



## Chapter 12: 2018 Update

This update will probably be the final update in this project. Since the project began in 2005 and eventually, with the involvement of the inter-net, I have received a regular stream of information, with several discoveries usually coming at the same time every four to six months. The last new information came well over a year ago with only minor follow-up in the interim. These discoveries were primarily regarding the Charles Roach line. Having found over half of Sol's reported original output it's likely that I have found all that can be found. More Charles Roach violins have been discovered however, and this has created an opportunity for his descendants to become acquainted with each other and share stories. Some of those stories, when put together, shed some light on why Charles was committed to a mental institution around 1933 for the remainder of his days. I've enjoyed being a facilitator for that line, but it's really up to them to pursue. However, I will enjoy being kept up to date on their finds and will certainly relay any new information I receive to them.

Cousin Nancy Davis sent a number of newspaper articles that she had researched regarding the Roach's and they are presented here as further insight as to what they were like.

**Altoona Tribune 25 March 1914 page 10**

### Trout Have A Lent Says Veteran Roach

Famous Nimrod and Izack Walton of Windber cites his experience with game.

*Sol Roach, the famous Nimrod and Izack Walton of Central Pennsylvania, who resides at Windber and hunts the wilds in that section of the state, has his own ideas concerning Trout. They are rather interesting and timely right now for the reason that the season is approaching and in addition Mr. Roach claims that trout have what he calls a lent.*

*The Johnstown Tribune a few days ago published the following story concerning Roach's belief that Trout voluntarily fast for a short period.*

*"Sol Roach, Windber's premier nimrod and Izack Walton, is convinced that at certain times the trout voluntarily fast, their abstinence generally lasting four days, and marked by a retirement from their usual haunts. Mr. Roach has just finished reading an article in Forest and Stream in which a sportsman argued that the conduct of the trout at times suggested that they were temporarily blind, so that they could not see the bait or fly. The*

article made Mr. Roach smile. As the trout season opens March 31, his observations on the 'trout blindness' theory were grabbed up as being especially timely and interesting to fishermen. Here's what the expert fly manipulator said, in a running talk:

*"The trout have what I call a 'Lent". They will lie under rocks, logs, etc., for three or four days, and no bait or fly will bring them out until after their 'Lent'. I've made big catches on a certain stream one day and have seen lots of trout left. I have gone back after these and could not get a single bite. Nor could I see any of them in clear water. I stuck right to them for four days in succession and finally they came out and I got the limit. This, to my mind, was proof that the trout, through some instinct, have a period of abstaining from food and for retiring from their usual haunts. I know how to fish, I believe, and nobody that knows me would say that in cases referred to I had probably frightened the trout.*

#### **Tips for the "Green" Fisherman.**

*"One requisite in fishing for trout is to keep off the wrong side of the stream – the side which throws your shadow on the water. Keep concealed as much as possible, when on the bank and tramp lightly. A slight jar on the bank has a pronounced effect under water and alarms the trout, who are very sensitive.*

*"Don't use silver or nickel ferrules, and don't have silver or nickel reels flashing their brilliance on the waters. If you do, you'll have an empty basket after a days work. A rod of real light color, with bright varnish, also means an empty basket. You mustn't make a noise, even with your equipment, in other words.*

*"Fish up stream- always- and wade if possible. Fishing downstream sends sticks and stones down ahead of you; the trout gets 'get wise'- 'he's coming'- another empty basket.*

*"One of the most attractive agents in producing an empty basket is the wearing of white shirt and collar, light suits or cap and light straw hats. These label you to the fish because they make you clearly visible to the critters in the water.*

*"Another prolific cause of 'poor luck' is the failure to use the right kink of fly. Trout will rise to the right kind of fly even if they are chock full of real bugs and flies. The color, movement, etc., arouse their curiosity, then challenge their powers of grab, and there you have them.*

#### **Altoona Tribune 26 November 1915 page 8**

*Mrs. Sol Roach, of Windber, who can fish and hunt as cleverly as her husband, who has won much renown, accompanied him to Centre County on a recent hunting trip and shot a large fat wild turkey. She did it with a clean rifle shot which killed without fussing up the big bird.*

**Tyrone Daily Herald 13 November 1908**

*C.M. Steiner, A.R. Kidd, C.J. Woods, J.N. Husher, Sol E. Roach, and C.S. Rouse, all of Pittsburgh, registered at Ward house on Thursday evening as "The Lost Six" on their way to Black Moshannon, to hunt deer. They were a happy crowd of young fellows and will likely have a royal good time.*

**Harrisburgh Telegraph 22 June 1923 page 17**

**Roach is Guest**

*Lewistown, June 22.- "Roxey" Roach, manager of the Johnstown Independent Baseball team and his wife will be guests of the Burnham Gun Club next Tuesday, when his team will meet the Lewistown All-stars, in the first of two contests. Mrs. Roach acquired the State title for women shooters at the shoot at Greensburg this week, by breaking 182 targets from a possible 200. Her husband broke 196 of 200 targets at the Greensburgh shoot.*

**Altoona Tribune Tuesday 24 January 1911 page 3**

*William Roach, the plucky shortstop for the New York Americans, is spending this week at the home of his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Sol Roach who reside on Graham Ave.*

**Altoona Tribune 20 January 1914 page 8**

*Sol Roach of Windber and R.G. Hoove of Bell Grove, were out trapping near Bell Grove, when they caught a large catamount. It will be mounted at Philadelphia.*

**Harrisburgh Telegraph 3 June 1922 page 2**

*Sol Roach, of Windber, whose army tent was looted while he was camping in November, 1919, in the Allegheny mountains in Centre County, had arraigned before Justice J.M. Keichline this week. Andrew Bressler and John Hall, young men of Uniondale, charging them with larceny. The crime was committed two years ago and since that time Roach had a detective on the case. Bressler was discharged for lack of evidence. Hall was held under \$1,000 bail for court. He furnished bail.*

One of the fun parts of this project has been meeting the relatives I didn't know I had. In June of 2016 I was contacted by a lady from Reidsville, North Carolina who said her mother was a Roach and that there was a lot of music in the family. After comparing notes on relatives by phone we could not find a connection to Sol or his parents at that

generation. Their line did go back to a John Roach, a common and recurring Roach name. Their line could have intersected with a John Roach prior to Sol's parents. Family characteristics were much the same, most resembling those in the Charles Roach line. The family originated in eastern Pennsylvania.

In October of 2016 a young woman, location unknown, emailed to say that her great uncle had told her that she was a great great grand daughter of Sol Roach. She indicated that her grandmother was Jennie Mae Roach who married LeRoy Pope. There is some confusion here as Jennie May Roach was the daughter of one of Sol's brothers. She and her husband are buried in the IOOF Cemetary, Brisbin, Pa. with the Robert Roaches, and the Popes. Saul did have a sister named Jennie J. Roach who married John Rowland. They are also buried in the IOOF Cemetary, Brisbin. She said she and her mother were interested in more information, but did not respond to two attempts to contact them.

## Charles Roach Violin #10 and visit to Cleveland

In September of 2016 I traveled to Cleveland, Ohio to visit Michael McGowan, a great grandson of Charles Roach. Michael became the owner of Charles Roach violin #10 as well as the Sol Roach 1898 mandoletto that he purchased from the previously reported owner in Georgia. We spent two evenings and a full day exchanging information on our families. The following pictures and measurements are from that visit.

### Charles Roach Violin #10 Dimensions

Viewed at Michael McGowan Home  
Cleveland, Ohio September 11, 2016

|                  |        |
|------------------|--------|
| Total Length     | 23 ¼ “ |
| Body Length      | 14”    |
| Lower Bout       | 8”     |
| Waist            | 4 3/8” |
| Upper Bout       | 6 ½ “  |
| Depth (max)      | 2 1/8” |
| Thickness (body) | 1 ½”   |
| F hole length    | 2 ¾”   |
| F hole C to C    | 3 ¼”   |

The neck and finger board seemed large in the hand.

Nut width            7/8"  
At body joint        1 3/8"  
End of finger board 1 3/4"

Thin peg box rails



**Michael McGowan (L) holding the January 1938 Charles Roach violin #10 and Lon Roach (R) holding Michael's 1921 Sol Roach regrad which Michael had purchased from a music store in Pittsburgh. This violin was reported on in the 2012 update. Note the Sol Roach 1898 mandeletto hanging on the wall.**





The above are pictures taken at McGowans. Michael purchased the violin from Mark Ralston and had it professionally redone. The violin appears in the 2015 update with pictures while Mark had it. He found it in a collection of violins he purchased from an estate. Note the wide finger board and the thin walls on the peg box. Michael had the violin repaired and set up by a well known and reputable violin repairman in Cleveland who reported the violin to be a good instrument.

## Sol Roach Violin #31

On March 8, 2017 I received a phone call from Yvette Hoffman of Seattle, Washington area. She works for a non-profit group that takes donations. One of the donations was a violin made by Sol Roach. After seeing the tags and checking the internet she contacted me about its value. The violin is an original and at that point, not

playable. The top was broken. It has two tags inside. One is a “Made By” tag with a red border that does show a double sharp sign and a date of “Feb 1926” . The second tag has the graduation codes: B. 5-6-7-8-11, T. 5-6-7-8, TE. 6-7-8. She intended to sell it on Ebay.

On March 15 it showed up for sale on ebay with a picture that revealed the type of damage. The top board was cracked lengthwise with a hole punched through it where the sound post would have been. This posting had not gone unnoticed by our friend Mark Ralston in Pennsylvania. On March 22 I received an email from Mark showing that he was watching it and deciding whether to purchase it, which he ultimately did. After seeing the picture, my cousin, Nancy Davis, said it reminded her of a story. She said that one of her Michigan relatives had passed away the week before and had at one time played one of Sol’s violins and was in an orchestra. She had laid her violin on a chair and somebody sat on it. Nancy wondered whether this could have been her relative’s violin. That story could certainly explain that type of damage.

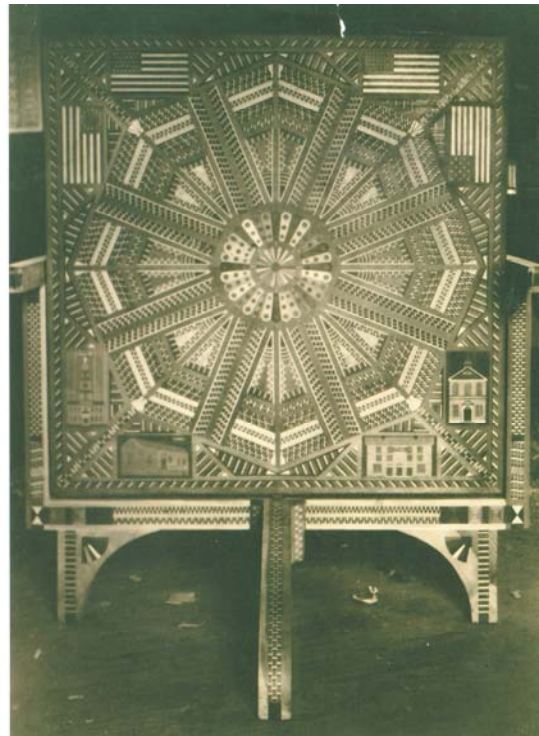
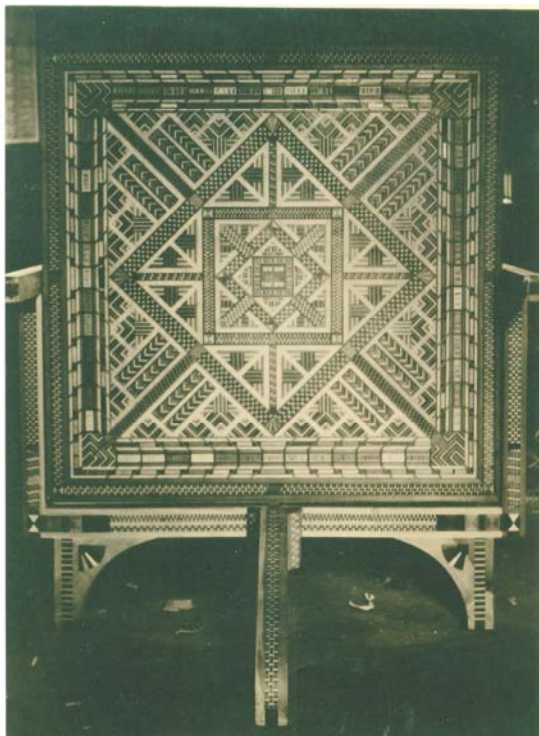


While Mark had the fiddle disassembled he found that Sol had signed the instrument on the underside of the fingerboard: “Imitation of Strad, Dec 1924 and again 1926 (apparently re-graduated) “. During this period Sol would take violins that he made earlier, typically ones that he had made for relatives, and re-graduate them to his latest level of understanding.

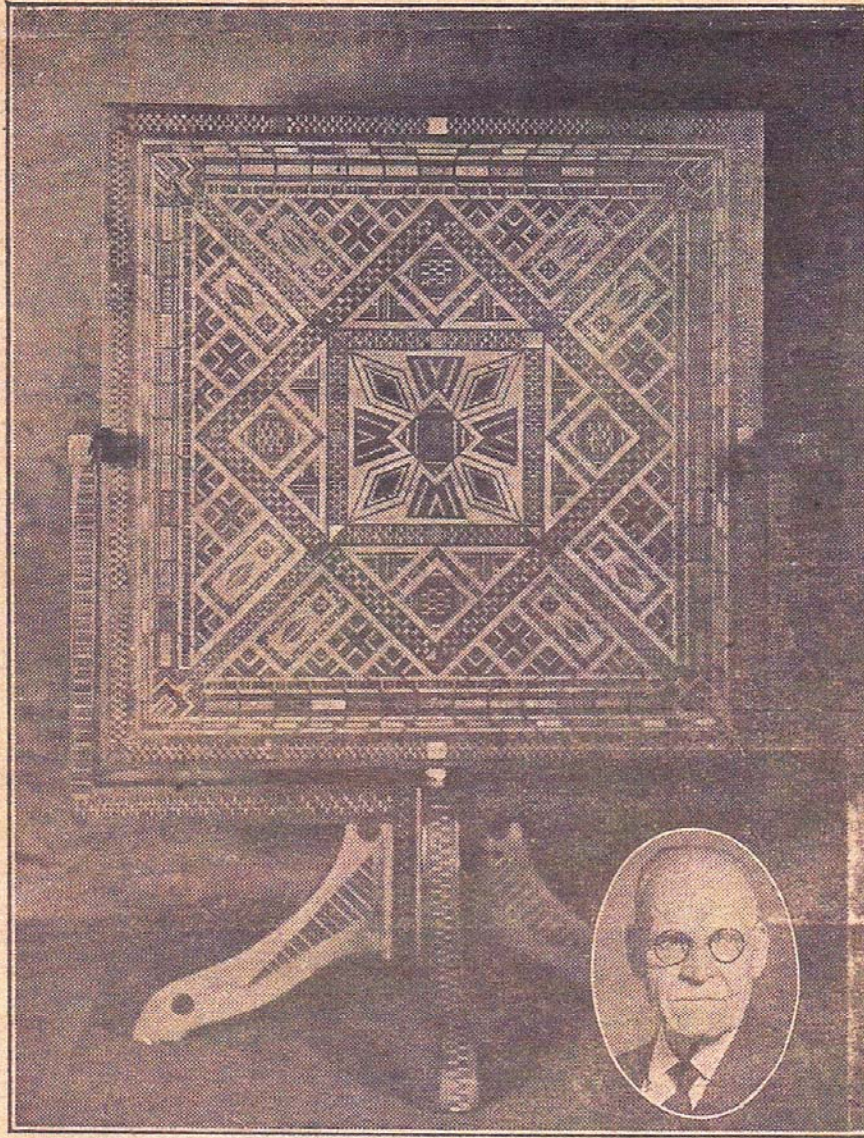


## More Information on Windber violin Maker John L. Breath. Lived only 2 blocks from the Roaches

In February 2017 I received a nice note and several pictures from Evelyn Ward of Lakewood, Ohio. Evelyn had been doing family history research on the internet and came across my website and was astonished to find information on John L. Breath who was her great grandfather's brother. She wrote that she was astonished because she had never heard any stories in the family about his making violins. Instead she said that his fame arose from the inlaid tables he made. She enclosed two photos of the tables and a clipping about Mr. Breath, reproduced here.



Artistry in Woodwork :-



The Era this week prints a photograph of a rare specimen of woodcraft consisting of 34,971 pieces of wood gathered from 47 states of the Union, and Alaska, Porto Rico, Hawaii and the District of Columbia. It also contains pieces of native wood from every county in the state of Pennsylvania, and a center piece taken from Perry's ship which was raised in 1912 after being sunk in 1812.

J. L. Breth of 1312 Somerset avenue, is the designer and builder of this masterpiece having started his collection a number of years ago,

when he received wood from 17 different countries, accumulating 135 different kinds.

Mr. Breth for a number of years was employed by the Windber Lumber Company, and of late years has been giving much of his idle time to his masterpiece, which can be seen at his home.

Comparing this table with other of similarly built tables, it is believed to contain more individual pieces of wood than some that have received national recognition. Mr. Breth is contemplating entering his masterpiece in the next exposition for work of this kind.

The above article indicates that John Breath lived at 1312 Somerset Avenue in Windber. Sol lived at 1101 Graham Avenue. The Breaths lived one block north and two blocks west of the Roaches. Also, as we learned in the 2012 update, the Roaches and the Breaths were connected through marriage as well. Sarah Breath, stepdaughter of John L. and his second wife, married John Curtis Edder in 1902. John Edder was the brother of my grandmother Carrie Edder Roach who married Sol's son Wilbur in 1903. It is unlikely that these two would not know each other and not be sharing their interest in woodworking and violin making. Charles Roach was also a master woodworker and did intricate wood inlay work.

## 1927 Re-grad

In January of 2017 another Sol Roach re-grad appeared on Ebay. The violin bore the stamp "Pietro Antonius Dalla Costa Fecit in Treviso 17..." and also sported a Sol Roach tag that clearly stated that it was a re-grad done in 1927. No further information is available.

## Charles Roach #9, October 1937

On Saturday, October 15, 2016 I received a phone call from Steve Dransfield of Gap Mills, West Virginia. Steve is the great grandson of Charles and Leola Roach. He had been given a violin by his uncle that was said to have been made by Charles Roach. No tag was visible at the time. However, after Steve blew the dust out of it with an air compressor a tag clearly revealed that it was Charles Roach violin #9 dated October 1937. The violin was not playable and had plain pieces of wire for strings, probably meant as a decoration only. Steve has since had the violin put in playing shape and reports that it plays easily and seems to sound better each time it is played. He confirmed that the neck is thicker, just as is Michael Mc Gowan's 1938.

Steve said that Charles gave the violin to his grandmother, Ida Roach Erickson, who passed away in 1998 at the age of 98. Steve said, "She told me about another Charles Roach violin that was kept in the parlor of Charles and Ola's house in Houtzdale. A thief broke one of the windows and reached in and grabbed the violin which was never recovered. This was about 1931. Mom (Betty Jane Erickson) was born October 16, 1923 in Houtzdale and was 10 years old when her parents moved the family to West Virginia in 1933. She still has vivid memories of her time spent with her grandparents, Charles and Ola, and all of her mother's siblings. Mom was staying with her grandparents when the violin was stolen and remembers the incident." He also talked about some of the theories as to why Charles was committed to the Warren State Hospital. Steve said that he was hoping to collect as many of his mother's recollections as possible as she has just celebrated her 95<sup>th</sup> birthday.

On May 24, 2017 I received a phone call from Doris Longwell of Clarksburg, West Virginia. Doris is the granddaughter of Zillah Roach, first born to Charles and Leola. Doris was unaware of the violin connection in here family and was fascinated by this new knowledge. Doris is an avid researcher of her family's history. During our conversation she was able to shed light on the mystery of the first Roach in America. She said that he was John Roach who was born in 1731 or 32 and died in 1816. He came from Southwest of London, Kent, Chalk, Gravesend. He came over in 1750 and married Lovel Selman in 1753 and produced three children. He came over with Simon Broadstreet of the Broadstreets who founded Massachusetts. She said that she heard this from her grandmother and confirmed it by checking passenger and immigration lists. She also offered additional insights into why Charles was institutionalized.

During the summer of 2018 Doris arranged a trip to Gap Mills to meet her cousin Steve Dransfield and had an opportunity to meet his mother and talk Roach family history and experience the violin.

Doris was also able to provide the actual street addresses of the Charles Roach home in Houtzdale and his father, Robert Roach home in Brisbin, Pa.