

COUNTRY DANCE AND SONG

13

November

1983



Country Dance and Song

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Editors' Statement

The editors were planning to send off this thirteenth volume of COUNTRY DANCE AND SONG with a grand fanfare, but sober reflection suggests that a brief down-beat will serve just as well. COUNTRY DANCE AND SONG has a fine tradition as a permanent record of CDSS research. We hope to continue that tradition and add to it. For the first time, an editorial board appears as a feature of CD&S. CD&S is now a refereed journal in which publications will have been approved by at least two editorial readers as well as the editors themselves.

Volume 13 offers articles typical of the research interests of the Country Dance and Song Society's members in English and American country dance and music. In the future, the editors hope to add articles which define various traditions, give introductory bibliographies, and generally act as resources for the membership to introduce themselves to fields outside of their own specialties. Offers to write such articles would be appreciated, and the range of sub-genres which ought to be described in this way—from Garland Dancing to Labor Songs to Shaker Music and Dance and on—seems unlimited. The editors also hope to offer special issues on a single topic—dance instruction, the music of New England, British and American folk music—again, the topics seem limitless.

The members of CDSS not only talk about dance and music, they also make music and participate in the dance. We hope that they will also do that with their journal. If a general background article helps to open a new field of interest, we would be pleased—and we are reasonably sure that there are plenty of specialists who would gladly read about other areas of CDSS interest. We hope that research in both the oral and the written traditions will continue to make up a healthy proportion of CD&S. The facts of the music and its spirit are both important, and the readership will have to excuse us if we occasionally throw in an item like the one which concludes this volume—from *Yankee Notions*, 1857—to define a mood. After this short song and dance, we hope to have a long run. Your suggestions and participation are welcome.

DEES for the Editors and
Editorial Board

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Traditional Dancing and Dance Music of the Monadnock (N.H.) Region (Part I)

Editor's note: This is part I of a two-part article by Ralph Page, dean of New England country-dance callers. It was originally given as a talk at Keene State College (N.H.) in 1981 and has been rewritten by Ralph Page especially for CD&S. Part II will appear in the May 1984 issue.

The Monadnock region is known all over North America and even in England and Germany as "the home of traditional New England dancing." Certainly there has never been the need for a "revival" of the dance form, because we never lost it. Of course, country dancing was, and still is, more popular in some towns than in others. That is human nature. No excuse was too trivial for us to hold a country dance, and they were common in relation to political happenings, firemen's celebrations, sheep shearings, and just about anything else from New Year's celebrations to Leap Year balls.

The early dances came with the early settlers from Great Britain. All over Europe the English were known as "the dancing English." There is a legend that Queen Elizabeth I bestowed the office of Lord Chancellor on Sir Christopher Hatton not for any superior knowledge of the law but because he wore green bows on his shoes and danced the Pavane to perfection. The country dances were the ordinary everyday dances of the country people, performed not merely on festal days but whenever opportunity offered. The English common people and bourgeois society of the country developed the country dance to its highest point in complexity. When they came to America, the English brought with them their love of dancing and music.

English country dances were set down and published by John Playford in a series of books entitled *The English Dancing Master: or, Plaine and easie Rules for the Dancing of Country Dances, with the Tune to each Dance*. Playford and his heirs published seventeen editions of the book through the years 1650 to 1728, finally covering 900 country dances of varying degrees of difficulty. They explored all forms of crossovers and interweaving, with the numbers of participants varying from four to an indefinite number. Sometimes each couple in succession led through the figures, sometimes alternate couples, and occasionally the whole group "for as many as will" performed the figures simultaneously. When you emigrate from one country to another with the idea of taking up permanent settlement in the new country, you tend to take what you love with you and what you hate you leave behind. The English dances came along.

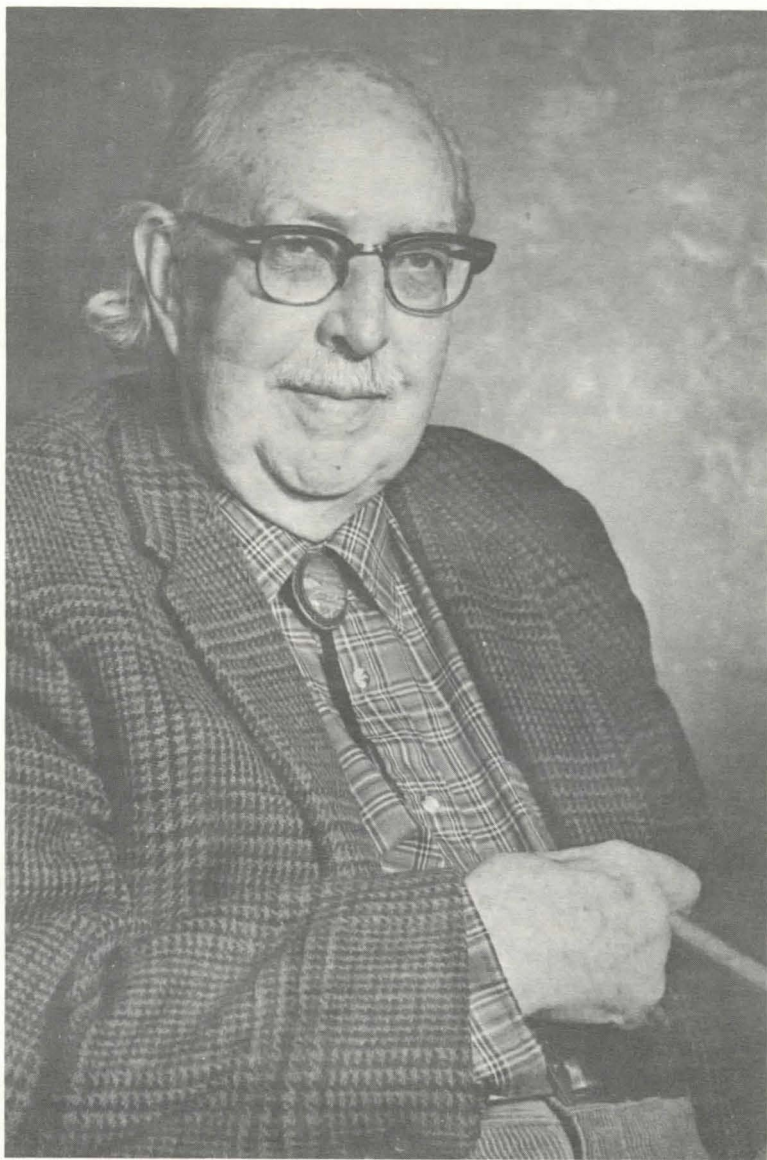


Photo by Barrett Studios, Keene, N.H.

Ralph Page holding his famous cigar

Most of our early settlers were Puritans, but not all of them were pickle-faced kill-joys. Percy Scholes's *The Puritans and Music in England and New England* gives overwhelming evidence of their love of music and dancing.¹ It is probably an incomplete reading of the antics of John, Increase, and Cotton Mather that started the venerable vulgar error which insists that they were all blue nosed so-and-sos who hated fun and passed (untraceable) laws against music and dance. Boston had its dancing schools in the last third of the seventeenth century. Unfortunately, these early dancing masters seldom advertised, so we can read about them only when they got into trouble. Carl Bridenbaugh cites two in *Cities in the Wilderness*.² The first in 1672 was "put down"; no explanation available. The second in 1681 was Monsieur Henri Sherlot, "a person of very insolent & ill fame, that Raves and scoffs at Religion." He was ordered out of town, and soon after Increase Mather wrote his "Arrows Against Profane and Promiscuous Dancing." Mather reissued it in 1685 when another vagabond, Francis Stepney, chose Lecture Day for his classes and otherwise defied the ministry, then fled town one jump ahead of his creditors. It is not known who ran the dancing school in 1688 when Cotton Mather complained bitterly that parents were more concerned with it than with their children's souls, but it clearly must have been very active.³

Newly appointed ministers of this era were given "Ordination Balls," the earliest one yet traced was given by Reverend Timothy Edwards (father of the famous Jonathan) in 1694.⁴ I have often wondered how the idea arose that all the New England clergy objected to dancing. The Puritans had justification for their approval. The best dancing masters of the day taught manners, and manners were a minor branch of morals. We may smile condescendingly at the idea of our Puritan forefathers devising moral reasons for something that is plain, ordinary fun; but if anybody has seen how square dancing improves the morale of underprivileged children as I have, he will know what the wise old Puritans also knew.

A few of the popular dances of that day that were danced in America were "Maiden Lane" (1650), "The Old Mole" (1650), "Dargason" (1662), "Jacob Hall's Jig" (1695), "The Geud Man of Balangigh" (1698), "Childgrove" (1701), "The Black Nag" (1670), and the big circle dance "Selinger's Round" (1670). Also popular was a square for eight, "Hunsdon House" (1665), whose first figure is step for step the "Grand Square" of modern-day square dancers.

The tradition continued in the next century. In 1716, an advertisement in the *Boston News-Letter* informs us of "All sorts of fine works, as Featherwork, Filigree, and Painting on Glass . . . and Dancing cheaper than ever" was taught in the city.⁵ A reference to dancing in the middle of the eighteenth century is made by Selma Hale in *The Annals of Keene*.⁶ He writes, "In 1748 Nathan Blake of Keene and a young man named Allen, were exchanged for a young French Lieutenant named Raimbout. On the way home Blake stopped at the home of the Raimbouts. The neighbors were invited; a sumptuous feast was prepared; 'wine', to use the language of Blake, 'was as plenty as water'; the evening, and the night, were spent in dancing; the happy father and mother opening the ball, and displaying all the liveliness of youth." This is not to say that Nathan Blake was a dancer, only that he was exposed to dancing, and we may be sure that he talked about it upon reaching home.

In 1783, a ball was given by the Royal Governor in Boston, at which all the light-heeled and light-hearted Bostonians of the Governor's set danced until three in the morning. As balls (or routs, as they were also called) began at six o'clock, people danced long hours. On the eve of the Revolution there had been two assemblies in Boston, one for those with Tory

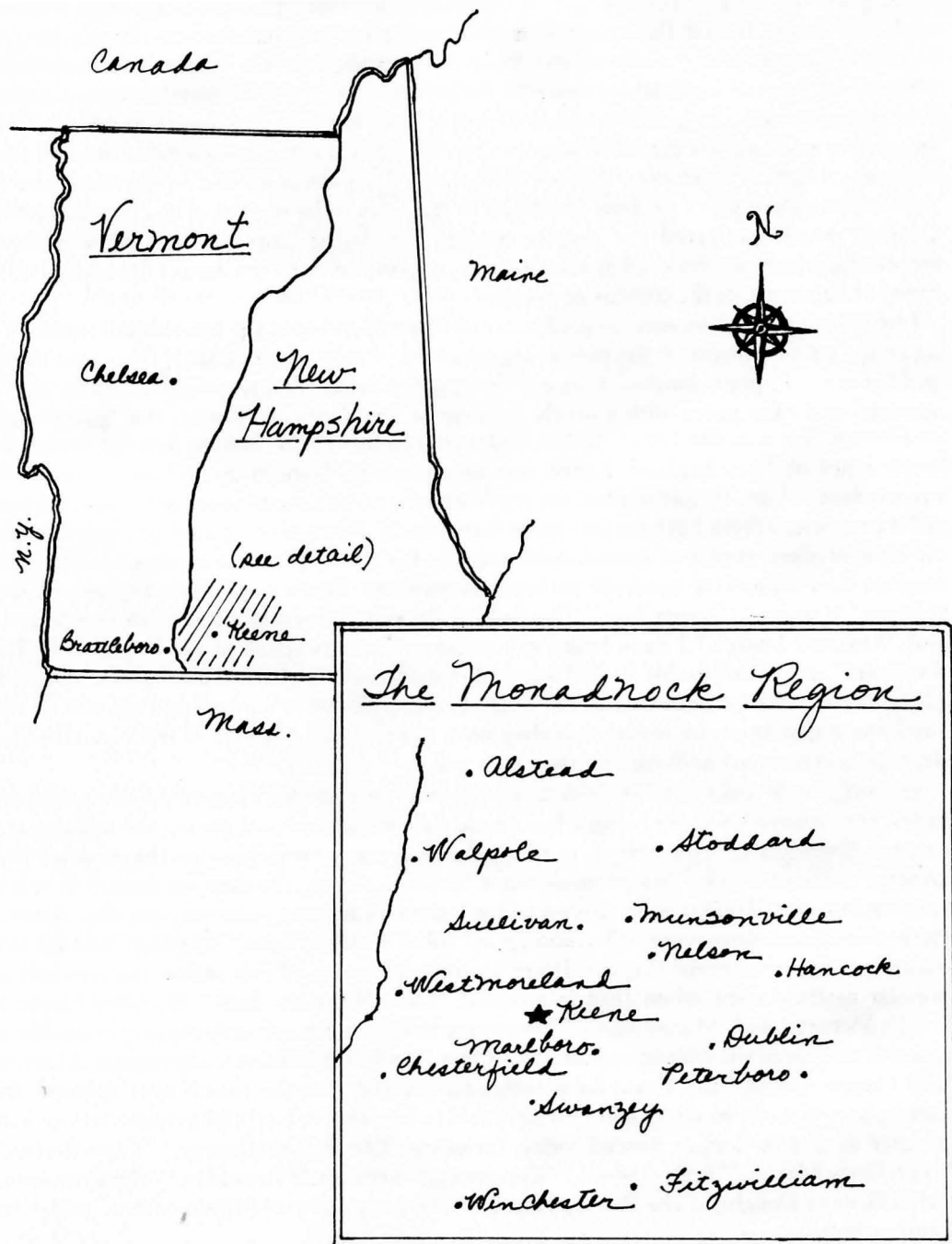
leanings, the other a Liberty assembly. The letters of a young lady loyalist declare that the former was reputed to be the best in America. There are frequent references in the diary of John Rowe, friend of John Adams, to brilliant balls and very "good dancing."⁷

The American Revolution was conservative—a preserving of the status quo by keeping the traditional English liberties. The division with England was political not cultural. Therefore we did not invent a new type of dance but expressed our Revolutionary ardor in new dances of the old type. Dances such as "Stoney Point," "A Successful Campaign," and "The Defeat of Burgoyne" were created by the dancing masters, given names commemorating events of the war, but still kept the prevalent country dance formations and used English terms for the figures involved. Up until the Revolution people considered themselves Englishmen dancing English dances. However, in the 1790s and early 1800s we began to Americanize some of the terms in contra dances. A "hey for three" became "figure eight"; "right hand and left hand" became "right and left" and was usually called "right and left four"; "chasse the center" became "down the center with partner and back"; and "swing partner once and a half" became "turn partner by the right hand once and a half around."

The Monadnock region was active at this time. One of the early dance books published in New England was *A Collection of Contra Dances of Late, Approved and Fashionable Figures*, by Thomas Carlyle, printed at the Museum Press of Walpole, New Hampshire, in 1799. Another early volume, *The Dancer's Instructor*, "Containing a Collection of the newest Cotillions and Country Dances," by "W. J." was printed in Keene by John Prentiss "for the Compiler" in the early 1800s.⁸ A hand-written dance tune manuscript by Caleb Chase, of Keene, is in the files of the New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, New Hampshire. The first dancing school in Keene was taught by John Burbank, of Brookfield, Massachusetts, in the winter of 1798-99. In 1799, Burbank published *A New Collection of Country Dances* for the year 1799.⁹

John Griffith was undoubtedly the best-known dancing master of the post-Revolutionary era. He wrote several books of contra dances and cotillions—a direct ancestor of the modern-day quadrille. Two of his best-known works are *The Sky Lark*, published in Northampton, Massachusetts, in 1794, and the famous *Otsego Manuscript* published in Otsego, New York, in 1808, containing some 350 contra dances arranged alphabetically. Some of the dances are still danced today in the Monadnock region: "British Sorrow," "The Young Widow," and "The Doubtful Shepherd" are probably the best known. Another of his creations deserves more popularity than it has, "The Bonny Lass of Aberdeen." Griffith's version of "Money Musk" is nearly identical with the way it is danced to this day in the Monadnock region.¹⁰ We are fortunate that there was a dancing master of John Griffith's caliber. He was not afraid of pioneering in small towns which had never before known a dancing master. He traveled up and down the Connecticut River Valley as far north as Walpole, where he published *A Collection of Contra Dances* in 1799. He called one of his dances "The 'Statia Girl," and it is nice to think that he knew a girl from 'Statiaville, where the "Silent Way" road is in Keene today, and named the dance for her.

The War of 1812 had a profound effect on the dance forms of this country. It was not a popular war in New England; we called it "President Madison's War" and talked of seceding. The rest of the country fell in love with and took up with what was called the "French quadrille" while New Englanders, especially those living in the smaller towns, kept on



dancing and loving the country dances from the older tradition. The cities, even those as small as Keene, danced the quadrille more and more. Not so in the towns like Nelson, Stoddard, Chesterfield, Westmoreland, Walpole, Alstead, Hancock, Dublin, and Fitzwilliam. Why did we retain the old dances well into the present century? We danced them because we liked them—being the contrary-minded people that we are, had we thought we were preserving anything we probably wouldn't have danced them. The quadrilles became a set sequence of figures and were therefore memorized. They got more and more complicated so that dancers were given printed directions to the ones to be danced at any particular ball. Country people preferred the simpler contras that lasted longer. Why bother to learn something which was finished as soon as four couples had done the dance? Quadrilles were aimed at deportment; the contras at exercise.

I am often asked when was the golden age of square dancing in the Monadnock region? As far as the smaller towns of the region are concerned I very much doubt if there was ever a "golden age" of square dancing. Country dancing has remained a popular pastime for over a hundred and fifty years with scarcely a let-up in popularity. In Keene, the "golden age" unquestionably was the 1870s, 1880s, and well into the 1890s. Square dancing swept the larger cities of New England; Keene was no exception. Danced by millions of people in square dance clubs, it is now a far, far cry from what was danced years ago—some people call it progress; others have far less polite terms for it. When playing a set of quadrilles, the old-time orchestras played special music written for them. This was continued until quite modern times; favorite quadrille orchestrations were "Black Cat," "The Prince of Good Fellows," "Circus," "Queen Bee," "The Sailor's Return," "Good Humor," "Harvest Moon," and "Autumn Leaves." I have heard my uncle and others speak in awed tones of "The Barry Set" and "The Marble Set" of quadrille tunes, and I have hand-written manuscripts of the violin parts for both (see p. 9). Certainly quadrilles were danced, and are still, at the small town dances of the region, but they have not replaced our love of traditional contra dancing, and it seems unlikely that they ever will.¹¹

Bringing dance types up to modern times, I have never attended a country dance anywhere in the region without there being a few round dances interspersed among the squares and contras. Sometimes, in the early days of my dancing, every third dance on the program was either a waltz or a galop (we pronounced it "galow"), which, the way we danced it, was a turning two-step. Galops were danced to contagious music and were very popular. Among the better-known ones were "Whip and Spur," "Blue Streak," "Soho," "Flip Flap" and the real old-timer "Prince Imperial Galop." There are several dances of this region that are just as popular as they were when first introduced: "Lady Walpole's Reel," "Sacketts Harbor," "Hull's Victory," and "Money Musk." There may be others but certainly those four qualify as favorite contras of the Monadnock region. "Opera Reel" is still occasionally danced. A buxom lady I knew named Edith Cram frequently said about it that the fourth time through the reeling part of it she began looking for her maid to breathe for her! Old manuscripts give us popular dances no longer danced today, including "Old Father George," "Cape Breton," "High Betty Martin," "Rolling Stone," "Constancy," "Springfield Assembly," "The President," "Miss Foster's Delight," "The Priest's House," "The Lady's Choice," "Pettycoatee," and "The Leather Strap."

Up until the turn of the century, people learned to dance by attending a dancing school. If

they didn't know the dance, they were not supposed to get on the floor to dance it. They sat it out. They were told, "Don't you spoil my dance." In the 1870s and 1880s several dancing masters set up a circuit of towns for their classes. One of them, W. W. Ball of Keene, became a well-known dance master and for a number of years he held weekly classes in the county towns. On Monday night he might hold a class in Munsonville; the next night he would be in Stoddard; Wednesday night, in Hancock; Thursday night in Fitzwilliam. Each class lasted about two hours and music was supplied by the local fiddler. At the close of 10 to 12 lessons there would be a ball or special party for the students and immediate families. W. W. Holman, a native of Fitzwilliam, taught dancing for several years in that town, Winchester, and Swanzey. His son Harry Holman was a fine dancer and came to scores of my dances in the area. His favorite dance was "Pat'nella" and he often requested it but also insisted that we play the "right" music for it; this was a tune known up and down the Connecticut River Valley as the "Vermont Pat'nella." Dick Richardson of Marlboro grew up with the tune in Vermont and taught it to us "outsiders" who had the misfortune to live in New Hampshire. A Mrs. F.C. Howard was a well-known dance teacher who traveled around the region in later years.

One hundred years ago the grand balls, or assemblies, or cotillions as they were sometimes called, invariably opened with a grand march, led by the floor managers and their partners, one of whom many times was the eldest lady present, or a bride, if one happened to be present. A great many complex figures made up these grand marches which frequently lasted ten or fifteen minutes. About 11:00 o'clock a long intermission came and everyone entered the dining hall for a feast of roast turkey, venison, or oysters. Promptly at 12:30 the dancing recommenced and would continue until two or three o'clock in the morning. For many of the fancy-dress balls, orchestras were imported from Boston or Worcester to furnish the music. Inevitably the balls opened with an hour-long concert to which a separate admission was charged. Overtures by the whole orchestra and solo numbers by the more talented individuals were featured. The musicians were professionals. Few local orchestras could compete with the quality of music thus offered, though Atherton's of Peterboro and Beedle's of Keene could certainly do so—and did.

There were a number of other sorts of dances. A very few of the old farmhouses had a dance hall built into them. Sometimes up attic, sometimes on the second floor and, once in a while, over the woodshed. The Caleb Wright place in Sullivan had one; Tom Hasting's home in East Sullivan; the Balcom place in Stoddard; the old Sumner Fisher place in Munsonville was another, along with the James Wright house on Beech Hill in Keene. Every Leap Year saw many Leap Year balls in all parts of the region. The ladies paid all the bills, which included the hiring of the hall, engaging the orchestra, and calling for the gentlemen in their carriages. Fire departments held many dances during the fall and winter months. State and national elections seem to have been more personal then, and the winning candidate many times sponsored a "Victory" ball. The losers went to dance and play tricks. One of the standard jokes was to scatter red pepper over the floor or to put boards over the chimney, thus causing the stove to smoke so badly the windows would have to be raised while the braver men removed the obstacle from the chimney top. Uncle Wallace used to tell of one "Victory" dance held in Munsonville when someone threw a dead skunk into the room. Kitchen Junkets were seldom held in a room large enough to accommodate an orchestra of

even three pieces. Usually we danced to a fiddler perched on a three-legged milking stool up in the kitchen sink, out of the way of the dancers, though a fiddler like Charlie Cavender preferred to stand in the corner of the room. A continuing series in Swanzey for many years was known as the "Old Line Dance." Every dance was a contra dance, and the program began at 5:30 p.m. and continued until midnight.

Monadnock country dancing and music may have lasted so long because of the musicians who played the music. In the second half of this article, I will describe some of the old-time bands and fiddlers. I will also provide some of the newspaper accounts of the dances of the region in the 1870-1900 period to show them as part of the life at that time.

—Ralph Page

1. Percy Scholes, *The Puritans and Music in England and New England* (London: Oxford U. Press, 1934).
2. Carl Bridenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness* (New York: Knopf, 1960), pp. 117-18, 277, 277n, 437-38.
3. Bridenbaugh.
4. S. Foster Damon, *This History of Square Dancing* (Barre, Mass.: Barre Gazette, 1957), p. 66. See also "Dancing; Lilly Grove," in the Badminton Library (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1895), p. 176.
5. The *Boston News-Letter* can be located through the American Antiquarian Society.
6. Selma Hale, *The Annals of Keene* (Keene: J. W. Prentiss & Co., 1851), p. 27.
7. The sources have escaped.
8. The original copy of the manuscript is in the files of the New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, N.H. Carlyle's manuscript is at the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.
9. A copy is at the American Antiquarian Society.
10. "Money Musk" from the Otsego Manuscript of the American Antiquarian Society is as follows:
 - Turn your partner once and a half around
 - Lead down opposite sides one couple
 - Three first couples balance
 - Take right hands and turn your partner to the bottom
 - Turn partners to place
 - Right and left four
11. For more information on nineteenth-century dancing consult Richard Nevell, *A Time to Dance* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977).

Old Quadrille

Marble Set

Handwritten musical score for "Old Quadrille" and "Marble Set". The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first section, "Old Quadrille", spans the first 10 staves and includes markings for "No. 2", "D.C.", and "x". The second section, "Marble Set", spans the remaining 5 staves and includes markings for "No. 3", "D.C.", and "x". The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and repeat signs.

Chuck Luce: Old-time Vermont Fiddler

Harold "Chuck" Luce was born in Chelsea, Vermont, in 1918, and has lived within a few miles of there ever since.¹ In 1939 he married Edith Keyes "from over the next hill" and they raised six children while Chuck made a living as a dairy farmer, factory worker, and fiddler. He is now retired from the first two occupations, but continues to work on a "home-made" fiddle style that has made him one of New England's premier old-time dance musicians. This interview reflects his special personal involvement with traditional music and music-making in his village in central Vermont.

Chuck and Edith's ancestors go back at least to the 18th century in the same modest and serene hills of central Vermont, where the village names are straight from the English countryside: Tunbridge, Topsham, Barnard, Woodstock, Thetford.

Chuck's fiddling also bears the stamp of English ancestry, not just in the dance tunes he plays but in the way he plays them—straightforward, articulate, light and charming. Living and playing in a relatively isolated area, he has picked up only a few French-Canadian tunes, and little or nothing from the urban Irish. His main influence has been the Anglo-American tradition, and pop and country-western music. His repertoire consists mostly of traditional dance tunes like "Chorus Jig," "Hull's Victory," and "Fisher's Hornpipe," along with waltzes, marches and hoedowns he picked up from the radio and old (78rpm) records. His arrangements are sometimes sentimental, sometimes zany, but always full of life and lilt and inventiveness.

Chuck is now the regular fiddler for the Ed Larkin Contra Dancers, a group that performs authentic versions of traditional contras as they were danced in Vermont around the turn of the century. He has also played and called for innumerable square dances in the area, as well as performed in church and in a local bar.

In recent years his fiddling has attracted attention outside Vermont. He has been on the staff for American Dance and Music Week at Pinewoods Camp twice; in 1981 he played for the National Folklife Festival in Washington, D.C.

Chuck is also famous for playing the fiddle and the piano simultaneously, thanks to a machine he invented for playing the piano with his feet. And he can fiddle "and not miss any notes" while carrying on a conversation, calling a square dance, falling asleep, or even turning a somersault and rolling himself up backwards in a blanket. This final feat was last performed at Pinewoods in 1980.

The following excerpts are from an interview with Chuck and Edith in August, 1983, on the front porch and in the living room of their house in Chelsea village.

Q. You've been playing the fiddle since you were a child, right?

Chuck: Yeah, about eleven when I first played. I tried it when I was a lot smaller than that, but every time I'd climb up on the piano stool, I'd get the case unlatched and my sisters would catch me at it and go out and tell my mother "Harold's at the fiddle" and she'd come in and close it back up. And that's all there was to it, until I was eleven and I took a few lessons.

Edith: His folks bought the fiddle for Edwin, that's his brother. But Edwin would say "Harold never'll play the fiddle, he's too rattle-brained."

Q. Did Edwin ever learn to play?

Chuck: No.

Q. But he didn't want you to play his fiddle?

Chuck: Well, I wasn't big enough. I'd break it. Years ago, kids couldn't do much, 'cause they didn't know anything. Today, they send 'em to school when they're three years old, throw 'em in swimming when they're six months old, but years ago they couldn't do those things. They weren't advanced enough, or something.

Q. Did you go to school?

Chuck: I didn't go to high school. I just went through eighth grade. Took me nine years.

Q. Because you were working on the farm?

Chuck: No, I didn't like school. I couldn't read.

Q. About the fiddle, why did you want to play it so much?

Chuck: Oh, I just liked it, I guess.

Q. Had you heard fiddling?

Chuck: I'd heard Ed Larkin play some. And they had a guy north of here, they called him "Crazy" Chase. All he knew how to do was play the fiddle. He was mentally retarded, I guess. But my folks took us down to the dance when I was five or six years old, and he sounded *so* good. Then when I was nine or ten I went to a dance, and I just couldn't sit still, I mean it seemed so good! I didn't know how to dance, I'd just sit there and listen.

Then my father had a hired man, and we'd take the fiddle down and fool around with it, and the two of us got so we could play on one string. I was sliding up and down the whole length of one string. Then we got another hired man, and he said that wasn't the way it was played, that all I had to have was three fingers to play it all right. So I started working on that. And when I was eleven I took nine lessons.

Then my father asked Ed Larkin if he cared if I came when he played, if I took my fiddle and kept out of the way. So I did that. He didn't teach me anything. He used to give me the devil 'cause he said I was gaining time on him. He'd turn around and yell right out, "*Slow it down!*" But he never showed me how to get anywhere with it. I got it all on my own.

He was a pretty stern old buzzard. When they got lined up to have a contra dance and anybody got fooling around a little bit, he'd stop and point his bow down there and say,

"You either get into line or get off the floor!" And that's the way it was. They straightened out.

Q. Now at that time, contra dancing was dying out, right? And Ed Larkin wanted to preserve it.

Chuck: That's right. When I was a kid they had the kitchen junkets but they were fading out.² When I was eleven or twelve I went to two different ones. There was a guy built a big porch on the side of his house, and I remember going there. Ed Larkin sat and played inside the window, and they danced in the living room and on the porch. I remember it was time to go home, and they played the goodnight waltz and I liked it so well. Probably it was "Home Sweet Home." And I went up to the window and asked him to play that again. He said "My gal, boy! I got to go home and do some chores in the morning!" This was probably one o'clock in the morning.

But I remember dances when they'd stay all night. Later I played at kitchen junkets over across the hill here, 'twas colder than the dickens. You'd take a horse for it, put on a fur coat, take a horse blanket and put a lantern under the seat, drive a ways and then get out and walk, your hands would get so cold. And we played 'til daylight in the morning, that'd be seven o'clock in the winter.

Q. And you'd come back and work on the farm?

Chuck: No, my father told me to go to bed, 'cause I must be tired. Which was all right, I was!



*"Road to California" is a little-known tune that typifies Chuck's melodic style of playing.

Q. Let's talk a little about the way you play. You seem to try for precision, for really playing every note.

Chuck: I guess I try to get in what is in there to get out. If I was going to dance, I'd like to have somebody play for me the way I try to play for somebody else. When this other fiddler plays for the contra dancers he plays so fast, it's jump here and jump there. I like to get a bounce, sort of. Timing is what I think it is.

Q. You once told me that Larkin would say you ought to play every note with a separate stroke of the bow.

Chuck: I remember when my father asked him about my playing. He said, "There ain't no trick to fiddlin'. You just get a bow for each note."

Q. That's practically impossible.

Chuck: Well, no, I wouldn't say it's impossible. I mean in "Irish Wash Woman" I think I got one or two places in there that I slur two of them together. I don't know as I do it every time. I don't think much about it, it's just automatic.

Q. You say you did take lessons at two times. Who were your teachers?

Chuck: A guy from Williamstown, the first time. I think I took nine lessons, but I couldn't get anywhere to speak of. I couldn't read — not even notes. He found so much fault with me I just got sick of it, so I didn't go any more. But I played a lot by ear, and I played for dances some. And then when I was 17, they had classes here and I took lessons. This was a government project.

Q. This was during the Depression?

Chuck: Yes. They had an instrumental teacher and a vocal teacher, they came together from Barre. They had a small band down in Tunbridge, 22 or 23 members in it. I'd ride down there with her and she'd bring me back home on her way back, for a couple of years.

I took enough lessons, but I never followed it up. I should have learned my notes, but I didn't, it just didn't mean that much to me. I just wanted to fiddle, I guess, and play simple things.

Q. But would you say you got something out of these lessons?

Chuck: Oh yes, I know I did. I mean my timing, my clarity, my style.

But I don't bother with style. I still fiddle like this.³ I don't go way up and spread my fingers around. Now we've got two guys who go to the fiddlers' contests, it takes them about five minutes to get into position.

Edith: They're not fiddlers, they're violinists.

Q. What's the difference between a fiddler and a violinist?

Chuck: I think fiddlers get more expression. I know we went to one fiddlers' contest, and the guy came out on stage with his music stand, got his music put up in front of him and played

real good. But it wasn't fiddlin'. There was no expression or feeling whatsoever, nothing that came out of him. It all came out of the fiddle. You have to have some of it in you to get it out.

Q. You've played in contests, and for dances, and in church and in bars. What do you enjoy most?

Chuck: Oh, a dance hall I guess. I like to see everybody have a good time. They had a guy up here last night danced the polka. We couldn't play any better, I don't think, and I don't think he could have danced any better. He was putting it right out so we could see him, and I guess we tried to do it too.

Q. When did you start calling square dances?

Chuck: Right off. I started when I first played for the kitchen junkets, when I was 16. Larkin was the one that usually came, and he couldn't come for some reason. And they had a guy named Sam get up there and he couldn't talk, and he was going to call changes. And they had a circle two-step, and he said, "Let's have a turkle two-tep!" So that's when I started, because I knew they couldn't understand him, so I tried it and it worked.

Q. What instruments do you like to have in a dance band?

Chuck: I've always thought the fiddle, a set of drums, a good banjo player and a good piano player are about as good as you can get. It seems to click pretty good. But I also like a bass. And steel guitar.

Q. Now you can also play the fiddle and the piano at the same time, with this contraption that lets you play chords with your feet. When did you invent this?

Chuck: Let's see, two of three years before we were married. I was 17.

Q. Did you do it because you needed it, or was it just for fun?

Edith: Because his sisters went and danced, instead of playing the piano.

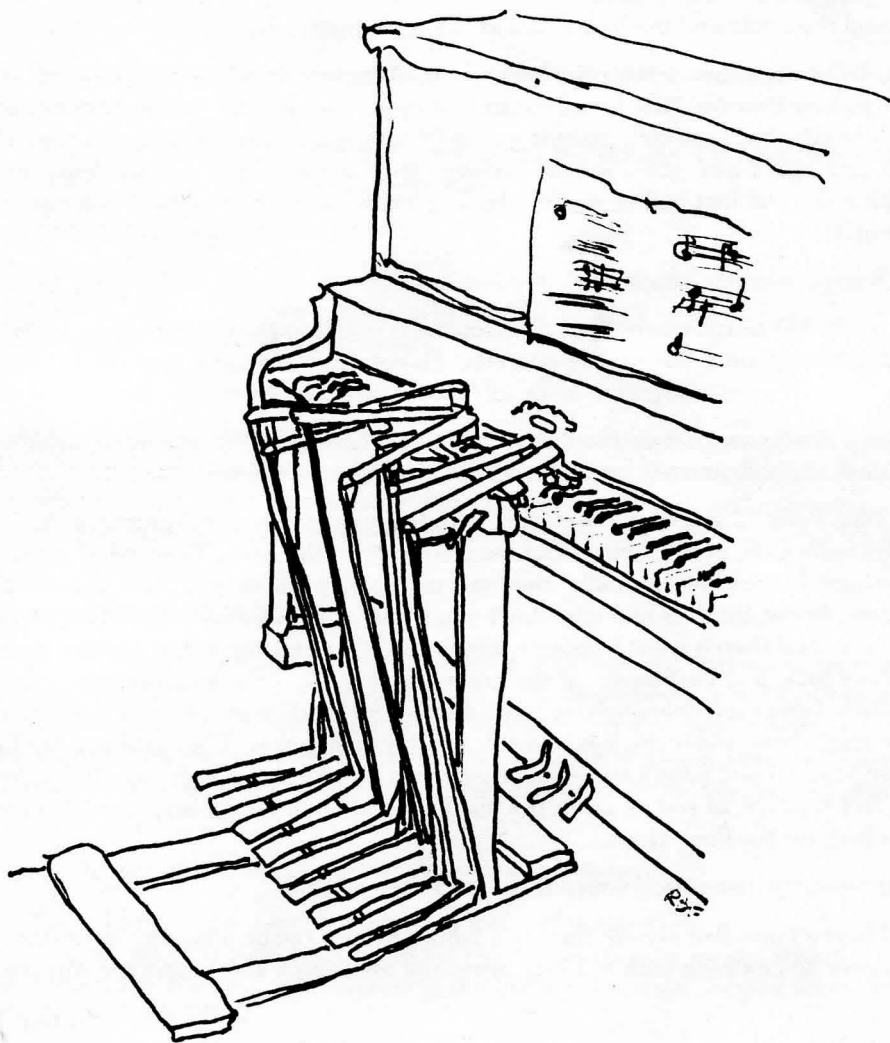
Chuck: My sisters and I would play for a kitchen junket, and they'd miss some lady or something and they'd come get my sister, so I'd have to play alone. I didn't know why I couldn't fix something. But I didn't have any boards or anything, so I asked my mother if I could have that little table-leaf. She wanted to know what I wanted to do with it, and I said "saw it open and make something to play the piano with." So I got that, and I got a couple of upright pieces . . .

Edith: His mother said he went into a trance.

Chuck: The first one I made had six pedals, three for my right foot and three for my left foot. Then I liked that so well I thought I could alternate it, so I put on three more pedals for my left foot.

Q. And can you move it around to change the key?

Chuck: No. I've been going to do that for the last forty years but I never have and I probably never will. If I had things to do it with, you might say money or something to tinker around



Chuck Luce's piano playing machine, invented by Luce when he was 17. The device is played with the feet and allowed him to accompany himself on the piano.

with, I could elongate some holes. It would be bothersome because your black keys are so much shorter than your white keys. But it could be done. I've got it all fixed up in my head.

Q. What else have you invented?

Chuck: I built a banjo outfit first. Played the banjo with my feet.

Edith: And the fiddle and the harmonica at the same time.

Chuck: I had quite a time getting the banjo thing to operate. I had my fingering, but I couldn't get the picking to come. First I tried to put tin cans on a wheel and run the water down to get the belt to run, but I couldn't make it go. So I finally got a heavy sewing machine wheel, all rusted, and had a guy put a screw in there, and I made a little wooden lever and put it through a slot and just rocked my foot back and forth to turn the wheel, and put two picks on the belt.

Q. So it strummed the banjo?

Chuck: Yeah. My music teacher put on an operetta with her pupils, and I played this thing in the intermission time during the operetta. Played the harmonica and the fiddle and the banjo.

Q. Now, I also know that you can play "Pop Goes the Weasel" on the fiddle while you do a somersault and roll yourself up into a blanket. When did you work that out?

Chuck: Well, I was 17 and we were playing with this concert down in Tunbridge. And some of the boys were over at our house, and we went out on the lawn. They asked me if I'd ever seen anyone do tricks with a fiddle, and I said no. So they said do you think you could? And I said I don't know. So they said why don't you try it? And I said why don't I try playing it in back of me. And then it went from one thing to another, putting it down under my legs and behind my back, and I sat down on the grass and they said I don't suppose you could keel a somersault, I don't see how anybody could do that. So I said I don't see why they couldn't so I put the fiddle bow under my legs and just went over like that. They said you can't do that and play a tune. I said I don't know, so I tried it and it came out all right. So I did it. And after they left, I thought of rolling up in the blanket. And now, I don't see why I can't put that blanket back on the floor again.

Q. You mean you can unroll yourself, and still keep playing?

Chuck: I haven't unrolled myself. But I told Edith I think it can be done. I've got it figured out. I may never do anything with it, I may never roll over again. But I don't see why *you* can't!

—Tom Phillips

1. For location of Chelsea, Vt., see map on page 5.
2. Junkets were community dances held in homes. Ralph Page writes that sometimes it would get so crowded the fiddler would sit in the sink. For a full description see Tolman and Page, *The Country Dance Book* (Brattleboro: Stephen Greene Press, 1976 [1937], p. 15N.)
3. With the left palm flat under the neck of the instrument. This is unsuited for classical violin playing, which requires *vibrato* and many shifting positions.

The Independence Lancers

On two occasions in 1979, I had the good fortune to visit the bi-weekly Saturday night square dance at the Grange Hall in Independence, Pennsylvania, about 25 miles southwest of Pittsburgh. I found many of the best features of traditional rural dances: a good caller with an interesting and varied figure repertoire, a solid three-piece band—made up in this case of fiddle, electric guitar, and electric bass—and an enthusiastic group of dancers of all ages, including many older dancers who have been dancing most of their lives. I was also surprised to find the Lancers being danced as part of a continuing local tradition.

The caller at Independence is Bill McAdoo, a retired steelworker who attended his first square dance as a small boy. Bill recalled that as a teenager in the late 1930s he attended as many as four dances a week in the area between Washington, Pa., and the northern panhandle of West Virginia. His dance program at Independence is much the same as the dances he attended as a young man:

They usually danced two squares and [then] three round dances . . . right after the squares you'd dance a slow dance, a waltz, then maybe they'd have a schottische and a polka something like that, and then you'd have your squares . . . and right after intermission you danced the Lancers.¹

The Lancers is a five-part quadrille that was popular in the nineteenth-century ballrooms of England and America. I had seen it mentioned and described in quite a few dance books and occasionally one or two figures from it are revived at New England style dances.² But I was truly astonished when Bill McAdoo invited me to witness a performance by a set of his oldest dancers of a complete five figure Lancers, perfectly phrased to its own special music played by fiddler Doc Fry accompanied by his brother Joe on the electric guitar.

Bill McAdoo remembers that the Lancers was very popular and was always danced right after the break at all the dances held in his very localized area of the West Virginia northern panhandle. Everyone knew all five figures from memory and there was no caller or prompter. It was only after World War II that the tradition began to die out:

Well, back in the old house dances years ago . . . I don't remember them dancing the Lancers too much. But the older people, the generation of my father, when they was younger they danced the Lancers. . . . And then when I was growing up, we got to going to Bethany [W.Va.]; down to Masonic Hall in Bethany they always danced the Lancers, McCord's Hall on Bethany Pike . . . they always danced the Lancers. Follensbee, Goodwill and Raywood, those places always danced the Lancers in that section there. But when you got away from there you never seen it. Now there's old timers

today that never saw the Lancers danced. Doc Fry is the only fiddler around now that plays the Lancers. Now there used to be a fiddler in Wellsburg by the name of Obie Little, he's gone now. Slim Fell out on Wellsburg Pike, he can play them on the saxophone and Ida Tarr played them on the piano. And those three was in the band that played for most of the dances back then.³

Nowadays the Lancers is only danced at Independence whenever eight of the older dancers who know the figures can be rounded up and whenever Doc Fry is present to play for them. Doc is not a member of the regular band, but usually comes to dance and occasionally calls a few squares. Even then Bill McAdoo reviews each figure briefly before it is danced, often reading from a ditto sheet of abbreviated directions noted by one of the dancers. I was fortunate to see the Lancers performed on both occasions I attended the dance and made sound films of the Lancers and other dances.⁴

A note about the music and dance descriptions which follow: the Lancers as danced and played at Independence is part of a living tradition, not something revived recently. As such, it must be accepted for what it is, not what it ought to be or used to be. Its survival is rather extraordinary. The music, transcribed by Claudio Buchwald from the playing of Doc Fry, is strikingly similar in form and structure to several published versions of Lancers music.⁵ In figures 1-4, the dancers wait and listen to the first eight bars of music before starting to dance. This also means that the first eight bars become a tag at the end. Only in figure 5 do the dancers begin with the music.

FIGURE 1



Wait first 8 bars
 Head couples go forward and back (4 bars)
 Head couples go forward, swing opposite once around with
 a walking step swing and fall back to place (4 bars)
 Head couples cross over the set, one couple making an arch,
 the other going under, both couples wheel around or do
 a California twirl on the other side (4 bars)
 Head couples cross back to place reversing the arches and
 wheeling or twirling at home (4 bars)
 Turn corners by the left hand and then swing partners (8 bars)

Repeat figure for sides, then heads again, then side again.

FIGURE 2



Wait first 8 bars
 Head couples go forward and back (4 bars)
 Head ladies cross over the set, change places and bow to
 opposite gent (4 bars)
 Head couples cross over the set as in figure I with one
 couple going under an arch made by the other (head ladies
 are now in home positions with opposite gents) (4 bars)
 Head gents cross over to original partners and swing (4 bars)
 Side couples face partners and back out to lines of four
 with the heads, lines go forward and back (4 bars)
 Lines go forward again and swing partners back to home
 positions (4 bars)

Repeat for sides, then heads again, then sides again.

FIGURE 3



Wait first 8 bars

Head couples go forward and back (4 bars)

Head couples go forward, bow to opposite (2 bars)
then fall back to place (2 bars)

Head ladies chain across and back (8 bars)

(Note: in the ladies chain, the gents turn the ladies
either with an open left hand turn or twirl them
around behind, rather than a modern courtesy
turn with an arm around.)

Repeat for sides, then heads again, then sides again.

FIGURE 9*



Wait 4 bars (16 counts)

Joining inside hands with partners, head couples lead out
to the side couples on the right and bow to them (2 bars/8 counts)

Moving in a counter clockwise direction around the inside of
the set, the heads wheel around with the lady backing up and
the gent going forward, ending facing the other side couple and
bowing to them (2 bars/8 counts)

Heads back up to original places and all bow to partners (2 bars/8 counts)

All join hands and circle left once around (4 bars/16 counts)

Repeat for the sides; repeat for the heads except the heads go
out first to the side couple on their left then the one on the right;
repeat for sides who likewise go first to the head couple on their left.
When leading to the left first, couples move around the inside
in a clockwise direction and wheel around with the gent backing
up and the lady going forward.

*For convenience this figure was transcribed in
12/8 rather than the conventional 6/8. To avoid confusion
the directions will be given in terms of both bars of
music and beats or counts of music.

FIGURE 5



Grand right and left all the way around, swing partners at home (8 bars)

First couple promenades around the inside of the set ending at home facing out, away from the set. First lady then folds in front of her partner to face him, with crossed hand hold (4 bars)

The other three couples fall in behind the first couple, side couples in any order, then other head couple. All are now in a single line with ladies facing their partners and joining crossed hands (4 bars)

All chasse four steps to the gents' left (ladies right);
 all chasse four steps to the gents' right (ladies left);
 all chasse four steps to the gents' left (ladies right);
 gents roll their partners back to their right sides (8 bars)
 First couple casts off followed by the others (gents to the left
 and ladies to the right); first couple meets at the bottom and
 leads the others up the center two by two; all back away from partners
 into two lines, men on one side, women on the other (8 bars)
 All go forward and back in lines (4 bars)
 All swing partners to original places (4 bars)
 Repeat for couple 2, then couple 3, then couple 4.

—Bob Dalsemer
 Music transcriptions by Claudio Buchwald

1. Interview with Bill McAdoo on 9 September 1979.
2. See Curt Sachs, *World History of the Dance* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1965), p. 440. Also, Roy Dommett, "The Kitchen Lancers," *English Dance and Song*, 41:3 (1979), 7.
3. Interview with Bill McAdoo, 9 September, 1979.
4. Copies are available on videotape from the CDSS library. Thanks are due to the National Endowment for the Arts, Folk Arts Division, for funding this project. Thanks are also due to Claudio Buchwald for musical transcriptions.
5. See, for example, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ford, *Good Morning* (Dearborn, Mich.: Dearborn Pub. Co., 1926), p. 85.

English Country Dances: **Cecil Sharp (1859-1924) and John Playford (1623-c.1687)**

Folk dancing as a recreational activity has a great attraction for people of extremely diverse backgrounds, who find in it the answer to their needs for social contacts and exercise. For some it is an outlet for the exuberance of youth, for others it satisfies the need for self-expression while offering the safety of group participation; some people choose it in response to an inner urge for a link to ethnic roots, while others, less analytical, would say they dance purely because they "love the music" or because "it is fun," or they "like a situation where all ages are able to have a good time together." For whatever reasons, many people are making English country dancing their choice, and its appeal seems to be growing. There are certainly many more people doing country dancing today than, say, thirty years ago. Perhaps this is because the English dances do have great variety in all those aspects that good dancers value and that tyros soon learn to appreciate — variety in tempo, formations and figures, and in style. The techniques needed to perform the dances may not be as obvious as those for Scottish dancing, for instance, or intricate Balkan stepping, but skill is needed nevertheless and the subtleties of phrasing and response to the music offer a challenge to the expert. It would be hard to surpass the pleasure and satisfaction that come from dancing the Morpeth Rant or Fandango to perfection!

An extremely common misunderstanding about English country dance is that "English" means "Playford." This latter term is now often used very loosely, to designate a certain style of country dance, in much the same way that in England the word "Hoover" is applied to any type of vacuum cleaner, or as in this country "Kodak" used to be synonymous with "camera." There are two distinct types of English country dance, the "traditional" forms and the historic revival dances, or Playford-type.

The so-called traditional country dances are basically community dances. These were the kinds of dances that Cecil Sharp published in the first *Country Dance Book* in 1909.¹ They may be compared with our New England contras, for instance, or Appalachian square dances. They have a definite regional flavor both in formations, steps, and style of music; the repertoire was often quite limited, the same dances being repeated over and over again in any one community; the dances were rarely taught, since the people who attended the sessions had done them all their lives and only needed a prompting call to alert them to a change of figure. Sharp collected dances in Devonshire, Somerset, Warwickshire, Surrey, Derbyshire, and Oxfordshire: all were "longways for as many as will," the type of country dance that survived into the twentieth century. At the time Sharp was noting them down there were probably more stylistic differences in performance than one would find today. With increased communications and ease of travel, distinctions tend to disappear. Fifty or

sixty years ago a dancer showing off his stepping in Devon or Somerset would not have used a north country polka, but with the introduction of dances from one area into another, stylistic differences now are fewer and the ways in which dances are done vary considerably.

Traditional country dances may frequently be recognized by their names, often of locations, such as "Yorkshire Square," "Winster Galop," and "Norfolk Long Dance." If one finds a dance done to a rant tune (the north country variant of a reel), there is no question it is a traditional-type dance, even if contemporary; the same is true of the English hornpipe rhythm (dances like "Steamboat," and "Speed the Pough"). As for formations, Sicilian circle dances must be assumed to be traditional dances since their ancestry has so far only been firmly traced back to the nineteenth century, when they appeared in profusion.

Cecil Sharp's discovery of these existing traditional country dances was extremely important. Country dancing as a form of social recreation was popular for generations but by the beginning of the twentieth century its popularity was being eclipsed by waltzes, polkas and other couple dances typical of the ballrooms of the late Victorian era. Country dancing was in fact no longer fashionable, but examples were still to be found in rural areas. Sharp realized that he was seeing dances that might indeed be classified as "folk," or at least could be said to rest on a traditional basis. In her excellent biography of Sharp, Maud Karpeles says that he believed country dancing "had its origins in the processional and circle dances which at one time formed part of the May Day ritual."² Sharp's first-hand experience with these surviving traditional country dances led him to delve into the history of English social dance with as much interest as he had shown in observing and analyzing the existing ritual dances he found. In fact his understanding of the way in which the dancers moved and the patterns they traced in both the traditional country and the ritual dances was to be of immense value when he began to interpret the country dances he found in the classic publication *The English Dancing Master* published by John Playford in 1651.

What is "Playford"? Since there seems to be an occasional dimness or fogginess of perception about "Playford," perhaps it may be well to clear up a few misunderstandings, one of which is that of thinking that Playford-type dances are the only true English country dances. Another is the failure to realize that although John Playford was a music publisher and bookseller, he was *not* a dancing master. Yet another misconception is that the 1651 edition of *The English Dancing Master* was unique. Though it was probably the first English book of its kind to include descriptions of the dances as well as the tunes for them, many similar publications appeared later, put out by Thompson, Walsh, Bray, and others. Thus, to call "Fandango," for instance, a Playford dance is incorrect: it comes from a collection edited by Thompson.³ As can be seen, there are pitfalls for the unwary in using the term "Playford" too loosely; nevertheless, to the vast majority of dancers it conveys the image of the second type of English country dance, the historic revival as distinct from the traditional.

Anyone who is interested in the background of historic English country dance should read the studies by Margaret Dean-Smith and the introductions to the *Country Dance Books* by Cecil Sharp (see source notes). Briefly, however, country dancing was first mentioned as a specific type of social dance in England in the middle of the sixteenth century when Elizabeth I was queen. The ladies of her court danced country dances to the music of pipe and tabor; the Queen, reportedly, preferred the galliards, the voltas or similar court dances. Some country

dances of this period remained popular and were included a hundred years later in the first edition of *The English Dancing Master*. For example, "Heartsease," "Putney Ferry," "Catching of Quails" are mentioned by name in a play entitled *Misogonous* published in 1560.

From the beginning these country dances were regarded as a pleasing alternative to the stylized couple dances of the court which required great skill in performance. The one characteristic which distinguishes the country dance from the court dances is that it always involves more than two people dancing together for the edification of an audience; it is a group dance in which there is interaction between two or more couples—in other words, a dance in which there is a *progression*. The two forms of social dance continued to exist side by side at formal gatherings, with corantos and galliards being replaced by gavottes and minuets which in turn gave way to the couple waltzes and polkas, while the country dances themselves went through a gradual evolution. The earliest country dances were dances for sets of couples—two, three, four, six, eight in round, square, or longways formations, a few of the latter for "as many as will." By the mid nineteenth century many of the set dances had vanished from the ballroom and only longways dances were likely to be on a program. Near the end of the nineteenth century, Margaret Dean-Smith remarks, "a nostalgic public began to look with favor on things 'old-world' and various efforts were made to revive 'the old country dances' . . . attempts more romantic than truly historic." The time was ripe for serious musicologists and dance historians to study early country dance; a most obvious source was John Playford's collection: "*The English Dancing Master: or Plaine and easie Rules for the Dancing of Country Dances, with the Tune to each Dance*. London, Printed by Thomas Harper, and are to sold by John Playford, at his Shop in the Inner Temple neere the Church doore. 1651." In his preface, Playford implies that one reason for publishing was to produce the collection before it was pirated; he had heard of "a false and surreptitious copy" that was being circulated.⁴ The concept of printing directions for each dance with its tune was new: such a combination has never before appeared in print. Considering the popularity of country dancing as social entertainment it is rather surprising that no books of dances had been produced up to this time. A possible reason for this lies in the social conditions of the period.

In 1651 when *The English Dancing Master* was published, England was beginning to recover from the bloody fighting of the Civil War, the shock of the trial and execution of Charles I, and was settling down to life under the Commonwealth. The Puritan ethic condemned all public dancing and theaters were closed; yet dancing in the home was permitted, since this was considered a matter for private conscience. Thus, we can presume that social dancing never stopped during these trying times; but it must have survived under many restrictions, such as the impossibility of travel and the normal cultural exchange between households, resulting in a lack of freshness and spontaneity which would usually arise from such contacts. Perhaps, then, *The English Dancing Master* appeared at an opportune moment to revitalize dancing in the home. This may account for the popularity of the book, but a very probable reason is the appeal it may have had for the "Gentlemen" of the Inns of Court whom Playford addresses in his preface.

Following traditions dating back to the time of Edward IV, the Inns of Court held Solemn Revels annually, these being private rites; no women participated in the dancing at these Solemnities. On occasion the Inns performed publicly before the court; in 1614 masques for

the marriage of Princess Elizabeth were presented by Gray's Inn and the Inner Temple. These were notable in that they introduced country dances for both men and women into courtly festivities — a custom which surely lasted until the execution of Charles I ended any royal entertainments. The Solemnities did survive the Commonwealth but the tradition of including social dance had been broken during the Commonwealth but the tradition of including social dance had been broken during the Civil War. In November, 1651, however, it is on record that "there was a Masque at the Middle Temple, London; . . . every man drank a cup of Ippocris, and so departed to their chambers, then the young gentlemen of the Society began to recreate themselves with civil dancings and had melodious music, many ladies and persons of Quality were present. . . ."⁵ This account suggests that John Playford's collection of country dances was in effect a manual designed to teach a new generation of Gentlemen of the Inns of Court what had once been a tradition.

When Cecil Sharp began to study the Playford collections he faced many problems. The directions for performing the dances are terse and frequently obscure. Since they were intended purely as a reminder to dancers familiar with steps and evolutions, no mention is made of the style in which dances were to be performed. When Playford's first edition was published, no standard system of dance notation existed, aside from Arbeau's *Orchesographie* (1588); Sharp did study this work and gained from it the idea of indicating the timing of steps by showing the notes in the melody with which they coincide. (He used this method in the Morris and sword-dance books.⁶) Sharp also studied Feuillet's *Recueil de Contredances* (Paris, 1706), a complex system of diagrams and symbols, which Essex translated as *For the Further Improvement of Dancing*.⁷ It is important to realize, however, that for the most part Sharp concentrated his efforts of interpretation on the early dances, which he believed were the purest examples of the country dance. There are no dances in his *Country Dance Books* later than 1728; a few of the late dances are well known, such as "Orleans Baffled," Trip to Kilburn," and "My Lady Winwood's Maggot."

In *The Country Dance Book, Part II*, Sharp offers the concept that when the country dance was regarded as "a refreshing contrast to the more formal and conventional dance of polite society . . . it suffered little or no injury . . . but when, as time went on, it challenged, on its own merits, the supremacy of the drawing-room dances, the dance was at once subjected to an enervating influence which, paralyzing its powers of resistance, ultimately led to its corruption." Sharp returns constantly to this theme and interprets the dances on the basis that above all they should retain a "gay simplicity" of movement. He came to certain conclusions about the steps that might have been used, drawing from his experience with the traditional dancers he had observed and consulting dance manuals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He felt that with the exception of the minuet step, all the steps — walking, running, skipping, slipping and double hop — were performed in Playford's time in much the same way that his traditional dancers used them.

With regard to the figures, Sharp says that with the exception of the side, the set, and the honour he had been able to connect nearly all of them with similar evolutions in Morris or sword dances; he cites in particular the whole-poussette, whole-gip, back-to-back, cross over, and of course the hey, "at once the most engaging and the most varied and intricate of all the figures of the set-dance."⁸ Playford describes set and turn single, but does not define the side.

This is the one figure that Sharp felt could be interpreted in more than one way; he chose one in which the dancers turn to face one another, but he admits quite readily that if, "instead of turning, the dancers were to fall back to places along their own tracks, the side would then be identical with the Morris figure of half-hands or half-gip. And this, I suspect, may prove to be the correct interpretation."⁹

Sharp felt intensely, as has been mentioned, that the decline and fall of the country dance began when the dancing masters took hold of it, introducing styles and mannerisms of the upper class ballroom. Certainly the evolution of the dances themselves in succeeding editions of *The Dancing Master* shows that the old forms (the set dances for varying numbers of couples) were soon superseded by the longways dances which became extremely popular in the assemblies of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. While it is true that during the reign of the minuet in the ballroom, country dances undoubtedly became more stylized and rarified, it should also be recognized that during the early 1800s at least they still offered an opportunity for uninhibited, light-hearted dancing. One has only to read the *Pickwick Papers* to discover Mr. Pickwick at Dingley Dell about to take part in the dancing. Having shed his gaiters (to the astonishment of his closest friends) he stands at the head of the line, waiting eagerly for the dancing to begin — and then "away went Mr. Pickwick — hands across — down the middle to the very end of the room, and half-way up the chimney, back again to the door — loud stamp on the ground — ready for the next couple — off again — all the figure over again once more — another stamp to beat out the time — next couple, and the next, and the next again — never was such going!" Or take Hardy's description of the dance in *Under the Greenwood Tree*: "Threading the couples one by one they reached the bottom, when there arose in Dick's mind a minor misery lest the tune should end before they could work their way to the top again, and have anew the same exciting run down through."

In the light of the above descriptions Sharp's approach to the style of movement that was to be used in country dancing may seem overly formal, suggesting more decorum than seems necessary. The country dance, he says, "is a mannered dance, gentle and gracious, formal in a simple straightforward way, but above all gay and sociable. The spirit of merriment, however, although never wholly absent, from the dance, is not always equally obvious. There are certain dances that are comparatively quiet and subdued in style, in which the normal gaiety is toned down to a decorous suavity; while between dances of this kind and those of the more light-hearted variety, there are many that are emotionally intermediate in type. It should be the aim of the dancer to feel these temperamental differences and reflect them in his manner and style."¹⁰

Is Sharp on the verge of falling into a pit of his own digging? With his insistence on the evils of what he considered the pretentious mannerisms of the court dances he is now suggesting a definite style for country dances that goes beyond mere "gay simplicity" and implies using a conscious and indeed analytical approach. But one must remember his absolute conviction of the importance of the artistic aspect of the folk dance. Maud Karpeles remarks that "he looked upon collectors and teachers as trustees whose duty it was to take these arts of folk song and dance from a small body of peasantry and to pass them on to the whole nation as accurately and as reverently as possible."¹¹ When Sharp goes beyond the

peasantry" he still holds to the ideal of dance as an art, and emphasizes the importance of the music. In his preface to the *Country Dance Books*, he says, "The dance is but the interpretation or translation, in terms of bodily action, of the music upon which it is woven, just as the melody of the song is primarily the expression of the text. Music moreover is the predominant partner of the union; there can be no dance without music."¹²

If one asks country dancers what first attracted them to the English, a great number will reply "the music." Most of the tunes in Playford's collection are airs, to be played on treble viol or treble violin. They are instrumental and vocal and many were probably ballad airs as indicated by their titles. Sharp was struck by the number of English folk airs, he says, which "lie buried in the *The Dancing Master*." He notes modifications in the tunes as edition followed edition; of the later editions he says, "It is impossible to examine the dances of the later editions without being impressed by the beauty of a large number of the tunes they contain."¹³ He points out that the best tunes were not always connected with good dances, while superior dances often had inferior tunes. In *Country Dance Book, Part II* he decided to use the tunes associated with the dances in the Playford collection but said he might act differently in the future. Margaret Dean-Smith comments that "in the matter of the tunes Sharp's work was less masterly and his judgment less well-founded, for, there is more opinion in Sharp's *dicta* than in historical fact."¹⁴ Nevertheless it is hard to fault his evaluation of *The Dancing Master* as "a veritable treasure-house of precious material. . . . [It] contains the largest and in some respects, the most authoritative collection of seventeenth century instrumental folk tunes that we possess."¹⁵

Cecil Sharp's *Country Dance Books* contain only dances from *The English Dancing Master* and *The Dancing Master* (as all later editions of the work were titled). Since 1922, when *The Country Dance Book, Part VI* was published, innumerable dances from other collections have been added to the country dance repertoire. It is not intended to explore these sources in this article. Playford's collections continue to be fruitful ground for dance historians. The connections between the country dance and the court dance is proving most interesting: the Country Dance and Song Society has been instrumental in furthering research on this subject through programs at English Dance Week at Pinewoods Camp as well as residential weekend workshops in recent years. A number of people have looked at Sharp's dance interpretations, notably Pat Shuldham-Shaw with "Another look at Playford."¹⁶ With the great majority of Sharp's interpretations, one can find no fault and there are no valid reasons for changing them. Other dances may benefit from closer scrutiny.

As for the style he suggested, it has been used for the past seventy years with only minor modifications — less "swoop" and spring, which demanded the wearing of rubber-soled shoes, for instance. But, as Maud Karpeles remarks, "Sharp made no attempt to give an exact reproduction of the style of dancing that may have been current in the seventeenth century, but allowed the style to be gradually evolved. The re-creation which was thus effected was a thing of great beauty: lovely to behold and completely satisfying to the dancers."¹⁷ As one of his demonstration dancers, Maud Karpeles could speak with deep appreciation. Sharp himself wrote, "Our aim in reviving these dances should be to keep them fresh and natural and, to this end, to avoid the use of elaborate steps, together with the tricks and mannerisms of the theatre or of the drawing-room; for that way, as history shows, danger lies."¹⁸ These

are words of true wisdom; leaders and teachers of English country dance as social recreation should never forget them.

Almost eighty years have passed since Cecil Sharp began his monumental task of re-introducing their country dances to the English people, at a moment when there was a real danger of the dances passing into oblivion. Today, we find a situation in which dance historians are increasingly going back to the publications of John Playford and his successors in an attempt to interpret the way in which the dances were performed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The re-creation of the dance styles is proving to be a fascinating problem. At the same time more emphasis is being placed on the music, its arrangement and performance.

Side by side with this urge to pursue the historic aspects of the country dance there is also a great interest in exploring the original sources for "new" dances—unreconstructed, as yet—to add to the growing repertoire of Playford-type material. Cecil Sharp himself made a selection of dances, choosing those he felt were the best, from hundreds in the literature. Tastes change, however, and it is obvious that were the selection being made today, some of those chosen in 1909 would not be picked now. Numerous present-day dancing masters too are composing dances just as was done in Playford's day.

A country dancer in 1983 has a vast number of dances from which to choose. Some contemporary Playford style dances are delightful, some are not; the same can be said of many of the "new" old dances. Time will prove which of them will have lasting value; as always the unsatisfactory ones will be dropped, but great dances similar to "Newcastle" or "Parson's Farewell," a perfect match of melody with movement, should remain forever on anyone's list of favorite English country dances.

—Genevieve Shimer

1. Cecil J. Sharp, *The Country Dance Book, Part I* (London: Novello & Co., 1909).
2. Maud Karpeles, *Cecil Sharp: His Life and Work* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967).
3. *Thompson's Compleat Collection of 200 Country Dances, Vol. IV.* (London: Charles & Samuel Thompson, 1780).
4. Margaret Dean-Smith, *Playford's English Dancing Master 1651* (London: Schott and Co., 1957; facsimile), p. 2 of the preface.
5. As footnoted in James P. Cunningham, *Dancing in the Inns of Court* (London: Jordan & Son, Ltd. 1965), p. 10.
6. Cecil J. Sharp and Herbert C. Macilwaine, *The Morris Book, Parts I-V*, 2nd ed. (London: Novello & Co., 1912).
7. Cecil J. Sharp, *The Sword Dances of Northern England, Parts I-III* (London: Novello & Co., 1912).
8. John Essex, *For the Further Improvement of Dancing* (London: 1910. Reprint Gregg, 1970).
9. Cecil J. Sharp, *The Country Dance Book, Part II* (London: Novello & Co., 1911), p. 18.
10. Cecil J. Sharp, *The Country Dance Book, Part VI* (London: Novello & Co., 1922), p. 11.
11. Sharp, *The Country Dance Book, Part II*, p. 61.
12. Karpeles, *Cecil Sharp: His Life and Work*.
13. Sharp, *The Country Dance Book, Part II*, p. 61.
14. Sharp, *The Country Dance Book, Part VI*.
15. Dean-Smith, *Playford's English Dancing Master*.
16. Sharp, *The Country Dance Book, Part II*, p. 27.
17. A series started in the early 1970s devoted to exploring Sharp's early dances.
18. Karpeles, *Cecil Sharp: His Life and Work*.
19. Sharp, *The Country Dance Book, Part II*, p. 23.

The Tuscaloosa Girl by Quillepenne

(from *Yankee Notions*,
6 (March 1857), 31)

"Oh, aint they, though? aint they good looking? I should rather think they are," said Tom. "I tell you what 'tis, I can just show you as pretty girls in the South and West as you can find anywhere on dry land. One I met at a ball in Tuscaloosa was good enough for anybody, and if any white man says she warn't, just let him say it loud enough for me to hear him."

"Tell us about her, Tom," suggested I.

"Well, gentlemen, she was about five feet high and eighteen year old, black hair and eyes, and dressed as tasty as any woman in the States. Awful good on dancing, too. I kind of froze to her first off, and got no better very fast, after getting an introduce. Tell you what it was — she was a mighty stunning piece — waltzed with her nigh half an hour, and then we sauntered out on the piazza to get cool. Got to talking about the moon, and stars, and all that sort of thing, (queer how fond of astronomy young folks are), told her that I knew one star — one "bright particular star," (Shakspere, you know), that would just take down all the rest of them put together. She asked what star 'twas; I hemmed and hawed, and did a little bit of the diffident — nothing like a little bit of the diffident with girls like her — finally I hinted in a mild way, that she was the star, and squeezed her hand gently at the same time.

"Lord o' mercy, what a pretty hand she had! just as soft as a jolly little white rose leaf, and no bigger than three of my fingers. Well, when I squeezed it, she gave a little bit of a pressure back again, that ran tingling all the way up my brachial artery, and turned the blood to pure nectar; then she rolled her eyes up so that the moon shone on them, and I could look away down into them about a quarter of a mile. That made me feel kind of queer, you know, and somehow, without exactly knowing much about it, I found my arm around her taper waist, and could feel her blessed little heart jumping, like a rat in a steel-trap. Directly she laid her head over on my shoulder, so that her warm, sweet breath swept over my cheek, and kind of rustled up the end of my moustache, at the same time letting the full flood of tenderness pour up from her eyes into mine.

"Don't laugh, boys, if I do get a little highfalutin'; you don't know how you'd have felt if you'd been in my boots just then. It took my breath away; but I mustered up all my courage,



and turned around a little, put my left hand under the back of her head, raised it up ('fraid I mussed her hair slightly — it was done up mighty nice, I tell you), and bending down, gave her a ringing kiss right on her mouth.

"Now, boys, by jingo, I tell you what it is; I've tasted sweet things afore now — talk about honey and sugar — talk about your Charlotte Russes — your Meringues a la Creme — they are nowhere. I felt as if I had died in a candy-shop, and had gone to the forty-ninth heaven, where I was eating sweetened ambrosia, with a whole crowd of she-angels playing on golden harps all inside of my head. I swow, if my heart didn't swell up as big as a two-bushel basket, and it hammered away, thump-thump-thump, so you might have heard it a mile off. She didn't say anything when I done it, and I was just going to do some more, when Jim Sawyer came along with his girl and interrupted. I hate Jim Sawyer."

"Too bad by half," said Joe, who had been very quiet during Tom's narration, "Did you follow it up?"

"No; I was only traveling through there — left next day and never saw her again, nor any other girl equal to her. I tell you what, I'd rather have lost the best paying patient I ever had, than to have lost sight of that girl. But you know what we used to say at college: '*Mutatis mutandur — Tempus frigit — Sic transit gloria mundi.*' That's all the Latin I remember; let's go and have something, I'm as thirsty as a graven image."