

## Violin Maker Enjoyed Hub Life During 1920s

By JOHN ZANES

GILMANTON — The room where Earl Brown works is a crowded room.

A table is crowded with the tools for making and repairing violins; pictures and memorabilia cover the walls.

There is a picture of Jack Benny with his Stradivarius, a picture of the Boston Symphony in 1881. There is a picture of Eugene Ysaye, playing the violin now owned by Isaac Stern. That picture has a special connection, because it was the outline of that instrument that Brown copied to make a violin of his own, 56 years ago in Boston.

He made it in the shop of Bryant, dealer in rare, old and new violins. The neck and back are maple, the top and the rest of it spruce. Brown made the chin rest and carved the head.

When there was an opening not long after, he went to work for Bryant, and worked there for 20 years. During part of the time he played violin in the Boston Civic Symphony, "and two or three others..."

Brown smiles, recalling the early days with Bryant. "I was working six days a week..." You didn't get much money, he explained, but a job in that shop was a stepping-stone in the world of music.

He wouldn't have wanted to miss living in Boston in the '20s and '30s. "After World War I, through the '20s, people had money," he said, recalling a grace that the city had in those days, the kind of atmosphere one doesn't associate with most cities anymore.

Born in Sabbatus Heights in Loudon, 85 years ago, Brown has been associated with the area, save for the Boston years, all his life.

He recalls the Gilmanton Iron Works fire of 1915 from his own witness. He attended high school in Pittsfield, where he played the violin.



### Violin Player Since 1910

Earl Brown of Gilmanton plays on a violin he made himself, 56 years ago, in Boston. Over the years Brown has played in various groups and bands, with the Civic Symphony in Boston, and, in 1914, twice a week in a movie house. The violin

is made to the pattern of one now owned by Isaac Stern, formerly owned and played by Eugene Ysaye. For many years Brown made and repaired violins.

# Gilmanton Man Expert Violin Maker

Earl Brown Recalls  
Repairing \$50,000  
Instrument 1759

EARLE O. ANDERSON

GILMANTON, April 25  
Working on violins is a  
way of life with Earl D.  
Brown of this town. They  
have always held a strong  
affection for him. His first  
playing acquaintance  
with them dates back to  
when he was a boy of 10.

He has repaired literally  
hundreds of the delicate  
stringed instruments. Many  
of them belonged to some of  
the most noted violinists of  
the day. The most valuable  
one was worth \$50,000.

## MAKES COPIES

Mr. Brown has also made  
copies of a dozen old mas-  
ters, including Stradivari  
and Guarnerius. He is now  
working on his 13th.

About three weeks would  
be required to turn out one  
violin, if he worked steadily  
on it. However, he sand-  
wiches that in with repair  
work, which keeps him  
pretty much occupied these  
days in his home workshop.  
For 20 years, 1922-1942,  
the Loudin native was em-  
ployed by O. H. Bryant,  
who had a violin establish-  
ment opposite Symphony  
Hall in Boston.

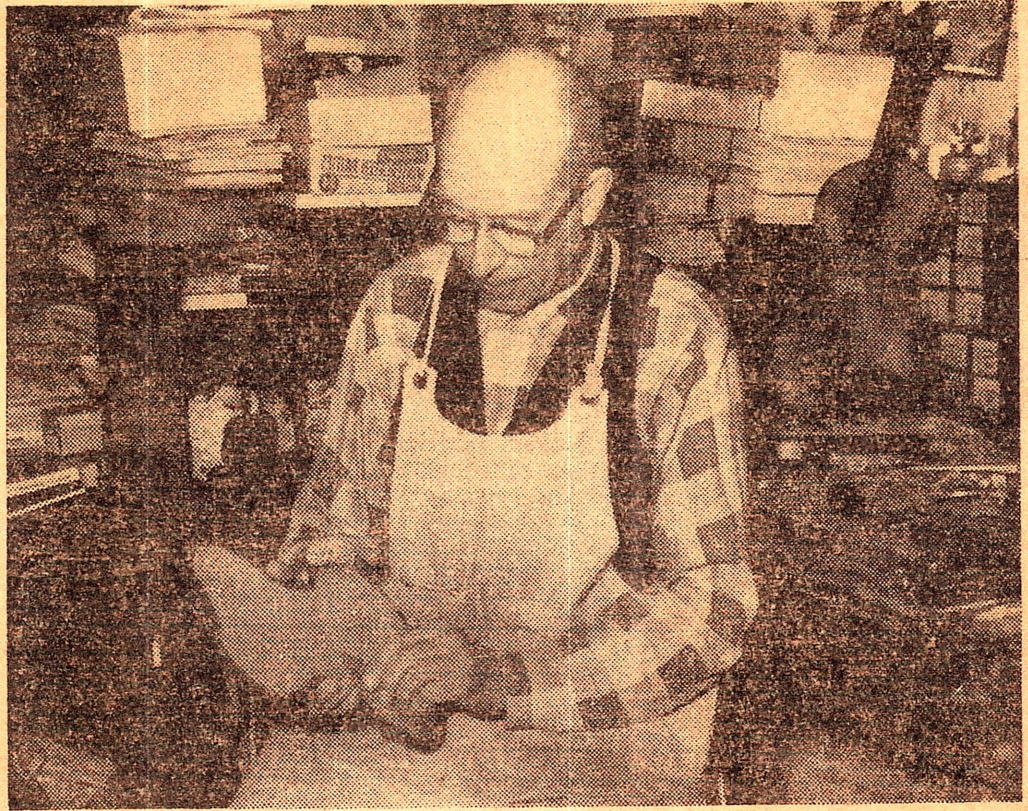
Bryant was regarded as  
one of the top violin makers  
in the U. S., Brown recalled,  
and also repaired all types,  
including 'cello and bass.  
He specialized in the man-  
ufacture of high grade viols,  
and as a dealer in old-  
time instruments.

"We handled all the violin  
work for the Boston Sym-  
phony," Brown said,  
as well as supplying the  
needs of opera houses and  
traveling musicians.

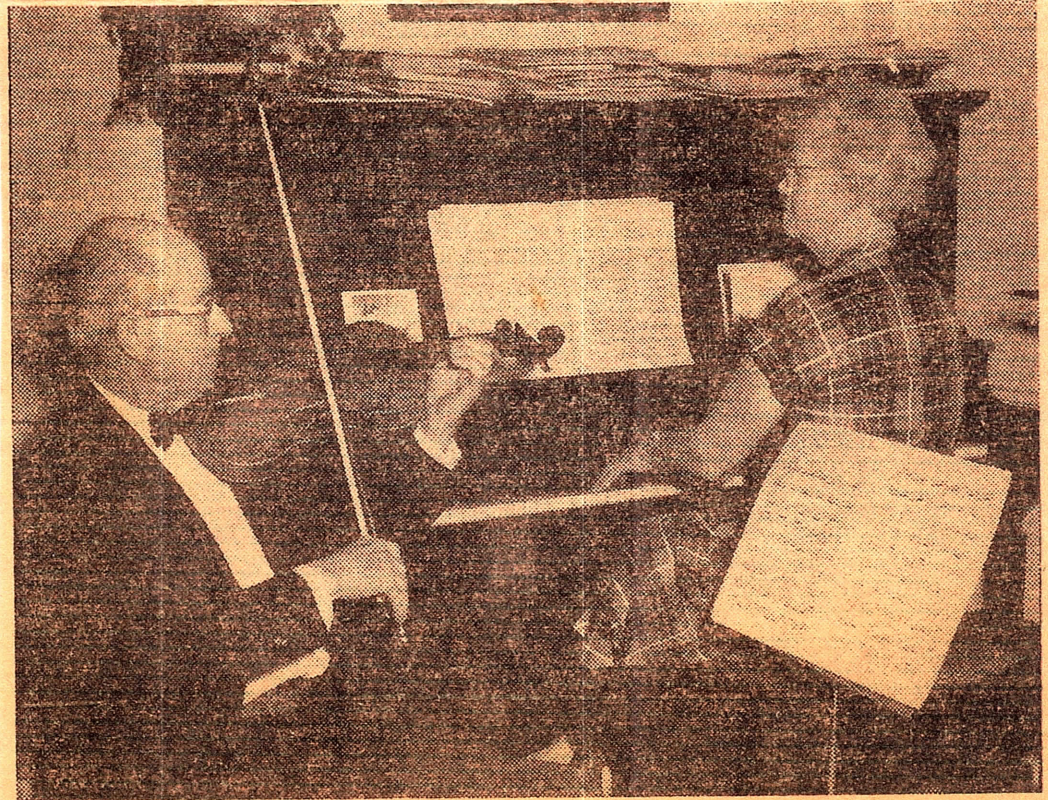
## TAKE YOUR TIME'

"One lesson that Mr.  
Bryant taught me was that  
good work was preferable to  
speed. I used to hurry at  
first, and get caught up.

"But he cautioned me one  
day to 'take your time,' re-  
minding me that he was not  
interested in how quick I  
could finish a job, but rath-  
er, in the finest kind of  
craftsmanship of which I



GILMANTON VIOLIN MAKER, Earl D. Brown, in home workshop. He is busy on outline of copy of a 1715 Alard Stradivari. While Brown has made only a dozen complete violins, he has repaired countless hundreds. For 20 years he was employed at this task in Boston. (Anderson Photo)



HUSBAND AND WIFE MUSIC MAKERS. Gilmanton couple provide their  
entertainment for the violin at the age of 10.

were always spent at his folks' farm at Lower Gilmanton.

"Unquestionably the most costly violin on which I ever worked," revealed Brown, "was a \$50,000 instrument, made by Antonio Stradivari.

"It belonged to Mischa Elman, one of the most famous soloists, who is this year celebrating the 50th anniversary of his coming to the U. S. I put on a new fingerboard and bridge.

"I heard Elman on the Firestone Hour a couple of weeks ago. I imagine that he was playing this same instrument.

many years conductor of the Boston Symphony. I had to open the base in middle of the joint, and insert a piece of wood; pretty exact work."

Evidence that his talent is appreciated is shown by his appearance with the Manchester Symphony orchestra for two seasons, 1954-1956; and with the Concord Symphony in 1956-1957. He played in both the first and second violin sections.

Mrs. Brown is also musically inclined, and much in demand in church and so-

cial circles, as organist and pianist.

For 13 years, she was organist at St. James Episcopal church in Laconia. That was many years ago, when she was Mrs. James Pennock.

While filling this role of church organist, she composed an anthem and communion service for special occasions. Her two sons, James and George Pennock of Gilmanton, also enjoy music. James as a guitarist, and George as a pianist.