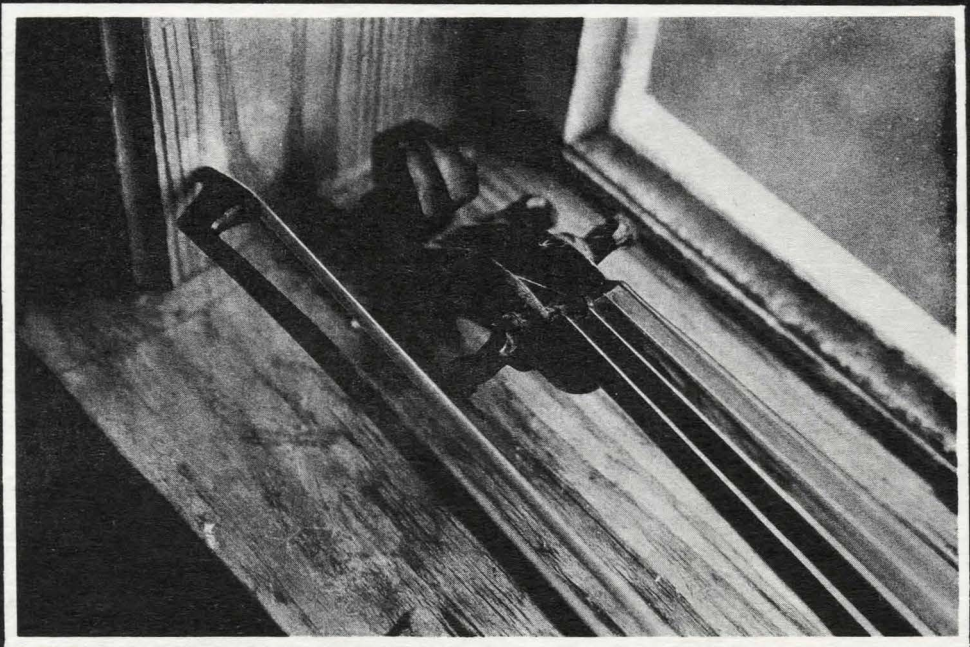


Country Dance and Song 10



Country Dance and Song

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Cover photo: Fiddler Gusty Wallace's instrument. Mr. Wallace of Sulphur Well, Kentucky, was one of LeeEllen Friedland's informants (see article, page 5).

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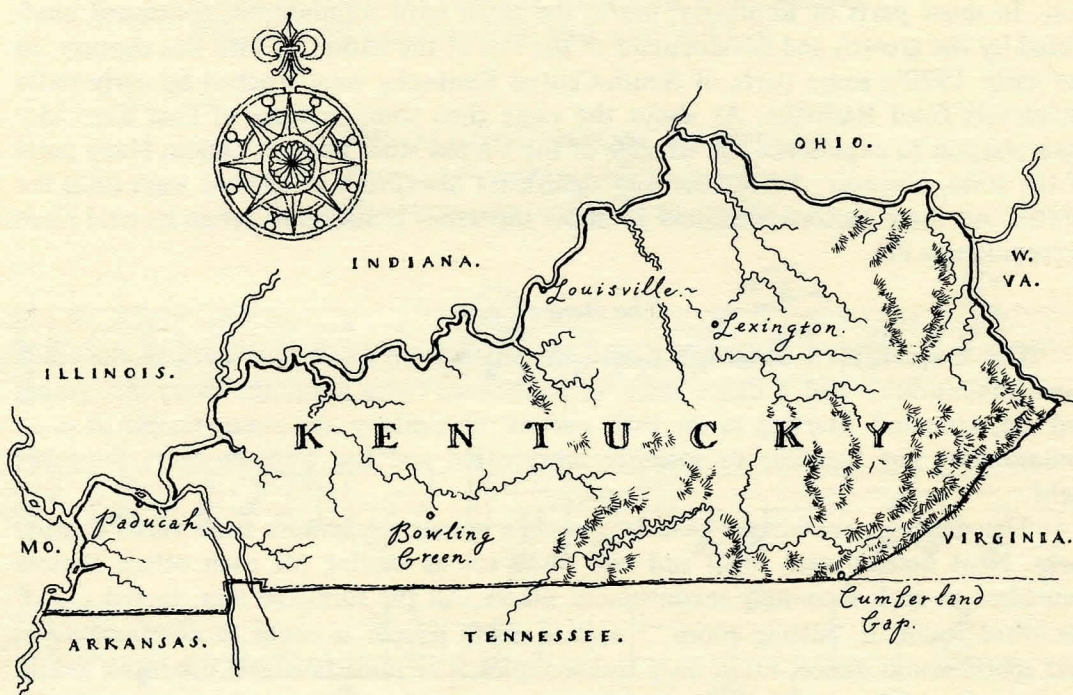
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TRADITIONAL FOLKDANCE IN KENTUCKY

LeeEllen Friedland¹



The pioneers who settled the Kentucky wilderness were seeking a life of independence and freedom. They were primarily Scotch-Irish, but also German, French Huguenot and English. Starting in 1720 they arrived in the ports of Philadelphia and New York and migrated west, away from the comparatively crowded eastern seaboard. They settled first in the rich farmlands of Pennsylvania. The next generation moved south through the Greater Appalachian Valley to Virginia. Some continued south to the

Carolina Piedmont, others moved as far west as Cumberland Gap. In 1775, Daniel Boone led the first party of settlers into Kentucky, and the first permanent settlements were founded in 1778. In their wake came many settlers who sought the lush farmlands that lay west of the mountains, and many who sought the isolation and independence of life in the highlands.

Pioneer life on the frontier afforded little time for leisure. Each homestead struggled to be self-sufficient and travelling was inhibited by the harsh terrain. Throughout the history of communities in rural Kentucky the local dance has played an important role. It was the main community social event and the only form of community recreation. In most parts of Kentucky, life in the small farm communities continued unaffected by the growth and development of the rest of the nation up into this century. In the early 1920's some parts of South-Central Kentucky were reached by early radio broadcasts from Nashville. At about the same time some sections of East Kentucky were starting to experience the struggle of the United Mine Workers Union. Many parts of the state, however, did not see any significant disruption of the old ways until the 1940's. All these factors conspired to allow the dance tradition to retain its vital place in community life.

The Dance Event

The frequency of dances in Kentucky varied from one community to the next. Most communities had a dance once, or sometimes twice a month. Everyone, young and old, attended. Starting in the early part of this century, the young people of some communities got together to socialize more often and had a dance every Saturday night.

The dances were always held in people's homes. Neighbors took turns hosting them. Most houses were small and had small rooms leading off each other. Dances flourished in such seemingly inconvenient places. All the furniture was cleared out of the front room or "sitting room,"² and as many people as could fit comfortably in that space would dance, often only four couples. The musicians and the caller would stand in the doorway and the rest of the room would be filled with bystanders. Sometimes there would be another set or group dancing in the room on the other side of the doorway.

It is important to realize how much of a unified, community experience these dances really were. Primarily, they provided a time to socialize and dancing was indeed the best loved way to do it. Since the available space often limited the number of people dancing at any given time, there were usually quite a few bystanders chatting or taking refreshments. Dancing, nevertheless, was the focal point. There was never any distracting activity near the dancing. Bystanders encouraged dancers with inspired whoops and hollers, or sometimes teased a friend who was dancing in the set. The dan-

cers themselves, although focused on each other, the music, and the caller's instructions, responded heartily to the bystanders' input. The dancers sometimes responded with eye contact, a teasing reply, or more often a burst of energy or innovation in their dancing. The caller might react to the bait by calling a tricky figure or a local favorite that would raise the intensity of energy in the set. The musicians were also responsive and matched the energy and innovation of the others in their playing. The cat-calling did not occur constantly through a dance. It was an embellishment; a special, playful spice added to spur everyone's spirits. It is indicative, however, of the underlying and constant involvement of everyone in the room. During a dance, the energy and fellowship was shared by everyone present. It was in the truest sense a community experience.

While there was dancing in the front room, there were usually people out in the kitchen socializing. Everyone brought a contribution to the refreshment table which was also a major attraction in the kitchen. Since the dancing was in the other room, the kitchen provided a place for larger group discussion or "horsing around."

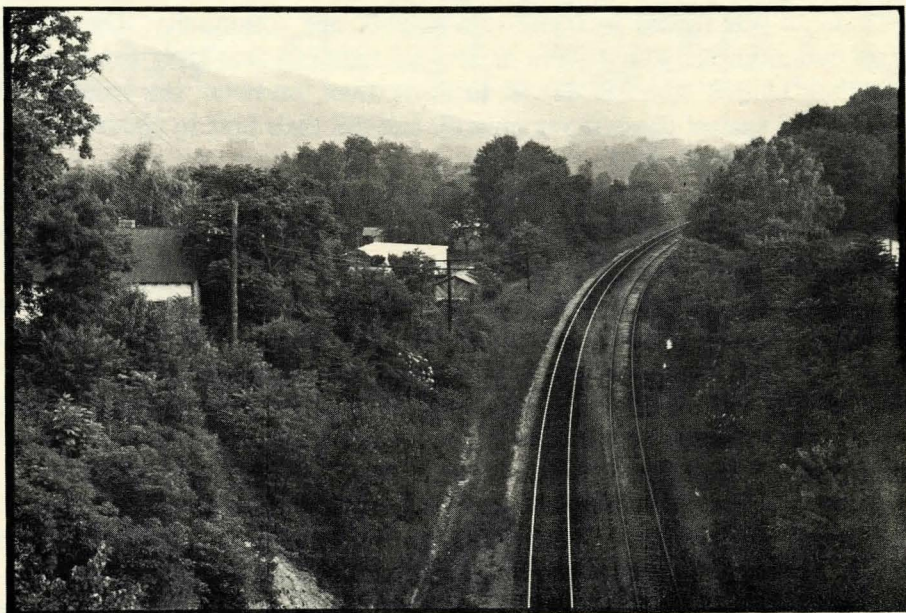
There were many strictly religious people in Kentucky communities who objected to dancing. In general, these people were very outspoken about their objections, but do not seem to have had much impact on the dance tradition itself. In communities where these strictly religious people were the majority, there was no dancing. Anyone who did want to dance was forced to travel to a neighboring community. There are many instances of communities which were so strictly religious that they would expel any member of their church who did dance. In most cases, however, the strictly religious members preached against dancing vehemently and did their best to convert the sinners in their midsts, but to little avail.

Dances were usually held for their own sake, to bring the community together and give its members a chance to socialize as a group. Throughout Kentucky, dances were also held after "workin's." A workin' drew people to help one neighbor with a big task such as digging a well, building a barn, or finishing a harvest. Everyone would work the whole day and be fed a big supper by the hostess. It was not uncommon for these dances to last all night, whereas regular community dances always ended by midnight. These dances were often held in the barn. During the warmer seasons, the dance was sometimes held outside where a large area would be cleared of stones and covered with sawdust.

There were generally more workin's during the warm months of the year. Traveling was easier then and there was always an overabundance of work to be done. Consequently, some communities had dances with greater frequency during the work season. This was never a source of complaint. There were some communities, in fact, which had very few dances during the winter months. In these areas the news of a

dance would be sent out all over, even beyond the immediate community. People would come from great distances carrying blankets and food as it was common for these dances to last until the wee hours of the morning. In fact, if the weather was foul people would dance until daylight and then sit down together to a big breakfast. If the weather continued to inhibit peoples' departures, they would keep dancing until the weather cleared.

It is interesting to look at the actual definition or bounds of what comprised a community in relation to the local dance in Kentucky. In many ways, peoples' lives were determined or shaped by the geography of their area. People on the homesteads related to the other homesteads that were closest or most easily accessible. In terms of everyday sustenance, certain factors helped define the bounds of a community: the average distance that could be travelled in a day, the need for special services (a doctor, blacksmith), the proximity of a source of outside or manufactured goods (needles, salt). Other factors came into account in determining the bounds of a dancing community. These might include a community's need for a musician or a caller, the desire of those individuals from nearby communities who wanted to dance but who were outnumbered by their strictly religious neighbors, and sometimes the need for a more balanced number of eligible young men and women.



View from a bridge just outside of Berea, Kentucky. Photo by Stephen B. Green.

Each community's dance tradition was truly an entity unto itself. There was very little exchange or influence among communities. It was rare for members of neighboring communities to be more than generally acquainted from meeting once a year at the County Fair or at market day in the county seat. An illustration of the dance tradition's isolation is in the use of certain terms. The dance event was known as a dance, a square dance or a hoedown. There were some communities that might call theirs a dance and never use square dance or hoedown. They would always know what a square dance or hoedown was, however, because they knew there were square dances (or hoe-downs) in the next community. People were familiar with the other terms, but never used them within their own tradition.

In most parts of Kentucky, money was not a factor in the dance tradition. Money was not exchanged, and callers and musicians were not paid. In one area of South-Central Kentucky, however, the callers and musicians were paid perhaps as early as the 1890's. It is possible that this practice originated in communities which had to summon musicians or callers from long distances. Other communities in the area may have adopted the practice as the musicians and callers were in greater demand and, perhaps, grew to expect payment. The caller would collect a nickle or a dime "on the corner" from the man of each of the four couples in a set, after each dance. At the end of the night the caller and the musicians divided the money equally.

The local dance afforded a time for neighbors to socialize as a group, which was rare in farm life. It was the main vehicle for courtship and provided a chance to exchange information. The dancing itself was the most important activity at these gatherings because it gave people a chance to relate on another level. It was all-involving, pure fun. There were other forms of group recreation which were conspicuously absent at dances. For example, there was never any singing at a dance. A musician might sing a line or two that went with one of the dance tunes, but there was no group singing of any kind. Singing games or play parties were also never done at a dance.

The dance event was important in rural Kentucky communities not only because it gave people a chance to socialize, but because it also gave them a time to dance. The dancing itself fulfilled an important need. A look at the different kinds of dancing found in these communities will provide a broader understanding of the dance tradition.

The Dancing

There were three types of dancing found in Kentucky communities: single dancing, couple dancing and group dancing. Each of these sustained the dance tradition in different ways.

The single dancing was known by many names. Most commonly it was called dancing, stepdancing, hoedowning, jigging, or square dancing. Other names for it were flatfoot, buck dancing, buck and wing, shuffle, and heel and toe. There is no evidence of the term clogging, which is widely used today in many parts of Southern Appalachia, ever being used within the dance traditions of Kentucky communities.

The single dancing consisted of an individual moving to keep time with music. The general form could be described as follows. From standing in a normal, upright position, the upper torso would lean a bit forward, the center of weight would drop and the knees would bend. Then the center of weight would rise and the knees would straighten. The downward movement was always on the downbeat of the music, so there was a dropping and rising movement equally dividing each beat of music. The dance tunes were almost exclusively reels, in 4/4 or 2/4 meter. While this dropping (and rising) movement was being done, a dancer would do any number of different kinds of stepping and gesturing³ with his or her legs. Examples of these would be: both feet sliding forward simultaneously, then sliding back to place simultaneously; shifting weight from one foot to the other in different rhythmical patterns, often lifting the free foot slightly off the ground; shuffling a foot in place, to the front or front diagonal, sometimes hopping between shuffles; raising the knee, sometimes combined with brushing the foot off the floor; rotating the leg so that the foot swiveled alternately on the ball of the foot and the heel, sometimes moving in a path to the side. The single dancing generally stayed within a very small area around the dancer. Travelling across the floor was not important and occurred incidentally, as the result of the stepping and gesturing.

Music was usually the source of inspiration for the stepdancing. The fiddle was the most common instrument played, although after the Civil War the banjo was just as prevalent. In many communities the jew's harp was also very popular. There was a very important relationship between the music and the single dancing.

You hit yer feet to the tune of the music. As each notes were changed yer feet would go on with it. You have rhythm of a pattern you went by accordin' to what the tune was.⁴

But now, you mostly have to dance accordin' to the music that you're dancin'. Because different tunes, you know, calls for different dancin'. It's hard sometimes to dance after certain tunes, but everybody tries. . . You got to try to change yer steps as the tune changes. It changes several times.⁵

This relationship between the tunes and the steps⁶ suggests the nature of the single dancing. It was totally improvisational. A dancer created different sequences of steps and gestures to complement the rhythmic patterns of a tune. Consequently, the

single dancing was highly individualized. Every dancer performed according to his or her ability and inspiration.

In the absence of musical instruments, stepdancing was accompanied by hand patting or clapping. Sometimes the dancing was performed without any accompaniment. Because the single dancing was so closely intertwined with the music, an experienced dancer would often stepdance to a tune, without any music.

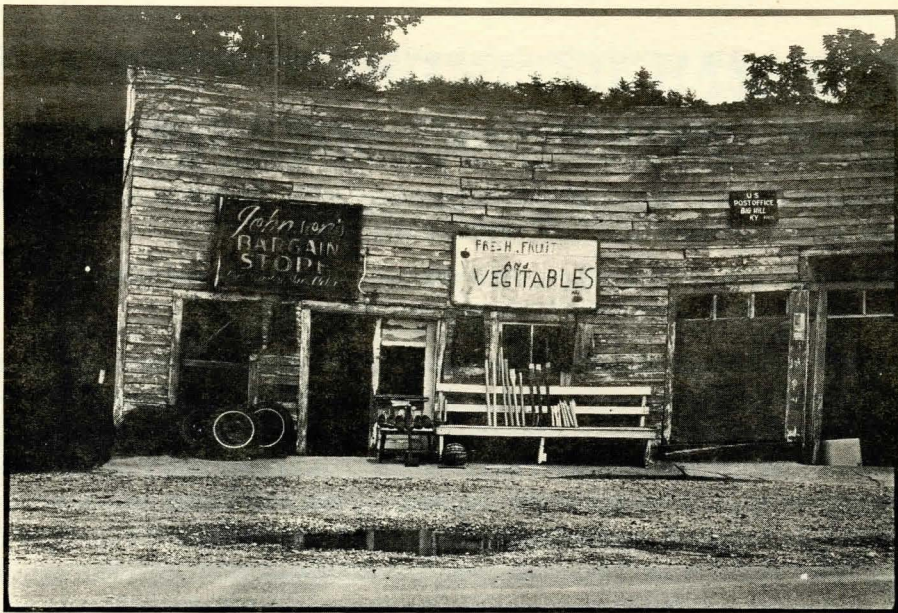
There was a guy. . . He'd tell you what this tune was gonna be, and without any instrument he would dance it, and you could tell what it was.⁷

The contexts for single dancing in Kentucky communities varied greatly. In some communities, there was stepdancing during a break or intermission at a dance event. During such a break, the musicians often continued to play, and a dancer (or dancers) would hoedown. Even if the musicians were resting, it was easy for a dancer to coax them into playing again. Sometimes the stepdancing was the center of attention and was almost like an informal performance. It was a chance for dancers to show-off a little or just have a good time. There was never a competitive feeling on the part of the dancers; they danced for their own enjoyment. Even when hoedowning was not the center of attention during a break, people still danced with great spirit.

In some communities, single dancing and group dancing went on simultaneously. One or two people might stepdance out in the kitchen or on the back porch. The single dancing, however, was never done in the same room as the group dancing, where it would be distracting.

The stepdancing had a role in the group dancing in some Kentucky communities. This role also varied tremendously. In some cases, it was common for most people to "go through" or dance a set with a smooth running step, but certain individuals would add embellishment with different steps. In some communities, everyone went through the group dance "stepping." In these cases, the stepping was usually a relatively simple rhythmic pattern and no one went through the group dance with a smooth running step since that was not considered dancing. In these communities where it was much less common for stepdancing to be done individually (outside the group dance) the hoedown steps tended to be less developed.

Another type of context for single dancing found throughout Kentucky was very important in the continuing sustenance of the dance tradition. Single dancing was done anytime, anywhere, whenever a dancer felt sufficiently inspired. Social situations such as those around the wood-burning stove at the local general store were frequently scenes of impromptu music and dancing. Dancing a "jig" was personal and expressive. It was as natural a response for a dancer as was playing a tune for a musician. A bit of insight into this kind of dance response was offered by one man from Southeast Kentucky. After a long day of hoeing corn in the sweltering, hot sun, he explained,



Post Office and General Store in Big Hill, Kentucky (near Berea). Photo by Stephen B. Green.

one would be so overjoyed to be finished that he “would throw his hoe down and dance. And that,” he said, “is where the name hoedown came from.”

Although the overall form and style of single dancing was consistent throughout Kentucky, there were certain aspects that varied greatly. Specifics of the dance style was one such variable. Examples of these fine points are: how much the center of weight was dropped; how much the arms moved and what kind of movements they did; how much the legs rotated during different parts of stepping sequences; how much the torso moved and how it moved. There were sometimes enough of these points in common to be able to describe an overall community style. There was also tremendous variation in individuals’ dance styles. Each dancer brought his or her own style to the stepdancing in ways such as: different kinds of movement phrases; the sequencing of different body parts; the qualities of different movements.⁸

There were similar kinds of community and individual influence on the repertoire of the single dancing. There were basic steps that were common to all communities, although they were often called by different names. Every community had its preference, however, which was greatly influenced by talented individuals. Most communities had a small repertoire of steps. It was not important to know a large number of steps.

The skill, taste and imagination of a dancer was measured by the way the dancer combined the simple patterns known by everyone. In every community there were talented individuals who invented variations or added embellishments to the community's repertoire of steps. These variations were the result of a dancer's creativity in improvising and his or her particular abilities.

There was a barber. . . He was originally from Tennessee, I believe. I was dancin'. He said, 'You dance a little different from what we dance. We did what we call the backstep.' He showed me and I said, 'All my friends use that step and I couldn't do it. I do this other'n. I developed my own style of jiggin'.' It's not the same, but I couldn't get that little kick that they did in that, and I developed my own style of kick.⁹

The creative input brought to the dance tradition by individual dancers helped to guide and shape a community's repertoire.

Couple dancing, which consisted of two individuals single dancing as partners, was not very common in the dance traditions of rural Kentucky communities. While the two dancers were stepdancing they would perform simple figures such as dancing around each other and holding hands, facing and dancing towards each other, then away. Often the two partners never actually touched each other. They had a lot of eye contact and a definite exchange of energy. The two dancers often responded to each other by elaborating on each others' steps.

The most common names for the couple dancing were dancing and hoedown. The contexts and types of accompaniment for the couple dancing were generally the same as for the single dancing.

Group dancing was found in all the dance traditions of Kentucky communities. Names for the group dancing were dancing, square dancing and hoedown. The phrase "go through" as from the expression "to go through a set" was also commonly used. The term "play" was also used to describe group dancing, especially for dancing after a workin'. It would be said that after working all day people would "play all night."

Group dancing consisted of a series of figures done to the prompting of a caller. It was danced by a minimum of four couples of men and women. The woman stood on the man's right and the couples faced the center of the circle. All the dancing took place within the basic area of the original circle. Each dance was the spontaneous creation of the caller who directed the dancers as they went along.

It appears that the oldest form of group dancing in Kentucky was done in circle formation. As many couples as possible formed a circle. The most common form of the dance began with the entire circle dancing a figure such as circling left or right. Then the lead couple would travel to the next couple to their right and dance a figure with them. After dancing the figure, the lead couple travelled to the next couple to the

right, danced the figure with them, and so progressed around the entire circle. When the lead couple was back in place after dancing with all the other couples, the entire circle danced a figure together such as a do-si-do or grand right and left.¹⁰ Then the second couple would travel to the right, to each couple in turn and dance a figure with them. It was customary for each couple to have a different figure to take around the circle. Except when the entire circle danced together at the very beginning and before each successive couple began to take its new figure around the ring, only two couples would be dancing at one time. This gave those in the set quite a bit of time when they were inactive. Dancers used that time to socialize with each other, and sometimes to single dance.

Socializing within the set was not the same as in everyday life. As part of the set, more physical contact was permitted between members of the opposite sex. Partners often held hands, stood closer to each other, and flirted more openly. The dance also neutralized any social, economic or personal differences. "Everybody was just like everybody else."¹¹ Socializing within the group dancing was a vital part of the community dance experience.

Square dancin' is a mixer to begin with. Now, you take yer modern [ball-room] dancin'. You go out there and you take yer date, maybe a couple with you. Y'll dance all night and maybe not say half a dozen words to somebody else in the room. Square dancin' y'll speak to everyone in there and you're all just one big, happy family. It's a mixer to begin with.¹²

Another form of the circle dancing differed from the form described above in this way. As the lead couple progressed around the circle, every other couple followed, and started progressing around the circle in the same way. Every other couple starting with the lead couple progressed, and every other couple starting with the second stayed in place to receive the visitors. Often a different figure was called for each progression. Eventually, the entire circle was dancing at once in pairs of two couples. This form was sometimes more common with large groups of dancers. This form of the square dance resembles what is known in folkdance revival groups as the Big Set. In the Big Set, however, after the introductory figure which is done by the entire circle, the first call separates the circle into the pairs of two couples. In the Big Set, the entire circle continues to dance all at once, whereas in the other form, only the lead couple continues to dance, progressing on to the second couple, and then gradually involving the rest of the circle. There is no evidence that the Big Set was indigenous to the dance traditions of Kentucky communities.

Most community dances in rural Kentucky were held in people's homes where the space available for dancing was limited. Sometimes there was enough room for eight or ten couples to dance at once, sometimes only four couples. A minimum of

four couples was necessary for a group dance. It appears unlikely that the four couple square dance, which is so prevalent today, was actually a separate form within the dance traditions of rural Kentucky. The structure or sequence of the four couple square dance is identical to that of the most common form of circle dancing. Whenever space permitted eight couples to dance at once, it was always the community's preference to dance together in one circle, never in two separate sets of four couples. The only time two sets of four couples might dance at the same time would be when one was in each of two adjoining rooms.

The four couple square dance was observed by Cecil Sharp in 1917. He called it the Kentucky Running Set, but in fact, the term Running Set is unknown in the dance traditions of Kentucky. It is possible that Sharp misunderstood the common expression, "Let's run a set," or even that he coined the term, inspired by this expression.

There is also a popular association between the name square dance and the square formation of a set made of four couples. Since it appears likely that the four couple or "square" set was incidental or insignificant within the dance traditions of rural Kentucky communities, it appears likely that the name square dance was not derived from this form. However, within the group dancing done in circle formation, there is a small square formed by four individuals when two couples dance together as part of the progression around the circle. In fact, most of the dancing any individual did in the group dance was within this small square made of two couples. Considering the prevalence of the circle formation in group dancing, it is possible that the term square dancing was derived from this small square formation within the larger circle.

The music of the fiddle and the banjo, and sometimes the jew's harp, was the usual accompaniment for the group dancing. In the early part of this century, the guitar began to spread to many parts of Kentucky and became very popular. The musicians were an integral part of the group dance experience. Their involvement, energy, and spirit was felt in their music and had a great effect on the dancers.

The music has the biggest to do with the dancin'. You take somebody who can't play music too well, you can't dance after it too well.¹³

A musician's ability to inspire others was highly regarded, and a good dance musician was a valuable member of the community. In many areas there were enough musicians to take turns playing during a dance event. Usually no more than two or three musicians played at one time, giving the others a chance to dance and socialize. Depending on the size of the set, an individual dance would last from fifteen minutes to half an hour, and often longer. It was not unusual for a large circle to continue dancing for more than an hour. Even the most dedicated, spirited fiddler needed relief.

. . . one fiddler would play until he give out and then another would take over. Yer arms would give out.¹⁴



Fiddler Gusty Wallace of Sulphur Well, Kentucky, who was one of the author's informants during her research. Photo by Stephen B. Green.

When there were not enough musicians to take turns playing, the set would continue for as long as the musicians could last.

When you just had one set of musicians, they'd play 'till they git tired and then just quit. And if you's in the middle of a figure, why that's allright too. That's all she wrote! They'd just git up and go rest and take a break.¹⁵

I'd take a man with a big ambition to play 'cause it'd take as many as twenty couples at one time in the stands, and they'd circle dance (we call it square dance), and they'd just keep on goin' around and around 'till this fiddler'd just finally have to call 'em. They didn't have no mercy on him.¹⁶

The music played for group dancing was always a reel with an even number of measures. The tunes were usually in two parts, each part being an eight measure phrase which was repeated. To many traditional folk musicians in Kentucky the term "fiddle tune" meant a tune that would be used for dancing, and the term "song" encompassed everything else. There were many tunes in the repertoires of Kentucky folk musicians that had irregular rhythms or uneven numbers of measures. These tunes were never used for group dancing. The irregular tunes were sometimes played for single dancing, however, and often helped to show the skill of an individual dancer.

Most dance musicians in rural Kentucky communities were men. There were women musicians in some communities. They were usually banjo players, and in later years, guitar players. The women were not generally in the main set of musicians, but would take a turn playing while another musician rested.

There were always musicians present at a dance event to play for group dancing. If a set's worth of people wanted to dance at an impromptu gathering where there was no musician, they would dance to hand patting. The bystanders and the dancers who were not actively dancing a figure would pat a steady rhythm. Sometimes, instead of hand patting, the group might "diddle" or sing a fiddle tune for accompaniment. They would diddle the tune using arbitrary, meaningless syllables. They never sang a song with words.

The caller was an indispensable part of the group dancing. The caller improvised different combinations of figures for each dance. Most callers used a patter type of calling that was said in time to the music, but it did not follow a melody. Each call was said in time so that the dancers could continue to flow smoothly from one movement into the next. Callers had their own styles of calling. Some gave very plain directions using the call lines, simply describing the movements to be done. Others used a constant patter, filling in between the call-lines with little rhymes or descriptive nonsense. Keeping a constant vocal tension by using this continuous patter often helped to ease the wear on a caller's voice.

In some Kentucky communities there was only one caller, in other communities there were many. While the role of the caller was comparatively specialized in some communities, in others, most of the dancers could call a little bit. The caller generally stood in the doorway with the musicians. Sometimes the man in the lead couple of a set would call while dancing.

A community's repertoire of group dance figures was greatly influenced by the caller. There were many figures that were common to all Kentucky communities, although they were sometimes known by different names. Most communities had their own variations of certain figures or figures that were their own creations. It was generally the caller who introduced new figures into a community's repertoire and adopted variants into use.

The size of a community's repertoire of group dance figures depended on how frequently its members danced together. A community that did not dance very often, for instance, would tend to know fewer figures. The entire community had to know all the figures well enough so as to respond to the caller without interrupting the continuous flow of the dance. Figures were learned by watching and participating. There was no formal teaching. These factors also contributed to the figures remaining relatively simple, so that they were within everyone's capabilities.

The most common context for group dancing was, of course, the community dance event. In a sense, the dance event existed to facilitate the group dancing. It provided a time and place for people to gather together and it insured the presence of a caller and musicians.

Group dancing provided an opportunity for people to dance, socialize, and have fun together. It helped reinforce a feeling of community for people who lived isolated from their neighbors, and whose social interactions were rare. One dancer expressed these feelings, contrasting them to his recent experience in a Western Square Dance Club.

That's the way square dancin' was. It's just a fun thing. I think a lot of the time that they've taken a lot of the fun out of square dancin' because they've made it [Western Square Dancing] so complicated. A beginner can't dance it. I'd been calling for forty-five years I guess. . . dancin' forty-five years, and I had to go back to this new stuff and learn all over! I had to forget what I already knew. And the biggest thing I had to learn in this new stuff, was to keep my ears open and my mouth shut!¹⁷

FOOTNOTES

¹ LeeEllen Friedland conducted fieldwork for this paper as part of her undergraduate honors project at Marlboro College, Marlboro, Vermont. In September 1979, she will be enrolled as a graduate student in the department of Folklore and Folklife at the University of Pennsylvania.

² Phrases commonly used in Kentucky are in quotation marks the first time each one appears in the text.

- ³ In most cases, I have used the vocabulary of movement analyses to describe dance movement. I have done this in hopes that the consistent, specific use of these terms will eliminate ambiguity for the reader. For instance, a step is a movement (usually of the leg) that includes a full transference of weight onto that body part. A gesture is a movement that does not support weight. A slide is a step and/or gesture that involves continued contact with the floor. I have used the term shuffle to describe a quick sliding leg gesture (e.g., to the front, immediately followed by a quick sliding leg gesture back to place). A brush is a leg gesture sliding from the whole foot to the toe. For further discussion of movement description and analyses see Peggy Hackney, Sarah Manno and Muriel Topaz, *Study Guide for Elementary Labanotation*, Dance Notation Bureau Press, New York, 1977. The comprehensive reference text is Ann Hutchinson, *Labanotation*, Theatre Arts Books, New York, 1970.
- ⁴ Field recording K-1. September 1975. Dancer, Clear Creek, Rockcastle Co., Kentucky. LeeEllen Friedland, collector.
- ⁵ Field recording K-4. November 1975. Dancer, Longfork, Pike Co., Kentucky. LeeEllen Friedland, collector.
- ⁶ In Kentucky, the term "steps" is used to refer to all movements of the legs. Unless stated otherwise, from this point on I use the term steps in this way, as it is used in the dance tradition.
- ⁷ Field recording K-1.
- ⁸ These aspects of movement style are described in Laban analyses, particularly Effort/Shape.
- ⁹ Field recording K-2. October 1975. Dancer, Caller, Hazard, Perry Co., Kentucky. LeeEllen Friedland, collector.
- ¹⁰ See Patrick E. Napier, *Kentucky Mountain Square Dancing*, Berea College, Berea, Kentucky, for fuller explanations of these figures.
- ¹¹ Field recording K-3. October 1975. Dancer, Blackey, Letcher Co., Kentucky. LeeEllen Friedland, collector.
- ¹² Field recording K-2.
- ¹³ Field recording K-4.
- ¹⁴ Chester Huffman. Field recording T-7-74-712. April 1974. Musician, Glasgow, Barren Co., Kentucky. Bruce Greene, collector. Folklore Archive, Western Kentucky University.
- ¹⁵ Field recording K-2.
- ¹⁶ John Rountree. Field recording T-7-74-709. March 1974. Musician, Bowling Green, Warren Co., Kentucky. Bruce Greene, collector. Folklore Archive, Western Kentucky University.
- ¹⁷ Field recording K-2.



LUMPS OF PUDDING

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*H W BUNBURY Esq^r Delin Etch'd by W Heath
London Published Aug 15 1811 by Robinson 5 Margaret Street Cavendish Square &
Colnaghi Cockspur Street*



Engraved (coloured impression).¹ A country dance; eighteen couples in a strip design in the manner of the *Long Minuet* (No. 7229), dance with awkward vigour; one of the most active ladies has a wooden leg. The first couple (l.) face each other, the lady squinting violently. On the r. a man turns eagerly from his elderly and offended partner to a young lady, whose partner also holds the hand of another lady, while an elderly man stands alone on the extreme r., holding his wig, and mopping his bald head. The elder men wear powdered hair with small pigtails, the younger ones have frizzed hair without powder, short or with small tails. Only one or two wear wigs. The women

¹ Flesh tints and light monochrome only



LUMPS of PUDDING

*What an elegant set! What a bustling of Bumps!
 What a Dance! See the dancing of Sisters and Pumps!
 At the sight my Old Man looks as ready to dance
 As a little boy, and is now dancing like a Prince.*

wear simple high-waisted gowns with elbow sleeves and long gloves; one wears a hat and long sleeves. All wear flat-heeled shoes, and have frizzed hair, short, or piled on the head; a few wear feathered bandeaux; one lady only has powdered hair. Some have strange hair ornaments: a fat and very décolletée lady with a lap-dog under her arm wears round her erect bush of hair a circlet from which project barbed zigzags, like lightning flashes. A youngish lady has on her head a bird with a barbed fang; an older



one in spectacles wears a small windmill behind two drooping aigrettes. The neglected lady wears a tiny wheat-sheaf, her pretty rival a ship in full sail. Below the title:

What an elegant Set—What a bustling of Rumps!
What a Sweet Toe to Toe-ing of Slippers and Pumps!
At the sight my Old Drumsticks are ready to Prance
There is nothing I love so as seeing Folks Dance.



'Lumps of Pudding' was a country-dance tune; it is in *The Dancing Master*, 1703 [Ed. note: It first appears in the 11th edition, 1701]. C.W. Beaumont, *Bibl. of Dancing*, 1929, p. 46. Bunbury died in May, 1811; the drawing is probably some years earlier. The print was advertised in a handbill (in B.M.) dated 11 Nov. 1811. 'This day is published, Price 10s. 6d Plain or One Guinea Brown or Coloured in a superior Manner. . . from a drawing by that distinguished genius the late W.H. Bunbury, Esq. . . ' A third publisher is 'Mr. Molteno, Pall Mall.' The size is given as eight feet by twelve inches.

The above description appears in the *Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires* of The Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, Connecticut.

COMPLEX SIMPLICITY

Joy Van Cleef¹

For hundreds of years, in Europe, and then later, in America, the dancing master played an important role in the education of a well-brought-up young person.²

During all this period, beginning with the earliest recorded teachings, there was a remarkable consistency in the basic concepts which he attempted to instill; for while there were tremendous differences in the dances which were in vogue in different times and places, and in the techniques required for their correct performance, *all* dancing masters emphasized good *deportment*; and this emphasis was the common denominator of their instruction. It was in order, primarily, that they should learn deportment that generation after generation of young people were marched off to dancing school or provided with tutors for private lessons. (This includes the children of Puritan families.)³

What was good deportment? Gallini, writing around 1770, echoes the descriptions by many of his predecessors and anticipates his successors:

And in what does a graceful deportment consist, but in holding up the head without stiffness, and keeping the body upright without affectation? Ease in the various attitudes, a gay, modest, and open countenance; a firm, assured gait without heaviness; light and airy without indecency or precipitation; a certain flexibility in the limbs, a muscular agility for the readily taking all the characters, or making all the movements requisite for expressing a due regard for one's company. . . .⁴

Once established, he believes:

. . . the habit of good deportment will constantly show itself in every, even the most indifferent of gestures, or action of the possessor, and only the more so, for himself being unconscious and insensible of it.⁵

He goes on to declare that the grace of ease can never be acted. It must have stolen into second and better nature in virtue of a habit, contracted not to destroy the first nature, but only to improve and embellish it.⁶ He wrote:

Neither must that air, the acquisition of which I am recommending, ever appear to be the result of study; the beauty of it is to seem something innate, and not acquired. . . it must have been insensibly melted into the whole frame and behavior.⁷

Behaving simply, in other words, was a pretty complicated business; and to give the impression of natural ease took a lot of hard work and practice.

Today we are accustomed to the idea that endless hours of training are required to enable figure-skaters to drift through their routines with apparently effortless grace and we realize that gymnasts can make their feats look easy only by dint of relentless practicing. But we have got away from the belief that any particular skill or expertise is required to make ordinary social contacts rewarding. We feel that sincerity must be unrehearsed, and we have discarded practically all conventions about propriety in manners and dress which might restrict spontaneity. Unfortunately, the sort of "natural" behavior commended as "authenticity" often winds up in a kind of self-presentation which is uncouth, unkempt, and unintelligible. Of course, as fast as we discard old conventions we develop new ones, that being the nature of the human animal; thus, in recent years, for instance, blue jeans became as *de rigeur* for the ladies as hoops and bustles once were, and male hair-styles rivalled the baroque elaborations of 18th century wigs.

In centuries past, it was quite otherwise; parents believed that careful social training could hardly be started too early, and the dancing master bore the chief responsibility for carrying it on.

Even if all this emphasis on dance-and-deportment existed in the upper social circles of Europe, surely things were different here in early America? No, so far as we can tell, they were not.⁸ Dancing masters were at first scarcer here than they were in Europe, but their tasks were the same; and with the rise of the middle classes here and abroad, their numbers increased. Still, there are many indications that their basic philosophy and teaching did not change much. For instance, we find the following paragraph, which appeared in the London *Spectator* (no. 334) on March 24, 1712, repeated word for word (without acknowledgement) in *Saltator*, a dancing manual published anonymously in Boston in 1801:

A man who has paid no regard to his gestures in any part of his education, will find himself unable to act with freedom before new company. It is for the advancement of the pleasure, which we receive in being agreeable to each other in ordinary life, that raises a desire for having dancing, in its purity, generally understood as conducive as it really is, to a proper deportment in matters, that appear the most remote from it.⁹

It must be understood that deportment in its physical aspects was considered to be closely linked to moral virtues. Beautiful and gracious behavior was not a "front" or a cover-up; it was considered to be an *expression* of inner virtue, and indeed, conducive to it. If a person was taught to move beautifully, it would encourage him to have feelings of harmony and sympathy and such good feelings could, in turn, be expressed through dance. Many sixteenth and seventeenth-century English expressed this point of

view. Interestingly enough, many therapists today believe that posture and movement-style reveal a great deal about an individual's psychic health; and that by improving his bodily expressiveness, a person will thereby improve his mental health and general functioning. And though their terminology differs from that of the dancing masters, the therapists seem to have many of the same standards in mind in discussing posture.¹⁰

While skill as a dancer and the accompanying correct deportment were signs of membership in the upper classes of society, the dancing master had it in his power, sometimes, to open the door to advancement for his pupils. Anyone could study dancing, after all, who could pay for lessons; and an attractive young person who acquired good ballroom techniques was at an advantage in winning promotion, making a good marriage, or otherwise improving his circumstances. Like other forms of education, dance education tended, on the whole, to promote social mobility even while it celebrated gentility.

An example of this is found in the story of Sarah Pierce, who was born the daughter of a potter in Litchfield, Connecticut, in 1767. When her father died in 1783, she became the responsibility of her older brother, John. He thought his sister might learn to support herself as a teacher, and arranged for her to go to New York to complete her own education. He wrote to her there:

The short time you have, and the many things you have to learn, occasions me to wish you would employ every moment for the purpose. I hope you will not miss a single dancing school, and that you will take lessons from Captain Turner at other times, pray get him and Kitty, your friend, to instruct you in everything in walking and standing and sitting, all the movements of which, tho they appear in a polite person natural, are the effects of art. . . which you had best take the utmost pains, or you will never appear natural and easy in. I am somewhat fearful that your old habits at your age cannot be so thoroughly removed, as to give place to a natural careless genteel air, and which totally hides the art of it.¹¹

Miss Pierce apparently took her brother's advice. At any rate, the school which she established in Litchfield came to be considered the outstanding educational institution for young ladies in New England, both academically and socially; and in the journals and correspondence which she left, Miss Pierce had a great deal to say about the value of dancing and the importance of good deportment. Her girls got plenty of practice, certainly, because the young men who were students at the Tappan Reid Law School were willing partners at the many social events sponsored by both schools.¹²

But why, one might ask, should we concern ourselves, when we dance for our own pleasure in our own time and age, with what the old-time dancing masters thought was desirable deportment? We are not dressed in wigs and corsets and other such limiting accessories (unless you want to count platform soles) and we are not bound by the

conventions of their day. Their ideas may have a slight historical interest, but what practical relevance do they have for us?

Well, not everything changes. The human anatomy, whatever may be inflicted upon it in the way of costume, remains pretty much the same, and so do the physical laws, such as the law of gravity, which affect its functioning; and there is really nothing old or new about the basics of good or bad dancing. Thus, one could recruit from the current members of the Country Dance Society a group of dancers who, appropriately clad, would blend into an elegant eighteenth century ballroom scene without difficulty; while the performers depicted by Mr. Bunbury in *Lumps of Pudding* (c. 1811), if equipped with levis and earth-shoes, would seem quite at home at many a present-day barn dance. And since the first recorded comments about country dancing, hundreds of years ago, there have apparently been those who kicked their fellow-dancers in the shins, wrenched elbows, failed to keep time to the music, confused the figures, and in one way or another created disaster areas about them; just as there have always been those who distinguished themselves by grace, agility, and their responsiveness to their partners. Many of the injunctions of the early dancing masters do still make sense, therefore, things such as Tomlinson's advice to pay attention to the dance even when you are not taking part in the figure, so that you will be ready to become active promptly when your turn comes.¹³

While there may be a blessed few among us for whom "doing what comes naturally" is all that is required to be a good dancer, most of us have to work at it. (Of course, even a good dancer can always become better.) No skill is acquired without effort, and in country dancing, as in other pastimes, the more skill, the more satisfaction. It's true that people can have a lot of fun the very first time they try country dancing; but we shouldn't conceal from beginners the fact that though the experienced dancers make it look so easy, you don't pick up instant expertise in dancing any more than you do in bowling, playing the violin, skiing, or anything else.

So the *Rechtschaffener Tanzmeister*¹⁴ has not outlived his usefulness. His aim is still to create in his scholars an air of ease and simplicity; his problems in achieving this result remain COMPLEX!

- ¹ Joy Van Cleef is an avid researcher in the field of 17th and 18th century social dance and author of *Rural Felicity: Social Dance in 18th Century Connecticut* (published in *Dance Perspectives* no. 65, Spring, 1976).
- ² Rameau, P. *Maitre a danser*, 1725, quoted in Guilcher, Jean-Michel. *La Contredanse*. Paris: Mouton & Co., 1969. p. 21.
- ³ Marks, Joseph E. III. *America Learns to Dance*. New York: Exposition Press, 1957. pp. 17–21.
- ⁴ Gallini, Giovanni-Andrea. *Critical Observations on the Art of Dancing*. London, [1773]. p. 124.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 126.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 127.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 143.
- ⁸ Marks. *passim*.
- ⁹ Saltator (pseud.). *A Treatise on Dancing*. (Boston, 1801). p. 14.
- ¹⁰ Kurz, Ron, and Hector Prestera, M.D. *The Body Reveals*. New York: Harper and Row, 1976. The quotation is usually attributed to John Weaver.
- ¹¹ White, Alain C. *History of Litchfield County, 1720–1920*. Litchfield, Connecticut: Litchfield Enquirer Press, 1920. Chapter X. p. 119.
- ¹² *Ibid.* Chapter XI, p. 121.
- ¹³ Tomlinson, Kellom. *The Art of Dancing*. London: 1735. Rpt. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Dance Horizons, 1970.
- ¹⁴ Taubert, Gottfried. *Rechtschaffener Tanzmeister*. Leipzig, 1717. Quoted in Taubert, Karl Heinz. *Hofische Tanze*. London: B. Schott's Sohne, Mainz, 1968. p. 60

CURRENCE AND MINNIE HAMMONDS: WEST VIRGINIA TRADITIONAL SINGERS

Robert G. Dalsemer¹

During my ten month stay in Randolph County, West Virginia, I spent many pleasant hours at the home of Currence and Minnie Hammonds in Huttonsville. Mr. and Mrs. Hammonds, who were both born in 1898, are bearers of long family traditions of music and song. Much of the Hammonds' (or Hammons, as some of the family spell it) family history and background is described in some detail in a booklet which accompanies the excellent double album set issued by the Library of Congress Archive of Folk Song, "The Hammons Family: A Study of a West Virginia Family's Traditions," AFS L 65-66. The subjects of the Archive's study, whose music appears on the above albums, are first cousins of Currence Hammonds who live in neighboring Pocahontas County. Minnie's mother's people, the Roberts family, is another large, musical family which has been closely allied with the Hammondses by several marriages. Currence and Minnie were married in 1915 and raised a family of nine children. They have lived in Randolph County since their marriage, where Currence has worked at various jobs connected with logging and timber.

Currence and Minnie associate many of their songs with specific relatives who sang them. Currence learned the song "Jimmy Ranvul" from his mother:

Now I always did like that one. You know, the reason I always like it, my mother used to sing it. She'd sit and sing that of a night for us. In the fall you know, she'd sit spinning or knitting, singing that piece for us kids. We'd sit right around there listening to her sing it. We'd make her sing it maybe two or three times.

In the mountains where hunting, and consequently hunting accidents, are common, it is easy to understand the appeal of this widely found story. The additional supernatural element, where Molly (or Polly) returns from the dead to testify at Jimmy's trial also helps explain the song's attraction. An excellent field recording of an Irish version, "Molly Bawn," has recently been released in this country on LP ("Singing Men of Ulster," Innisfree-Green Linnet SIF 1005).

"Harm Herbert" was a favorite of one of Currence's aunts. The exact reasons for the arrest and execution described in the song are unclear and I have found no information about any historical incident upon which the song is based. Needless to say, the Civil War was a divisive time in the Appalachian region, with guerilla bands from both

sides roaming the mountains. There were doubtless many needless executions of those suspected of sympathy with one side or the other, or desertion. A version called "Hiram Hubbert" appears in *Folk Songs of the Southern United States* by Josiah H. Combs (University of Texas Press, 1967). Jean Ritchie sings another version, "Hiram Hubbard" on Folkways LP FA 2426, "Jean Ritchie and Doc Watson at Folk City."²

Currence and Minnie both play 5-string banjo in the clawhammer style, although Minnie has not been able to play for some years due to arthritis. Currence frequently played with his uncle, Edwin Hammons, a champion fiddler who is still talked about by all the older musicians in east-central West Virginia. Consequently, Currence plays quite a number of fiddle tunes on the banjo, and some short, humorous songs. "The Gambling Man"³ is one of the few ballad-type songs that I have heard him sing with banjo accompaniment. He plays the melody as he sings, and takes an instrumental "break" after each verse. Several versions of "The Gambling Man" appear in H. M. Belden's collection, *Missouri Ballads and Songs* (University of Missouri Studies, Vol. XV, No. 1, Columbia, Mo., 1940). Country singer Elton Britt recorded a version with similar text, but a tune in a major key, for Victor in 1952. He called it "The Rovin' Gambler" and added a chorus. Bluegrass versions, similar to Britt's, but without the chorus, have been recorded by a number of groups, following the lead, in the early 1960's, of Benny and Vallie Cain and The Country Gentlemen.

Currence and Minnie sang "Come All You Roving Gamblers" to me in unison. It called to mind a recording by the late Dock Boggs of Norton, Virginia called "Country Blues." Boggs originally recorded the song on the Brunswick label in 1928. In 1963, Mike Seeger made a series of new recordings of Dock Boggs, including "Country Blues," which were released on several Folkways albums. According to Seeger's notes to FA 2351, Boggs had adapted "Country Blues" from an older song called "Hustling Gamblers," which I would guess is markedly similar to Currence and Minnie's version.

Minnie learned "Lady Marget" as a child from various members of her family. It is, of course, a British ballad (Child #74) which has been widely collected in the Appalachian region and beyond. Some versions contain a supernatural element, whereby Marget (or Margaret) appears as a ghost to Sweet William on his marriage bed.

Currence and Minnie Hammonds are skilled, powerful singers. In recent years they have enjoyed the visits of younger folks, like myself, who are interested in their lives and their music. They have also performed at the Vandalia Gathering, an annual festival at the State Capitol in Charleston which celebrates West Virginia's rich musical heritage.

JIMMY RANVUL

as sung by Currence Hammonds

Ionian mode



Come all you young heroes who handles a gun
Beware of your shooting after the down sun
I'll tell you of a circumstance that happened of late
That happened young Jimmy and his own lovely* maid

Jimmy was a-hunting out late in the dark
He shot at Molly Bender and he missed not his mark
Well, he run up to her and he found she was dead
In the fount of her bosom a tear Jimmy shed

Well he run back home again with his gun in his hand
Dearest uncle, dearest uncle, Molly Bender I've killed
Out stepped his old father with his locks very gray
"Stay at home its young Jimmy, do not run away."

"Stay at home its young Jimmy, til your trial will draw near
The laws of our country will set Jimmy clear."
The day of Jimmy's trial her ghost did appear
With her apron pinned around her, saying "Jimmy come clear."

You can take all these pretty girls and place them in a row
Molly Bender shone amongst them like mountains of snow
Molly Bender she's dead and almost are gone
With her apron pinned around her, she was shot for a swan

* lovely is pronounced *lovelie* (long i)

HARM HERBERT

as sung by Currence Hammonds

Pure pentatonic, mode III



A sad and mournful story, the truth to you I'll tell
A sad and mournful story, the truth to you I'll tell
Concerning Herman* Herbert, it's just the way he fell

He was traveling through this country, from old Kentucky came
He was traveling through this country, from old Kentucky came
He came for raise a family it was to be his aim

He was captured by the Rebels, with chains they bound him fast
He was captured by the Rebels, with chains they bound him fast
They swore so hard against him, they took his precious life

They drove him up the hollow, they drove him up the hill
They drove him up the hollow, they drove him up the hill
In the place of execution, he begged to write his will

Farewell you friends and neighbors, likewise my little child
Farewell you friends and neighbors, likewise my little child
I'll leave this letter with you, that I am bound to die

* i.e., Harm

continued

They wrapped the cords around him, they bound him to a tree
They wrapped the cords around him, they bound him to a tree
With eleven balls shot through him, his body shrank away

Harm Herbert was not guilty, I've often heard them say
Harm Herbert was not guilty, I've often heard them say
He was not in this country, he was ninety miles away

THE GAMBLING MAN

as sung by Currence Hammonds with banjo tuned GDGCD (G "modal")

Pentatonic, mode IV



Oh daughter, my dear daughter, what makes you look so
Don't leave your kind old mother, but let the gambler go

I took her in the parlor, I cooled her with a fan
She whispered low in her mother's ear, "I love the gambling man."

Oh baby in the cradle, Pap sittin' by
Mammy's washin' dishes, it's baby don't you cry

Oh, one says "Mama, I want a piece of bread."
The other says "Daddy, I want to go to bed."

I am a roving gambler, I've gambled all around
Whenever I meet a deck of cards I lie my money down

I've gambled out in Washington, I've gambled out in Spain
I'm going down to Georgy to gamble my last game

Oh daughter, oh dear daughter, what makes you look so
Stay with kind old Mama, don't with the gambler go

Oh Mama, my dear Mama, you know I love you well
But the love I have for the gamblin' man, no human tongue can tell

She's over the washboard, he's on the road
She's over the washboard, paying for his board

Sometimes he makes a dollar, sometimes he makes two
When he's off a-gamblin', oh lord what will I do

COME ALL YOU ROVING GAMBLERS

as sung by Currence and Minnie Hammonds

Pure pentatonic, mode II (except for F \sharp 's)



Come all you roving gamblers
While I have dollars to spend
For tomorrow my pockets may be empty
I'll neither have dollars nor friends
For tomorrow my pockets may be empty
I'll neither have dollars nor friends

continued

Wake up pretty Karo and Nella
What makes you sleep so sound
Before I'll be arrested here
The policeman I'll shoot down
Before I'll be arrested here
The policeman I'll shoot down

Come all you roving gamblers
While getting on a spree
While drinking your healths to the young girls
Drink one for little Nora and me
While drinking your healths to the young girls
Drink one for little Nora and me

Oh yonder stands my true love
With a wine glass in her hand
She's drinking down her trouble
And courting some other young man
She's drinking down her trouble
And courting some other young man

If I had listened to mother
I would not a-been here today
But being young and foolish
So easily* led astray
But being so young and foolish
So easily* led astray

It's up and down the railroad
Across the Georgia line
There's forty young women around me
No true one could I find
There's forty young women around me
No true one could I find

* pronounced *easilie* (long i)

Transcriber's note: The two singers, singing in unison, tended to agree quite well on the decorations, but often seemed to disagree on the meter. Minnie seemed not to want to hold the long notes quite

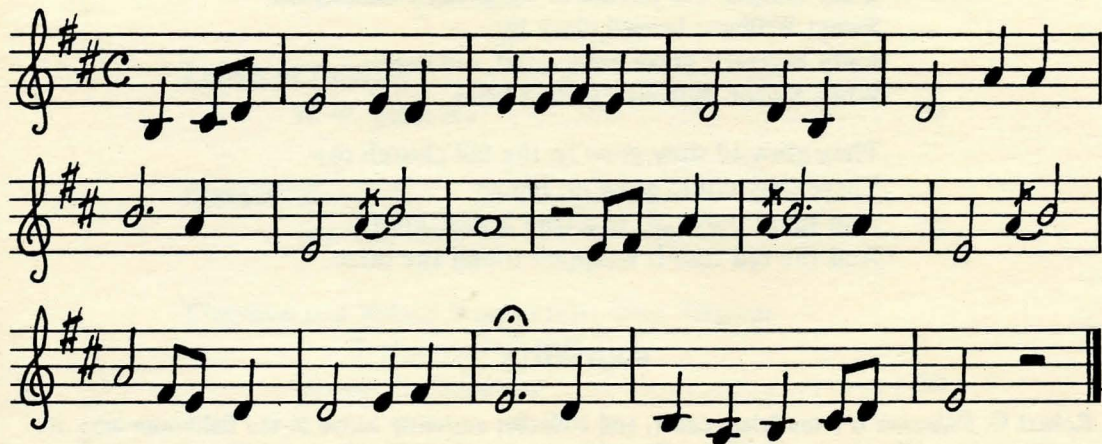
as long as Currence. I suspect that the basic tune is in 3/4 time throughout, i.e., Minnie is right. If the singer will simply shorten the long notes in each of the common-time bars by one beat, he will find a perfectly logical and stylistic tune in 3/4 time.

Jerry Epstein

LADY MARGET

as sung by Minnie Hammonds

Pentatonic, mode IV (Dorian 6th degree note added in passing)



Lady Marget was standing in her bowing hall
Combing back her yellow hair
Sweet Williams and his own true love
Came walking close by there

Back fell Lady Marget's ivory comb
Back fell her yellow hair
Back fell Lady Marget in her bowing hall
And no more were to be seen of her

Lady Marget was neither in her bowing hall
Nor neither in her room
She's in her coffin, lying there
That sits against the room

continued

Go fold me back the coffin lid
Go fold me back the sheet
That I may kiss her clay cold lips
Which once was so soft and sweet

Oh first I kissed her lily white hand
And then I kissed her chin
And then I kissed her clay cold lips
Which the breath it was not in

Lady Marget was buried in the green church yard
Sweet Williams buried close by
Lady Marget's grave grew a red, red rose
While Sweet Williams' grew a briar

They grew til they grew to the tall church top
There they could grow no higher
And there they tied in a true lovers' knot
And the red rose it wrapped round the briar

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Robert G. Dalsemer is a musician, caller, and collector currently active in the Baltimore area. He was an Artist-in-Residence in Elkins, West Virginia during 1977-78 and collected much dance and song material.
- ² See G. Malcolm Laws, *Native American Balladry*, American Folklore Society, 1966; p. 128, #A 20.
- ³ See Laws (1966), p. 231, #H 4.

ERRATUM

On page 9 of *Country Dance and Song* 9, the second line of the tune for "Hi Rinky Dum" should end with a half note F, rather than an E. The corrected second line of the tune is:



A TIME TO DANCE: A Review

A Time to Dance: American Country Dancing from Hornpipe to Hot Hash, by Richard Nevell. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977.

The major flaw of *A Time to Dance* is that it claims to be much more than it is. The book's jacket calls it "the first complete book on American Country Dance" offering "a complete history of country dancing." Although a comprehensive work of this kind is sorely needed in the field, *A Time to Dance* is not it.

Other more qualified reviewers have dealt specifically with the shortcomings of author Richard Nevell's scholarship. Writing for the *Sonneck Society Newsletter* (Vol. 4, no. 3, Fall 1978), John M. Forbes lists a number of problems ranging from some which are "simply irritating" to "many larger concerns." In general he states,

The history portion is not scholarly. It repeats many incorrect myths of past writings, and reinforces the popular character of the total work. Mistakes tumble from every page. There are errors of fact, context, concept, and omission. One is tempted to correct the text as if grading an undergraduate term paper. The reader finally wonders how this came to pass.

LeeEllen Friedland, in her review for *The Journal of American Folklore* (in press), systematically works through the book pointing out Nevell's mistakes. She begins:

It becomes immediately apparent in the introduction that the author lacks training in any academic discipline which would have familiarized him with the theories and terms of cultural studies necessary to undertake such a work. This is obvious both in his style, which is emotion laden and anecdotal, and in his use of inaccurate terms and concepts. For example, Nevell is ignorant of the distinction between popular and folk culture and between authentic and revived traditions. He does not even define the critical term 'country dancing'...

Indeed, some of Nevell's "history" seems little more than conjecture and day-dream-like theorizing, a tone set by his tomato plant "hallucinations" (p. 14) and reinforced by subsequent references to "ancient people." He then follows with various firm statements of "fact" which are simply incorrect:

The immediate forerunner of the contra dance as we know it was called Morris dancing. (p. 16)

. . . the cotillion was more of a spontaneous dance consisting of figures made up on the spot by a 'caller,' the American version of the dancing master. . . (p. 50)

and repeats mistakes of previous writers:

The southern [Appalachian] people were not particularly enamored of contra dances. In fact they preferred dances which, as Cecil Sharp observed in the early twentieth century, originated in the rural communities of Britain, ones like those Playford had recorded in the first edition of *The Dancing Master*. (p. 41)

Much of this criticism could have been avoided if Nevell had simply followed the example of Tolman and Page in *The Country Dance Book* (1937, reprinted by Stephen Greene Press, Brattleboro, Vermont, 1976). Their book succeeds where Nevell's fails because they make no pretense of representing anything more than their own personal experience:

. . . we can be only like the frog that hollers for its own puddle. . . we don't pretend, then, that this book will turn out to be a scholarly thesis on the dance. . . nor do we dare hope that it will be a quotable authority. (p. 10)

In fact, *A Time to Dance* contains a very pleasant, readable collection of interviews and personal observations from a variety of sources around the country, which results in a nice account of different kinds of dancing happening in the late 1970's. Reflecting this, Ralph Page is quoted on the book's jacket, "I enjoyed the book immensely. In fact I didn't want it to end. . . It is a contemporary history of the dance written in a pleasing style and manner."

A Time to Dance is not, however, the definitive work on American Country Dancing that Nevell and his publishers would have the reader believe. In his introduction, Nevell states, "The communities I ended up writing about are the ones where I could dance, play music, and feel at home with the people. When I didn't feel that bondage, that comfort, I moved on." That might be a reasonable method of operation for a book subtitled "A Sampling of American Country Dancing in New England, the South, and West." For a book labelled "complete," it is inadequate and misleading.

Fred Breunig