to swing, and he does them all in a very entertaining style. Performed with guitar.
- Friday, March 16 **MARK INFANGER** -- An encore performance by this talented new entertainer. Folk and pop vocals with guitar.
- Friday, March 23 **ED ASHE** -- This versatile performer plays folk, pop, blues, country, reggae and more! He is equally at home on acoustic and electric guitars, and usually brings along some very talented friends resulting in a great show.
- Friday, March 30 **DEBRA ZAHAY** -- Original folk and pop songs -- some satirical, some serious, some frivolous, but all excellent. With guitar.
- Friday, April 6 **DON BUEDEL** -- Some of the best traditional, old time music around, performed on guitar, fiddle, mandolin, banjo, etc. etc.
- Friday, April 13 **BOB JANIS** -- This talented singer-songwriter has a relaxed, mellow style. Folk and pop with guitar.
- Friday, April 20 **CRAIG DuSOLD** -- Often heard at our open mikes, Craig performs folk, country and pop songs with guitar.
- Friday, April 27 **PETE NORMAN** -- A return engagement by this performer who calls his style "contemporary wierdness." We call it folk and pop accented by some Scott Joplin rags. Vocals with guitar.
- Friday, May 4 To Be Announced
- Friday, May 11 **THURSDAY'S CHILD** -- A good-sounding trio playing music from the 60's and 70's as well as some old time folk songs.
- Friday, May 18 **KRISTI WACHTER** -- Her first time at the Two Way Street will surely not be her last. All original material, accompanied by guitar.

7

"Clawhammer"

BY: Paul Klonowski

Banjo



Frailing or clawhammer style banjo picking has been around since somebody put a shortened fifth string on the instrument, (perhaps one Joel Sweeney, ca. 1831, though it may have been added earlier). Originally this style was used to accompany a singer or to back up another instrument, especially at barn dances, music parties, and front porch pickin' sessions. Within the last fifteen or twenty years, however, clawhammer banjoists have begun playing more melodically, implementing more strings of single notes rather than the more traditional frailing strum. While the idea isn't new, its recent growth has been spectacular, and has drawn clawhammering out of its back-up role and into the limelight as a lead instrument, along with the fiddle and mandolin. There are a number of records, which are not always

readily available, which demonstrate these stylistic differences.

CLAWHAMMER BANJO, David Johnson
(Folkways PTS 31094, 1983)

This record has more than a dozen familiar old banjo tunes- from Old Joe Clark and Cripple Creek to Redwing and Cumberland Gap-fiddle tunes and mountain melodies. Johnson's playing is very traditional in its approach to clawhammer style; the tunes are arranged for backing up a fiddler. The lack of other instrumentation or vocals make this a banjo picker's record for banjo pickers' listening pleasure, as well as an excellent resource for the beginning-to-intermediate player.



FLEMING BROWN, (Folk-legacy FS1-4, 1962)

Here's a marvelous example of the banjo being played for vocal accompaniment. Familiar tunes, such as John Henry, obscure tunes, including one of the few anti-union songs I've heard, love songs, and murder ballads, (lots of these in old-time music) are presented here in a format that has not changed appreciably over the years- the banjo chords ring behind the singing, with more or less melodic instrumental breaks between the verses.

JOHN BURKE, FANCY PICKIN' AND PLAIN SINGING, (Kicking Mule KM 202, 1977)

John Burke, it has been said, is an unconventional clawhammer banjoist. Perhaps "unconventional" isn't the right word- he's a pioneer among banjo pickers. Burke has done to the clawhammer style precisely what Earl Scruggs did to the fingerstyle banjo forty years ago- he has added a new dimension to the instrument. The banjo need not be restricted to its traditional back-up role, but can be as much a lead instrument as the fiddle or mandolin. Here, then, is a record of the wildest clawhammering I've heard- still in the traditional frailing form, but with an approach that's distinctively, marvelously, John Burke.

Of course, the list of old-time banjo records is endless. Finding any of these records can be quite a chore,

but here are some other records and artists that are worth a listen:

CONTINUED PG. 8



The Arrowhead Country Club

A new "open mike" will be starting up this coming March at the Arrowhead Country Club on Butterfield Rd. in Wheaton.

Arrowhead is a public golf course that has recently been taken over by the Wheaton Park District. The club has a dining and lounge area ideally suited for acoustic music along with a parking lot.

Local residents Lori Horvedel and Dave Conte presented the idea of an "open mike" to the park district board and found the idea well received.

Juel Ulven will oversee the operation to help insure it's success and possibly pave the way towards future concerts. Juel is well respected in the Chicago area by virtue of his vast experience with The Fox Valley Folklore Society, Aural Tradition, Come For To Sing Magazine, and his background in open mike and concert performances.

The purpose of this new musical venture is to provide the community with quality music from local musicians, also giving the performers another place to present their talents.

The park district has agreed to allocate funds for advertising in order to draw people out for our music. We hope to provide a responsive audience at the open mikes.

Specific dates as well as a starting date has not been set yet, but we are looking at alternate Saturdays beginning in March and going until June. If things have worked out to everyone's satisfaction, we will continue on.

Hopefully, Arrowhead will turn out to be a musicians delight. If anyone has any questions, call Dave Conte at 668-5762. Looking forward to hearing your music and seeing you there.



Saturday March 3

5 string
"Banjo Workshop"

will cover many styles of banjo playing; from frailing to bluegrass.

All levels welcome to attend. Cost: only \$5.00
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with Don Buedel
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and we'll send you more information. Cost for the 7-week course is \$35.00 (payable 1st class) or \$6 per lesson.



Confessions of a Dirty Guitar Player by: Phil Cooper



"Over the Waterfall"
trad. arr. by: P. Cooper

Now in our rambles, let us all dwell on the concept of the dropped D tuning in our quest for the dirty guitar player. Dropping the low E string to a D restricts the playing to D related keys, but gives us the full D chord sound, impossible to get otherwise.

Blues musicians used the dropped D to good effect and it has also been used by solo finger-pickers for fiddle tune arrangements. The dropped D is responsible for the driving rhythm of David Bromberg's version of "Statesboro Blues" for example. Duck Baker has used the tuning for fiddle tunes on his various Kicking Mule albums to good results.

I've included a tab of the American fiddle tune, "Over the Waterfall" arranged in dropped D tuning. All the H's and P's indicate hammer-ons and pull-offs, get used to them as I use them alot in this piece. Try playing the finger board with your left hand and getting the notes to sound without using your right for practice with this technique. One of the by-products of this exercise is increased strength in the left hand and stiff forearm muscles.

Good people to listen to for Dropped D tuning hints are Dave Van Ronk ("Sunday Street"), Doc Watson, Pat Sky, John Renbourn (his version of "My Sweet Potato" is just great), and Bert Jansch. Even Gordon Lightfoot favors the dropped D tuning on some of his songs (The Canadian Railroad Trilogy).

DADGBE

A PART

H P P H P P

0 2 4 2 0 4 2 0 2 0 0 2 4 2 0 4 2

4 0 2 4 2 0 4 2 0 2 0 0 2 3 3 2 3 2 0 3

B PART

H H P H P

2 0 2 4 2 4 2 0 4 0 2 3 2 3 0 2 0 0 0 0

2 0 2 4 2 4 2 0 4 0 2 4 0 4 2 0

A PART VARIATION

H P P P

3 0 2 5 3 5 3 2 0 3 0 2 3 2 5 3 5 3 2 0 2

3 2 5 3 5 3 2 0 3 0 2 4 5 5 4 5 4 2 0

REPEAT

"The Old Quarter" Spring Schedule

SAT. MARCH 10 O'Reilly's Rogues A quartet with its own unique way of bringing to life a tasteful mix of familiar and rarely heard Irish favorites and classics. Marvin Lensink will open the show with a variety of rag, jazz and blues classics.

SAT. MARCH 31 MIKE OFFUTT A fine entertainer returns to The Old Quarter with a blend of music ranging from thoughtful and sensitive to thoroughly hilarious. Paul Klowski will perform a songbag of ballads, old time country songs and original songs accompanying himself on guitar, banjo and mandolin.

SAT. APRIL 14 DAN KEDING One of the most respected folk musicians in the midwest will perform traditional favorites with superb guitar accompaniment. Mark Dvorak will open the show with skillful interpretations of folk and contemporary songs accompanied by guitar and banjo.

SAT. APRIL 28 DON BUEDEL Don's homespun humor and music has become a favorite at The Old Quarter. An accomplished banjoist, fiddler, mandolinist and guitarist, Don performs a variety of old time and country tunes. THE LOCATION OF THIS SHOW IS TO BE ANNOUNCED.

SAT. MAY 12 PHIL COOPER and MARGARET NELSON Traditional English, Irish and original folk music. Phil and Margaret are two of the most delightful musicians you will ever hear. Opening the show will be Lisa Lilly, a talented singer/songwriter who will perform traditional folk songs and country tunes as well as her own material.

SAT. MAY 26 DAVID WILLIAMS A performer specializing in guitar and mandolin he also plays tenor banjo, five-string banjo and fiddle. His musical styles range from traditional folk and bluegrass to gospel and swing. His songs have been performed by a large number of other artists including Pete Seeger and Jim Post. Marvin Lensink will open the show.

MORE INFORMATION - 485-3712 or 387-9312

**ALL SHOWS - ST. BARBARA PARISH CENTER, PRAIRIE & WINDEMERE,
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