

## Chapter 18.

### The Domaine School

"Due to the fact that it was the adopted home of the famous conductor Pierre Monteux, the little town of Hancock in Hancock County is probably better known in musical circles around the world than any town in Maine," said the late Jonas Crane in a 1964 article for the *Lewiston Journal*. And, certainly, with the beginning of the Domaine School for Conductors in 1942, the cultural, social, and economic life of the community was radically altered, some would say for the worse, while some would say for the better. In their wake, Pierre and Doris Monteux brought with them to Hancock not only a host of talented students from all over the world, but the families and friends of the students, the relatives and friends of the Monteuxs, hundreds of concert-goers and music lovers from all over Maine, and tourists, all of whom generated a great deal of money into the economy and work for many townsfolk. Many of the students and their families needed a place to stay while studying at the school; and so from 1942, and especially from 1947, when the Forest Studio was built and opened for regular concerts, until the present time, a number of Hancock homes were transformed into summer boarding houses. So impressed with the town and surrounding area, many of Monteux' students, even when they ceased to be students, returned to Hancock, bought land and homes and became residents. Stores, restaurants, and other service businesses in the area have also greatly benefited from the annual summer influx. *Le Domaine*, now one of Maine's most notable and highly-rated French restaurants, was established in conjunction with the school by Don Purslow, Doris Monteux' son, and his late wife, Marianne Dumas Purslow, a Corden Bleu gourmet chef. Initially their clients included mostly the music lovers who attended the Sunday concerts and people associated with the school and the arts in Hancock County; but as their fine reputation grew over the years, so did their clientele, which now, under the auspices of their daughter Nicole Purslow, is more than state-wide.

Photo on previous page:  
The first studio - Domaine of the Great  
Pine - Former summer home of Pierre  
Monteux, now owned by Gordon Peters

Pierre Monteux



There were other gifts to the town from the Monteuxs. Pierre and Doris gave two organs to the Congregational Church, the last one being Monteux' own personal organ donated by his wife after his death. In 1951, the Monteuxs gave twelve acres of land to the town for the construction of the present Hancock Grammar School which opened its doors in 1953. The family also gave several gifts to the fire department, including the firehouse doors. Over the years, the Monteuxs and their relatives, especially the Meyer Davises, and the Domaine School have generously donated their time and talent to raise a great deal of money for all kinds of charities through their special concerts, cabarets, contests and the four very popular, patriotic, and historical pageants during the war years of 1943-45 and in 1946 which featured a great number of Hancock people in various historical and symbolic roles under the ebullient direction of Mrs. Monteux.

Beyond the boost to the economy, the church organs, the land for the school, the firedoors, and the special benefits, the Monteuxs also provided Hancock with a new image of itself, a new excitement every summer, a more worldly sophistication with the chance to mingle with new people from different parts of the world, and the wonderful opportunity to hear much of the world's greatest music played live in concert by brilliant professionals. For many of Hancock's younger citizens growing up in the same town as the Domaine

School, it was very inspiring, educational, and fun to be in such close proximity to such a great man and artist as Pierre Monteux; and it was a thrill to know Doris Hodgkins Monteux, a local girl who made good, and who had traveled from Hancock to the capitals of the world. Her example proved it could be done.

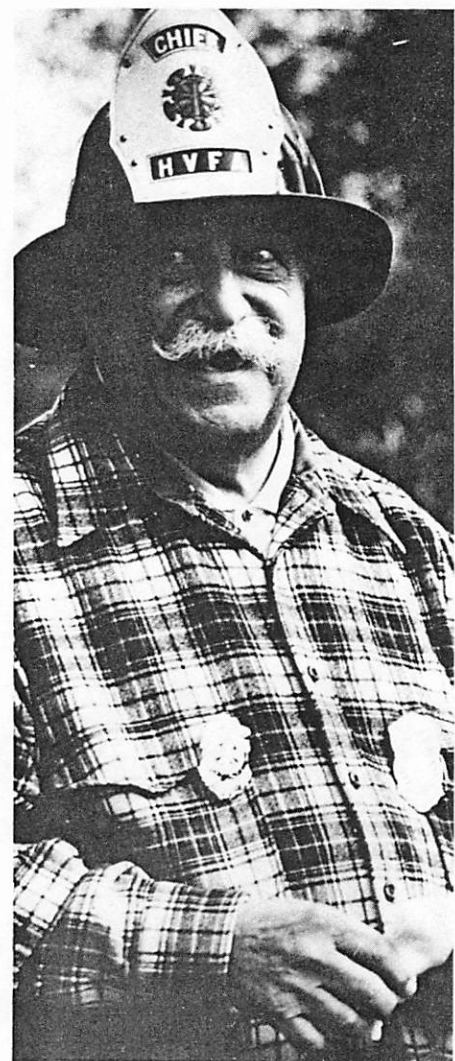
In return for all the gifts, as Mr. Crane noted in his *Lewiston Journal* article, the citizens of Hancock gave Pierre "... a simple gift presented to him on his 80th birthday. . . . This was a flagpole made from the finest tree (a pine) that the men of Hancock could find. That flagpole and the fact that the Hancock people made him an honorary fire chief convinced Monteux that the people of the town he loved had accepted him as one of them." It was appropriate that the flagpole be made out of a pine tree, not only because of Maine's nickname as "The Pine Tree State," but also because the full name of the conducting school and the Monteux estate was "The Domaine of the Great Pine."

At the time of his death in Hancock on July 1, 1964, Monteux was the principal conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra, having conducted over sixty-five orchestras in his brilliant career as one of the greatest conductors of his time. As John Thornton, music critic for the *Portland Sunday Telegram*, noted in his January 16, 1966 column, Monteux was "a member of the small fraternity of Walter, Reiner, Toscanini, and Beecham." On July 2, 1964, stories date lined Hancock, Maine were published on front pages around the world; and here in Maine in a banner-lined account, the *Bangor Daily News* referred to Monteux as the "dean of the world's symphony conductors," and from a front page account in the *New York Times* on the same date and whose headline also read "Dean of Conductors," it said, "One of the remarkable features about his conducting was that it always seemed so effortless. His beat was small. He never indulged in histrionics. And yet, when in front of an orchestra, his authority was absolute. The music unfolded with the utmost subtlety of nuance. One orchestral section was always transparent to another. And the music always seemed as fresh as the day of its creation." In the same article, it says, "He was an unforgettable figure on the podium, for though he was short, he was chunky. His hair remained black to the end, but his walrus-like mustache long ago turned white. He wore glasses only when conducting, and his wise, kindly eyes were so dark a green that unless one looked very closely they appeared brown."

Many famous people offered their public condolences and praises on July 2, 1964. Telegrams and messages came from all over the world to the Monteux family including those from Maine Governor John Reed, Senator Barry Goldwater, Leonard Bernstein of the New York Philharmonic, Arthur Fiedler of the Boston Pops, Erich Leinsdorf of the Boston Symphony, Lucien Wolfson, President of the Baldwin Piano Company, Sir Arthur Bliss, Master of the Queen's Musick and honorary president of the London Symphony, and many others.

Leonard Bernstein said, "The whole world is poorer for the passing of a great man. Pierre Monteux was a monument to music and to everything positive in the art. He lived out his long and luminous musical life without rancor, fuss,

Honorary Fire Chief Pierre Monteux



Pierre Monteux  
and a Forest Studio Orchestra



competitiveness, or pretentiousness. His humility was almost a passion. Perhaps most passionately he taught and guided the young artists who sought him out, and through them he will survive the passing of generations."

Erich Leinsdorf said, "Pierre Monteux was a true blessing for music and all who loved music. In my sadness over his passing is mixed profound gratitude that a kind fate kept him active longer than any conductor and that his lucid mind stayed with him all the way. Like all who are truly great he knew no boundaries of nationality or epoch. With him all composers, wherever they were, could be certain that their music would be heard undistorted and in its own glory. Pierre Monteux himself was made of music and thus an irreplaceable element of music has left us."

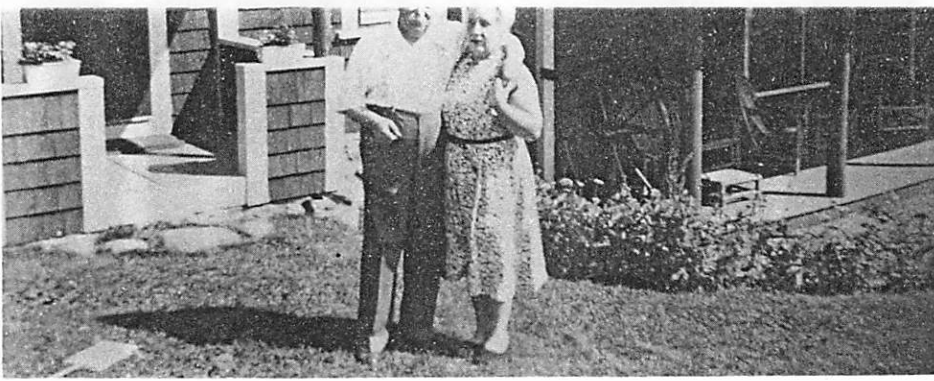
And Arthur Fiedler wrote, "It has been my great joy and honor to have known Pierre Monteux since 1918. To me he was a real musician's musician. I had the great joy of playing under him for several years and enjoying his friendship. Certainly the entire world will mourn the passing of this great conductor and gentlemen."

Born in Paris on April 4, 1875, Monteux attended the Paris Conservatory and studied, according to the *New York Times*, "theory and composition. His instrument was the violin and he won the first violin prize in 1896. But when he began his career as a professional musician he turned to the viola. ... In 1911 he became the conductor for Diaghilev's *Ballet Russe* (where he conducted for Nijinsky) and in 1913 and 1914 he also conducted at the Paris Opera ..." According to the *Bangor Daily News*, "Monteux conducted the first performance of Stravinsky's 'Rite of Spring' in 1913 when it was considered revolutionary in the music world. The performance touched off riots in Paris (Stravinsky himself has to exit from a window) but Monteux insisted on introducing it." He also introduced Ravel's 'Daphnis and Chloe' in Paris in 1912 and Stravinsky's 'Petrouchka' in 1913. According to the *New York Times*, he entered the army at the start of World War I, but he was relieved from his military duties by the French government so that he could tour the United States in 1916-17 with the Russian Ballet. This led to his first engagement with the Metropolitan Opera."

Monteux conducted the French repertory of the Metropolitan for three years, after which he became conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra for five years and was associated with the Amsterdam Symphony for nine years. In 1916 in Boston he met Doris Hodgkins Purslow of Hancock, who had been a music student at the New England Conservatory. Doris was working as an assistant to the music critic Charles Isaacson when she met Monteux at an interview session. Soon after their meeting, they were married.

According to the *Bangor Daily News*, "In 1934 (after Amsterdam, Paris, and other European cities) he returned to the United States and began his conductorship of the San Francisco Symphony. Monteux once said he liked Brahms, Beethoven, Schumann and Wagner 'in that order.' " Today in his Hancock study are a number of rare photographs of Brahms, as well as his French war medal, and keys to several cities. In summing up his career, the





Pierre and Doris Monteux  
at the "Camp Paradise"

New York *Times* said, "While in San Francisco, Mr. Monteux built up the little-known organization into one of the country's major orchestras." He remained with the San Francisco Symphony for seventeen years until 1952, when he retired, moving permanently to Hancock, the ancestral home of his wife. He continued with his conductors' school at Hancock in the summers and followed a heavy schedule of guest conducting around the world in the winters, until he became the head conductor of the London Symphony in 1961. Monteux became a U.S. citizen in 1942 and used his Hancock home for rest, relaxation, and work in between engagements.

Why did Monteux begin his conductors' school in Hancock? Mrs. Monteux says, initially, he was inspired by a picture of Franz Liszt (which is also now hanging in his Hancock study) surrounded by his students. While in Europe (1925-33), where he founded the Orchestre Symphonique de Paris, he began his first school, the forerunner of the Domaine School. Concerning the move to Hancock, where Doris and her equally formidable and charming sisters, Hilda Davis and Charlotte Michlin, grew up, Mrs. Monteux says, "For Pierre Monteux, world-famous conductor of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, the spring of 1940 presented grave problems for his small family consisting of his wife, their daughter Nancie, a beloved spaniel, Caramelita del Rio D'oro, himself and all their belongings. War raged in Europe and word had reached the Monteuxs that their ancient, picturesque home 'Vieux Murs' at *Cormeilles en Parisis* in the *Seine et Oise* had been confiscated, as well as the music library and furnishings of their Paris studio in Montmartre. Extreme gravity was added to the situation when word was received from France that two of his brothers and their families had been deported to camps in Germany by the Nazi government. (It was learned later that all had been 'eliminated' in the concentration camps of Buchenwald and Dachau).

"The San Francisco Orchestra season finished in April. Where to go? Madame Monteux thought of Eastern Canada, Quebec Province, where the French language is spoken, thinking to assuage worry and grief for the Maestro by the sound of his native tongue. All three sorely needed a renewal of the spirit; and after correspondence with her father, Eugene Hamilton Hodgkins, they were persuaded, if a suitable vacation home could be found where they would live from May until November, to move to Hancock, where Doris Monteux had grown up with her sisters and cousins of the Calvin Young family.

"When told of their need, an old childhood friend of Doris Monteux' came to the rescue and her lovely camp on Taunton Bay became their haven for the summer. The Maestro fell in love with the fields of daisies and buttercups, the low blueberry bushes on the slope and the clear running brook where he bathed every morning. The sunset on the ever-changing waters of the bay each day was an enchantment. At the end of that peaceful summer, he prevailed on Edith Towle, owner of 'Paradise,' to sell him the camp and sixty-four acres of the property, including the old home of Edith Towle's grandfather, Charles Wooster.

"Word spread quickly among the musicians that Monteux was in Maine and the following summer a young conductor from Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania,

Pierre Monteux with his Students  
in front of Forest Studio



Joseph Barone, presented himself one day at the camp to 'pay his respects to the Maestro.' He stayed in the town a few days and during his visit prevailed upon Monteux to allow him to bring a few talented young men the next year for 'contact and study with a great master.' After giving the matter serious thought, both Monteuxs felt he could not refuse this request. Consequently, in the month of July 1942, Dr. Joseph Barone arrived in Hancock with five young aspiring conductors. Thus, the modest start of the now famous Monteux Memorial Domaine School for Orchestra Musicians and Orchestra Conductors conceived by Dr. Joseph Barone and carried on after Monteux' death by Doris Monteux, her daughter Nancie Barendse, a distinguished host of sponsors, and a board of local interested and helpful music lovers.

Mrs. Nancie Barendse now does much of the running of the school: helping her mother, finding homes for the students, locating musicians for the orchestra, planning programs, assisting the teachers and conductors, principally Charles Bruck, conductor of the French National Radio, and Klaro Mizerit, former conductor of the Atlantic Symphony in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Describing the school today, Mrs. Monteux says, "It's a country school of serious study, a school of intense artistic experience, and a school with a soul."

But at first, from 1942 to 1947, there were only small, private concerts of chamber music and the like held at the Monteux' summer camp on the Taunton River. Only people who were invited could come; but the summer of 1947 when the Forest Studio (now Monteux Memorial Hall) was built "as a surprise for Monteux," the school had grown and the concerts were opened to the general public.

From 1942 to 1963, before Monteux' death, hundreds of young men and women came to Hancock each year to study and learn from this great man of music. Many came hoping to get accepted into the Master's classes, but were refused. Susan Springer, then a high school girl working as a waitress at Hanson's Restaurant remembers a number of the musicians "conducting a symphony" over their bowls of soup. Mrs. Theresa Hanson Budries recalls also the time that Monteux himself was being served at Hanson's in a back room so that he wouldn't be disturbed and a student accidentally finding out that the Master was there, implored her, "Why didn't you tell me he was there so that I could sit at his feet and adore him!" Among those students of Monteux' who ultimately took up residence in Hancock are Hubert Doris, head of the music department at Barnard College (and who is also organist at the Congregational Church in the summers) and Werner Torkanowsky, former conductor of the New Orleans Symphony, and Gordon Peters, conductor of the Chicago Symphony.

Closely affiliated with the Monteuxs and their school over the years have been several members of their family and relatives. Monteux was married before he married Doris and one of his sons is Claude Monteux, renowned flutist and former conductor of the Hudson Valley Philharmonic. Claude now lives in Lamoine where he has started a flute school. Monteux' daughter and Claude's sister is Denis Lanese, a painter and carver, who had an exhibit of her work in



Forest Studio



L to R: Pierre Monteux, Doris Monteux, Ginia Davis Wexler, Hilda Davis, and Meyer Davis

the summer of 1977 at "The Gallery" owned by Dorothy Carroll. Miss Carroll, among other talents, is a sculptor who created a bust of Monteux. The Monteux' daughter Nancie, who later married Simon Barendse and for several years lived in what is now the Richard Aldrich house, is an accomplished dancer, singer, and actress in her own right. Nancie appeared with her father and mother in concerts and shows all over the world, staged a number of dance recitals and one-woman shows in San Francisco and other places, and even danced in Betty Grable's first movie called "Collegiate." She is the mother of four sons.

Mrs. Meyer Davis, wife of the late and famous society orchestra leader and the sister of Doris Monteux, has spent most of her summers in Hancock; and in 1947, she and Mr. Davis purchased her present home in Sorrento to be near their relatives and the Domaine School where members of the Davis clan often performed, especially Emery and Ginia, two of the Davises' five children. Emery Davis, who married Jenny Ferry's daughter Gloria, and for several years owned and lived in the old Arthur Colwell house in South Hancock, has now taken over the management of his late father's orchestral empire which in its heyday numbered over sixty orchestras that stretched from Bar Harbor to Palm Beach.

Hilda met Meyer while she was accompanying the silent movies on the piano at the old Star Theatre in Bar Harbor, a theater owned by the Hodgkins' girls' uncle Joe Emery. Meyer had an orchestra in Bar Harbor and one night he needed a pianist so he hired Hilda, who was self-taught; and soon afterwards they were married. Hilda Davis is also a talented composer. Many times when her husband needed a little tune for a special occasion or for a special program, Hilda would write it, like the song "Mr. President," which she wrote for President Eisenhower at his 1952 Inaugural Ball in Washington. Daughter Ginia sang the song to the President, and she sang "The Star Spangled Banner" at the 1948 GOP National Convention. Of all the Davises, Ginia Davis Wexler has led one of the most busy and colorful lives. She comes from a very busy and colorful family that includes her brother Garry, who renounced his American citizenship in Ellsworth in 1947 to become "the first world citizen." Garry later wrote a book of his adventures entitled *The World Is My Country*.

Ginia, a soprano, sang in Europe and America in "Pelleas at Melisande" conducted by her uncle Pierre Monteux. During World War II, along with her mother, she was active in the Stage Door Canteen Shows for servicemen. She appeared under Mr. Monteux' direction with the Royal Belgian Opera Company and was his soloist numerous times with orchestras in this country and abroad. She has given eight recitals in New York City and sung with the Pittsburgh Opera Company. She also appeared in the Broadway show "Call Me Mister." According to an article in the Ellsworth *American*, "In 1958 while living in Paris, she won the Grand Prize in the international competition for interpretation of French songs. Since 1965, she has been giving programs of international folk songs with guitar and drum. In 1966 she made a world tour under the auspices of the U.S. Information Service during which time she made 90 appearances in 12 countries." In 1940 Ginia made headlines all over



The Meyer Davis Family  
L to R: Meyer, Ginia, Garry,  
Meyer, Jr., Emery with Marjorie  
at the piano

Pierre Monteux and  
Ginia Davis Wexler







Eugene Hamilton Hodgkins

the world when she was mistakenly detained in France as a spy. Ginia served as the director of the Hancock County Chamber Music Society which evolved into the Hancock County Friends of the Arts who today sponsor children's plays, concerts, and various programs put on at the Wexler Farmstead in East Sullivan, the Forest Studio in Hancock, and on the Hancock Point Village Green.

Ted Leavitt, the son of Charlotte Michlin and nephew of Doris Monteux, has been an actor and producer both in New York and Maine with Louis Collier. For a number of years he produced plays in the summers at the Bar Harbor Casino. Ted invented the game of Probe, along with several others, which he tried out initially with people here in Hancock. In 1975 he bought the Community House from the Hancock Women's Club which he sold in 1977 to Dr. Wesley Leonard.

Gene Hodgkins, the father of Doris, Hilda, and Charlotte, was a man of many talents. He was a self-taught musician, a barber, and a carpenter among many other trades; and his love of music, his romantic nature, and ability to do many things well; he obviously passed on to his girls and his grandchildren.

Summing up the contributions by the Monteux-Davis-Michlin family to Hancock and the world, it would seem that a central ingredient to the great spirit, the intelligence, talent, style and success of this fabulous family is their fine sense of humor, especially evident in the robust, fun-loving personalities of Doris Monteux and Monteux himself. What a team they were. The stories about both of them are locally and internationally legion.

For instance, at the Sunday concerts, many people came, no doubt, not just for the music but for Mrs. Monteux' witty commentary and the warm atmosphere she always creates. As Bangor *Daily News* critic Robert H. Newall once noted, "The intimacy and bonhomie that one expects at Hancock were all there, what with the proceedings presided over by the volatile and witty Mrs. Monteux herself. Her off-the-cuff comments go far toward generating the atmosphere of coziness and camaraderie in which Forest Studio specializes. In short, Madame herself is not the least of its attractions." As for Mrs. Monteux' abilities as a fine director and showman, Joyce Hancock Crosen, who participated in one of the World War II pageants, said, "... looking back, it was really a remarkable achievement. It was in excellent taste as I remember it, and, of course, very patriotic, since it was war time. I think that was one of the reasons it was so successful. Also, I don't believe that in the present day Mrs. Monteux could get the co-operation of the townspeople the way she did then. As far as I can recall, everyone pitched in, worked hard, and had a wonderful time. It really was quite a mix - local people, summer people, and 'the musicians' ... Pre-1950 Hancock was pretty provincial, and must indeed have seemed so to a lot of those 'rusticators,' but Mrs. Monteux somehow kept everybody functioning and carried it all off with her usual aplomb." In further tribute to the Monteux effect on Hancock folk, Eleanor Forni Lippert, who was living as an Air Force wife in England when Monteux became chief conductor of the London Symphony, remembers saving up her money so that she could afford a good seat, which turned out to be the one right behind Mrs. Monteux; but even



Seated, L to R: Hilda Davis,  
Mrs. Hodgkins, Doris Monteux,  
and Charlotte Michlin

though she wanted to, Eleanor was too shy to speak.

It seems like everyone in Hancock has their favorite "Doris Monteux story," but, according to the lady herself, the funniest comment she ever made in 35 years at the Domaine School occurred one concert time when the orchestra was all ready to begin. In walked three people who walked all around trying to find three seats together near the front, but they weren't to be had. There were, however, three seats available at the back of the hall. In exasperation, Mrs. Monteux stood up and said, "One seat is as uncomfortable as another, and there's no choice!" The seats, incidentally, were originally the pews from the old South Hancock Baptist Church; but in recent years these were replaced with equally uncomfortable wooden folding chairs.

As for the humor of Pierre Monteux himself, at 85, when he signed his contract with the London Symphony, it was widely reported that he insisted on a 25-year contract with an option to renew; and at a final banquet in his honor in San Francisco in 1952, Monteux said, after all the speeches were given, "I make you a solemn declaration. My hair is not dyed!" And in Hancock, when George Marsters, the Fire Chief at the time, had finished presenting Monteux with his fire hat and honorary fire chief's badge, Monteux said, "I will make all of you work very, very hard." In her book about their life together, ostensibly written by their poodle Fifi, *Everyone Is Someone*, Mrs. Monteux tells the story of a hotel man in New Brunswick who apologized to Monteux saying, "I'm sorry, sir; I didn't know you were someone." "Everyone is someone," replied Monteux. After his death, in 1965, Mrs. Monteux wrote another book about her husband, a biography, entitled *It's All in the Music*.

In tribute to the great man, Godfrey John composed a poem which appeared in the July 8, 1964 edition of *The Christian Science Monitor*. It is entitled "For Pierre Monteux:"

Not that he ever forgot  
To summon up a height -  
But heart and hand must feel along  
The sound that leads to light . . .

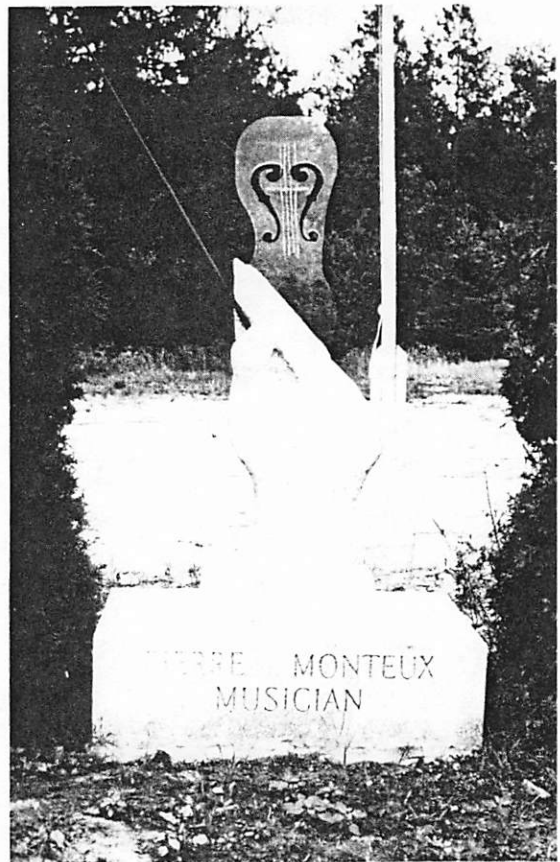
The music came to him  
For meaning out of the dark,  
Came to a heart that was made of song,  
To hands designed to wake.

Under his baton's ruse  
Orchestral empires met;  
At the subtlest stir of wrist and mind  
He measured beauty's weight.

Nor can we ever forget:  
All sound lifts in his face.  
The pastures of his love are rich -  
How can the music cease?



Of course, the music will never cease as long as there are music lovers and record players; and even the "hands designed to wake/under his baton's ruse" symbolically live on in the sculpture designed out of three tons of Maine granite on the Pierre Monteux Memorial Lot on Route One across the road from "Winterhaven," the Monteux residence, (some day to be the Monteux museum) at the Corner.



Pierre Monteux Memorial