



Square-Dance Figures from Northern New York State

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SQUARE-DANCE FIGURES FROM NORTHERN NEW YORK STATE

THE figures described below have been selected on account of their suitability for inclusion in the 'Running Set'.

The first five figures were noted with the assistance of Miss Marjory Sinclair at Schroon Lake during the course of an evening party kindly given at Mrs. Barrell's invitation, and the last two were obtained from the description of Mr. John Brockway at Fort Covington.

The style of dancing as seen at Schroon Lake was similar to that of other Square-dancing,¹ except that partners did not unduly prolong the 'turns'. The normal step was a quiet, smooth, walking-step, alternated at will with a chassée step, not un-rhythmically performed, and the dancers bore themselves with a gracious dignity which was very pleasing.

They had a big repertoire of figures, including several which have already been noted and various movements of a quadrille nature.

The introduction, i.e. the first change, was performed as follows:

Hands-eight, clockwise, sometimes followed by Hands-eight, counter clockwise.

1st and 3rd couples Half-Right-and-Left and Half-Promenade (sometimes Whole-Right-and-Left and Whole-Promenade); Ladies' Chain; Promenade (or Half-Promenade and Half-Right-and-Left).

All Allemand left; Grand Right-and-Left (sometimes omitted); Swing partners and Promenade.

2nd and 4th couples repeat figures as performed by 1st and 3rd couples.

All Allemand left, Grand Right-and-Left; Swing partners and Grand Promenade (sometimes omitted).

The introductory movements were as follows:

(1) To initiate a new figure, i.e. the equivalent of Grand Promenade, one or other of the following:

(a) Hands-eight clockwise, sometimes followed by Hands-eight, counter-clockwise.

(b) Allemand left and Grand Right-and-Left.

(2) Interpolated between the Rounds of the figure, i.e. the equivalent of Little Promenade:

(a) Allemand left; Swing partners and Promenade round, or

(b) Allemand left, Grand Right-and-Left, Swing partners and Promenade round.

The explanation of the technical terms is as follows:

Half-Right-and-Left (performed by two couples) = Contraries pass right shoulders; partners turn half-way round with the left hand.

Whole-Right-and-Left = As in Half-Right-and-Left, repeated to places.

Grand Right-and-Left = Circular hey, handing, partners facing and giving

¹ See 'Some additional Figures for Set-running' in *The Journal of the English Folk Dance Society*, 2nd Series, No. 3.

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right hands. Partners bow to each other when they meet half-way round, and occasionally back-to-back is inserted here.

A variant of Grand Right-and-Left is for the dancers to move towards the centre and back between each change, holding hands in a circle and facing alternately in and out.

Ladies' Chain (performed by two couples) = Women change, giving right hands, and turn contraries left; cross back with right hands and turn partners with left.

Allemand left = Turn contrary partners once round with the left hand.

SIR ROGER

(In the absence of any specific title, this figure has been thus named, because the movements are an adaptation of those of 'Sir Roger de Coverley', or 'The Virginia Reel', as it is called in America.)

Caller's rhyme:

Give right hand to your partner and swing,
Left hand to your corner,
Left hand to your partner and swing,
Right hand to your corner,
Both hands to your partner and swing,
Both hands to your corner,
Do-si-do your partner,
Same with your corner,
Swing your partners,
Promenade with your corners.

Partners turn with right hands; contraries with left.

Partners turn with left hands; contraries with right.

Partners turn, with both hands; contraries turn with both hands.

(It is suggested that the second turn be performed counter-clockwise.)

Partners arm right; contraries arm left.

Partners go back-to-back, passing right shoulders; contraries back-to-back, passing left shoulders.

Men turn their partners half-way round, turn their contraries half-way round and, staying with their contraries, cross hands and dance once round with them counter-clockwise (as in Little Promenade).

Repeat the above figures three times, each time with a new partner.

FORWARD SIX ON A SIDE

This figure begins as in 'Three in a Line'.¹

When the lines of three are formed, the dancers in each line go forward a double and back and cross over, passing right shoulders with the opposite.

1st and 3rd men go back-to-back.

The three dancers on each side go forward and back and cross over as before.

¹ Ibid., p. 47.

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FIGURE EIGHT ROUND THE TWO SIDE-COUPLES

Caller's rhyme:

First two couples forward and back,
Forward again and swing four hands half-way,
Form in the Figure-8 round the two side-couples with the gent in the lead,
Swing to the centre with the four hands half-way round,
Form the Figure-8 with the lady in the lead,
Swing to the centre and Right-and-Left through to places.

This figure is a variant of 'Cut the Figure-8'.¹

1st and 3rd couples forward a double and back and hands-four half-way round.

1st man releases his left hand from 3rd woman and, followed by 1st woman, 3rd man, and 3rd woman, goes the Figure-8 round the side couples, passing counter-clockwise round 4th couple and clockwise round 2nd couple.

1st and 3rd couples hands-four half-way round.

3rd woman, releasing her right hand from 1st man and followed by 3rd man, 1st woman, and 1st man, goes the Figure 8 round the side couples, passing clockwise round 2nd couple and counter-clockwise round 4th couple.

1st and 3rd couples hands-four half-way round and Right-and-Left to places, i.e. contraries face and pass by the right and partners turn each other half-way round with left hands.

RIGHT AND LEFT SIX WITH A CENTRE SWING

Caller's rhyme:

First couple lead to the right,
Four hands half-way swing,
Right and Left six
With the centre swing.

1st couple leads to the right and goes hands-four half-way round with 2nd couple.

1st and 2nd couples move forward and change places, 1st man passing right shoulders with 2nd woman, and 1st woman passing right shoulders with 2nd man. 1st man turns his partner in the centre, whilst 2nd man and 2nd woman make a half-turn with left hands.

1st and 4th couples change places as above. 1st man turns his partner half-way round with left hand, whilst 4th man turns his partner once round in the centre.

1st couple stands still. Meanwhile, 2nd and 4th couples perform movements as above, i.e. change places, and 2nd man turns his partner once round in the centre, whilst 4th man turns his partner half-way round with left hand.

1st and 2nd couples perform movements as above, 1st couple turning in the centre, whilst 4th couple remains neutral.

¹ Ibid., p. 48.

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1st and 4th couples perform movements as above, 4th couple turning in the centre, whilst 2nd couple is neutral.

1st couple remains neutral, whilst 2nd and 4th couples change, the 2nd couple turning in the centre.

1st and 2nd couples change, the 1st couple turning in the centre. 1st couple hands-four half-way round with 3rd couple.

1st man and 1st woman cross over right shoulders with the contrary. 1st man turns his partner once round, whilst 3rd man turns his partner half-way round with the left hand.

1st couple hands-four half-way round with 4th couple.

1st, 4th, and 2nd couples perform the 'centre swing' figures, as above.

RIGHT AND LEFT EIGHT

1st and 3rd couples lead to the right and go hands-four half-way round with 2nd and 4th couples, respectively.

Starting from these positions, dancers move along the line, passing right shoulders with each dancer that they meet. On reaching the end of the line, partners make a half-turn with left hands and then proceed to move in the opposite direction along the other line.

The movement is continued until each dancer has traversed the whole length of each line, and made one additional change, so that 1st and 3rd couples are facing each other in the centre of the set.

In the repetition after the Little Promenade, the figure is initiated by 2nd and 4th couples.

HANDS-EIGHT

1st and 2nd couple hands-four once round.

Pick up 3rd couple and hands-six round.

Pick up 4th couple and hands-eight round.

All release hands and move round in a single file, counter-clockwise to places.

THE LADY TURNS THE GENTS

Caller's rhyme:

First lady with the right hand gent
With the right hand round,
Back to your own with the left hand round,
Lady in the centre and three hands round,
Lady to the next right hand gent
With the right hand round,
Back to the left hand gent
With the left hand round,
Back to your own with the right hand round,
Lady in the centre and five hands round.
Lady to the next right hand gent
With the right hand round,

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Back to the next left hand gent
With the left hand round,
Back to the next left hand gent
With the right hand round,
Back to your own with left hand round,
Lady in the centre and seven hands round.

1st woman turns 2nd man with right hand, and her partner with left. 1st man and 2nd couple go hands-three round 1st woman.

1st woman turns 3rd man with right hand, 2nd man with left, and partner with right. 1st man, 2nd and 3rd couples go hands-five round 1st woman.

1st woman turns 4th man with right hand, 3rd man with left, 2nd with right and partner with left. 1st man, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th couples go hands-seven round 1st woman.

It will be found that there is a certain amount of variation in the length of the turns. The left-hand turn is always a whole turn, whereas the right-hand turn, except for the initial turn with 2nd man, is somewhat less than a whole turn.

MAUD KARPELES.