

Highlights

1 **President's Report**

2 **Vice President's Report**

3 **Russell's Ramblings**

4 **Caller's Corner**

5 **Get to know The Past**

6 **Web Sites of Interest**

The Olde Tymmer

*The Newsletter of
Canadian Olde Tymme
Square Dance Callers
Association
April 2021 Issue 69R*

Website: <http://sca.uwaterloo.ca/cotsdca>

Presidents Report

President's Report
- by Bill Russell

As I write, vaccines are rolling out. When will we know that we have achieved herd immunity? When will close contact be allowed by the authorities? When will we be able to dance together again? The short answer is: "Who knows?"

What I can say is that the Executive has decided not to plan any in-person activity before the fall of this year, and possibly not before 2022. Rest assured that we will restart as soon as we can.

In the meantime, Deborah Jefferson and Dave Lucas have been compiling a list of the recordings that folks have given the Association in the last few years. They include 78's, 45's, albums (lp's) and cassettes. As yet, we have not figured out how to make them available for lending. If you have

any experience in such matters, we would love to hear from you.

Most members should have received a magnetic metal badge with your name. Sorry about the delay if yours has not arrived yet. We have to gather a minimum number of names before ordering a new printing.

Our paper nametags had both your name and your status showing: Associate Member, Caller Member, or Honorary Member. The Executive decided to keep things simple and inexpensive by having only your name showing on the metal badges, as we are all members. However, we have since had enquiries about possibly having the Caller Member status added. We have explored possibilities to avoid reprinting the metal badges, but we have not found one.

If you would like to have your metal badge re-done, please contact me:

- cotsdca@hotmail.com

- 416-658-5162

- 18-9 Humewood Drive, Toronto,
ON M6C 1C9

This entails a cost we had not counted on. Would you consider contributing \$10.00 to defray the expense for your new badge? Again, we will have to gather a minimum number of names to order a new printing.

However events unfold, do keep safe and be well. I really want to dance with you again.

Vice Presidents Report

Nancy Wheeler

Hello COTSDCA Members,

It's been a while so I'll start by saying that I hope everyone had a Merry Christmas, a healthy and Happy New Year, Valentine's Day & Family Day. With the help of Zoom, Mom and I were able to connect as a family with my sister (Carolyn) in Newfoundland, my other sister (Susan) in Whitby and my niece (Laura - some of you may remember) in Algonquin Highlands, for all of these occasions. It may not

2 THE OLDE TYMER

be exactly what we had hoped for but it is definitely an ideal way to feel connected while adhering to the recommendations / restrictions and trying to stay safe. So far, so good.

Not much comes to mind. It might be nice to include write ups and/or photos of things that are keeping members busy during this time. For example, the pictures of Bill's wooden owl and lion puzzles. Perhaps others have something they would like to share. Just a thought...

Bill Hands first stains each wooden piece then assembles them in a particular order without the aid of glue or directions as, these are brain teaser puzzles! Unfortunately, the photo doesn't do it justice.



Bill and Marilyn are well; missing the social gatherings, but remaining covid-free.



For Your Information

For those of you who have asked: If you are 80 years or older, and need to renew your drivers licence, the required testing has been put on hold due to the pandemic. If you would like to renew your drivers licence, you can go into a ServiceOntario office and renew it for 2 years without doing the testing. However, all drivers licenses, stickers, health cards and accessible parking permits have been extended until further notice so you don't have to go out and put yourself in harm's way.

Here's hoping that you are all well and finding alternate ways to keep yourselves active both mentally and physically.

Until we meet (on the dance floor) again,
take care and stay safe,
Thank You

Nancy Wheeler



Russell's Ramblings

- by Bill Russell

Staying at home. Here we are. Some folks have become very productive; some, less so. I am mostly in the latter group. I spend an inordinate amount of time at my computer, mostly frivolously. But now and then, I do see some very interesting things.

Folklorist and fiddler Glenn Patterson put together a live Zoom broadcast for a music series called A Different Tune: Musical Heritage in English-Speaking Quebec. In December 2020, the subject was "I'll Swing Yours, You Swing Mine", celebrating traditional music and dancing in the Chateauguy Valley south of Montreal. It can still be viewed via the Facebook link:

<https://www.facebook.com/ADifferentTune/videos/400666704579831>

At about ten minutes into the session, Glenn quoted an earlier chronicler from the Valley, Bobby Hill. Mr Hill pointed out that there was not much in print about traditional music and dancing. Almost all of his information came from oral histories. What was done at home or after a barn raising was not of interest to the area newspapers. Not enough celebrity news I suppose, even then.

Mr Hill's graphic description of a barn dance just might sound familiar to some of us. He described a typical evening playing and calling for a barn dance at Dumas' Barn on the road to Franklin Centre in the

1950s. He says, “Whatever the dancers at Dumas’ Barn may have lacked in elegance, they made up for in stamina.” The typical format was to play through a first, second, and third change for the square dancers lasting about twenty minutes. This would be followed by a few so-called “round dances” – basically country and popular hits of the day for people to dance a bit more slowly in single couples. His description of “The Basket” – a particularly tricky square dance manoeuvre is especially vivid:

To form the “Basket”, the ladies would join their hands in front, followed by the gents, and the two sets of joined hands would then be raised up and back around behind the ladies’ waists and the gents’ shoulders. Moving clockwise, the dancers would generate centrifugal force by pivoting on their right feet and pumping with their left, leaning back against their joined arms as they whirled. I have seen the Basket danced gracefully, even sedately, but rarely at Dumas’. There the men love to swing so fast that the ladies would lose their footing (sometimes their shoes as well) and become airborne, stretching out horizontally and flying around at shoulder height until I called for the next couple to join and do it again.

With ten sets or more going at it, the spectacle on the dance floor resembled a fleet of helicopters, and one had to watch out. If somebody’s grip should give way, or if one set in full flight should collide with another, the result was sheer disaster. I have seen as many as sixteen dancers come tumbling to the floor all at once. Fortunately,

such mishaps were rare, and, miraculously, no one ever seemed to get hurt. The sprawling bodies, male and female, young and not-so-young, would invariably jump up and dust themselves off. Then, barely missing a beat, they would plunge back into the dance with renewed vigour.

Excerpts from: Robert Hill. "Old-Time Barn Dancing in the Chateauguay Valley." 2006. Chateauguay Valley Historical Society Annual Review.

Of course, most of us older folks don’t dance like that nowadays. But many of us do remember when “being swept off your feet” was not just a figure of speech.

Glenn also pointed out the profound influence of recordings on the music of the Chateauguay Valley. Don Messer, George Wade and His Cornhuskers, and even the distant Grand Ole Opry have all had a lasting effect on the square dance music and calling of today. The Canadians’ ensembles consisted of “a dizzying array of instruments from different genres: fiddles, tenor jazz banjos, trumpets, piano, guitars, saxophones, harmonicas, clarinets, and jaw harp. And so while there was much modern about the music they were playing, it was still somehow rooted in a sense of the past.”

The main point of “I’ll Swing Yours, You Swing Mine” is to celebrate a couple of the local Chateauguay Valley farmers who were bandleaders on the side: Ellis Wilson and Rufus Fisher. Surviving family members describe how the

little money they were paid helped them get through hard times.

As I watched the program, I could not help but think that similar stories could be found all over Canada, especially in Ontario.

PS: I sent this article to Glenn for his approval before submitting it to The Olde Tymer. He replied with another vignette that may be of interest (note that Zoom sessions often have screen freezes). If you play fiddle, you might want to play along:

<https://adifferenttune.blog/2020/05/19/john-and-connie-wilson-fiddle-and-piano-music-from-the-chateauguay-valley/>

No Association dance in November, January and April. No dancing elsewhere. Not a happy time for dancers, callers and musicians. But enough with doom and gloom!

This edition of the Olde Tymer is full of history. I hope it jogs some memories and warms some hearts. Each of us has many happy memories of dancing together. I propose that we share some of them with each other:

- You can write a post or share a video (related to old-time square dance) on our Facebook page.

- Or you can email a story to: cotsdca@hotmail.com

- Or you send me a card or a letter:
Bill Russell
18-9 Humewood Drive
Toronto, ON M6C 1C9

[\(416\) 658-5162](tel:(416)658-5162)
cell: (418)-670-4685

I am planning on putting together your stories and sharing them on a regular basis. Of course, the more I get, the more I can share (and the fewer...), so please send in your stories.

“Bill,” you might ask, “you ask us for stories. How about one of your own?” Well, here goes: When I moved to Toronto in the mid-70’s, a young lady invited me to the Friday Nighters’ dance in Scarborough, a long trip by subway and bus. Jack Hayes and a crew of musicians were playing; the church hall was pretty full; the callers were great; and all the folks were friendly, helping me go in the right direction without showing any annoyance. Then we did the Canadian Progressive Barn Dance: the version where couples side step toward the centre and back out and WWI classic tunes are played. You had a chance to briefly chat with each partner. I really enjoyed myself, and from that time on, I have looked forward to our style of square dancing.

Executive 2020-2021

- President ----- Bill Russell
russell_bill@hotmail.com
- Vice President ---- Nancy Wheeler
nancy7298@hotmail.com
- Past President ----- Dave Lucas
oac86aggie@hotmail.com
- Secretary ----- **OPEN**
- Treasurer.----- Deborah Jefferson
d14jefferson@gmail.com

The executive is currently seeking a willing individual for the secretary position. The meetings happen 3 or 4 times per year and are usually 2

hours in length. If anyone is interested in this job, please contact someone on the exec. Please consider throwing your hat in the ring. Thank you to Calvin Everitt for helping out last year.

Callers' Corner

- by Bill Russell

I am often asked where square dancing came from. Almost all of us have the idea that Europeans settlers brought their dances from home. In the New World, they were side-by-side with folks from other communities who had their own way of doing the dances. They needed somebody to remind them what to do next so that they could dance together successfully. And the person doing the reminding evolved into the Caller as we know it today.

It appears that this story has some gaps. Some early dance historians intentionally left out parts of the story. In particular, we can add to the mix influences from African-Americans, African-Canadians and Indigenous peoples. English ethnomusicologists Cecil Sharp and Maud Karpeles encountered square dancing in Eastern Kentucky in 1917. They saw the dances as “survivals of an ancient type of English country dance that had remained pure and unchanged for many generations in the southern mountains”. They did not attend dances in the Black communities nearby, because they considered them as “trouble and spent energy for nought”.

Musicians were often slaves and descendants of slaves, both in the

US and in the French and later British colonies of Canada. Someone in the band would call out the figures. Patter calls very likely were developed in this way, coming from the call and response singing patterns for work parties. I have heard lots of people refer to patter calls as “early rap music”. It may be truer than we might think.

In Canada, there has been very little study of the square dance traditions of Métis and First Nations communities. After the Conquest, the British and later Canadian authorities did their best to eliminate Indigenous dances. The fiddle – one of the most revolutionary instruments in the world – was adopted almost everywhere, along with square and step dancing. Amendments to the Indian Act in 1927 banned all Indigenous dances off of the reserve in western Canada; a ban not lifted until 1951. So now you will find the Dip ‘n’ Dive danced on reserves all over Canada.

In short, our “dances of the pioneers” are not exclusively the heritage of our European ancestors. We can acknowledge and appreciate that their roots are more widespread.

This writing was inspired by a paper that Hannah Shira Naiman is preparing for a college course. If you would like to read her paper-in-progress or ask her any questions, contact her at: hannahshiranaiman.com/contact

Get To Know The Past

Early in the newsletter Bill Russell talked about how he got started in square dancing at the Friday Nighters dance. Here is how Friday Nighters got started. My uncle Reg lived on Pape Avenue just south of Gerrard Street East and cleared his dining & living rooms out to make room for square dancing the living room and dining rooms got too small for the number of people wanting to dance. My dad was running the Lakeshore Square Dance Club in the west end and his brother said New Toronto was too far to go and dance. With the help of the Lakeshore YMCA, Reg relocated to the Broadview hall in the east end.

In the forties' my uncle Reg started The Square Circle Square Dance Club it was located at the Broadview YMCA every other Saturday night in a barn type building at the rear of the main YMCA building. It was a dance that had music by records and on special nights like Christmas they would have live music. I do not know the number of years it ran at the YMCA but it had to move up Broadview Ave. to a hall on the west side north of Danforth Ave.

When the club moved up Broadview to a hall north of Danforth Avenue on a Friday night and became the Friday Nighters Square Dance Club where they started to get live music. Jack Hayes was the fiddler and I do not know who the other player was. A lot of C.O.T.S.D.C.A. (Walter Cosburn, Bob Graves,) members attended and some started to call there. The club later moved to a church on Danforth Road at St. Clair Avenue.

COTSDCA & CFGM

SQUARE DANCE FOR FUN AT

THE CANADIAN OLDE TYME SQUARE DANCE CALLER'S ASSOC.
ANNUAL FALL DANCE
 THUR. OCT. 21 8.30 P.M.

LAKESHORE LIONS MEMORIAL ARENA
 (300 Birmingham & 21st St. - New Toronto)

MUSIC BY COUNTRY RAMBLERS

ADMISSION: Advance - \$1.00 per person
 At door - \$1.25 per person

PHONE FOR INFORMATION & TICKETS

WEST	CENTRAL	EAST
CL 1-0915	535-9135	PL 5-4597
CL 9-6726		PL 5-8074

WIN FREE TICKETS - LISTEN TO C F G M

Can you guess the year we advertised on radio?

Music Collection

The large selection of music of Grant Logan's is available and if you are interested, please contact Wallace.

Web Sites Of Interest

If you have not checked out the Association's website recently, you might want to see what is new:

<https://sca.uwaterloo.ca/cotsdca/>

In particular, we have added some pictures of the sheet music for many of the couple dances. Fiddlers should be able to download them and learn the tunes.

If you have found any interesting traditional square dance web sites, please pass them along to me at russell_bill@hotmail.com

Bill Russell



Publisher/Editor

Articles and items for sharing or comments should be sent to:

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