



THE MILFORD CONTRA DANCE

Physically Distanced Yet Socially Connected!



NEWSLETTER #8

FEBRUARY 2020

MESSAGE FROM SANDY, PETER, RICH, KATE, AND BILL

We hope this missive finds you well and enjoying winter in New England. After a long bit of bare earth we finally have snow! Snow to shovel, snow to snowblow, but also snow for snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. Earlier this month - February 2nd to be exact, was an auspicious day! And I'm not just talking about an oversized rodent named Phil. February 2nd is also referred to as Candlemas Day and Imbolc, among other things. Imbolc is one of the "cross quarter" days of the Celtic calendar, a day that fall halfway between a solstice and an equinox. Farmers used to have a saying: "Have half your wood and half your hay by Candlemas Day." as you certainly wanted to have heat and have your animals fed. All of this is just a fancy way of saying, "We're halfway to Spring!" Since we're not quite there yet, go throw another log in the wood stove, make yourself a cuppa tea and enjoy the February issue of our newsletter!



MYSTERY SOLVED

by Kate McClure

This was driving me just bonkers. As the band was warming up at one of the "before time" dances, the song it was playing stopped me in my tracks. It was from the Wizard of Oz. I was sure of it. Knowing it wouldn't be called "Suite from the Wizard of Oz", I asked the musicians. "Red Wing" was the answer.

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"I didn't say I would help. I said I'd accompany you."



VISUALIZE THIS DANCE

Submitted by Sue Rosen

I wasn't really thinking of writing a dance. The night before, twenty-five years ago, I had called the Tuesday night contra dance at the Cambridge (MA) YWCA with Debby Knight, Ruth Richards, and Walter Lenk, and one of the tunes they played was stuck in my brain. While I was out for a walk with this tune, Handsome Young Maids, on repeat, the sequence of moves just materialized.

Handsome Young Maids by Sue Rosen
Duple Improper

A1: (Couple 1 standing between couple 2, all facing down the hall in a line of 4)

Four steps down the hall, turn alone (towards neighbor, please), rejoin hands in lines of 4

Four more steps down the hall, walking backwards

Four steps up the hall, turn alone, rejoin hands in lines of 4

Four more steps up the hall, walking backwards.

A2: Bend the line and circle left once around
Balance the ring

Clover-leaf turn single (ladies turn over left shoulder, gents turn over right shoulder, providing a moment of eye contact with your partner to start the turn) 4 counts

B1: Neighbor balance and swing

B2: Long lines forward and back

Ones only swing partner (end the swing facing down between new neighbors). Click [here](#) for a video of the dance.

The sequence in A1 is reminiscent of the English country dance Dublin Bay, and the turn single, using four steps to turn alone in one's place (not a pivot!), is a common move in that genre.

When I described this new dance with its English country dance moves to Larry Jennings, he asked

me, "so what makes this a contra dance?" "Well, there's a balance and swing," I replied, and that seemed to satisfy my toughest critic... until he asked me, "and what will you call the clover-leaf turn single?" Larry gave a lot of thought to dance terminology. (He was the person who coined the phrase "long lines forward and back.") After struggling with the issue for well over a year, I settled on calling the figure a "clover-leaf turn single." Simple, descriptive, and everyone who knew English country dance would know what I meant.

I only started using this dance frequently after meeting caller and choreographer Becky Hill of Ohio in 2003. Becky mentioned how useful she found the dance was for mixed crowds--interesting enough for experienced dancers and easy enough for beginners with the aid of those more experienced folks.

While the dance is named for the tune by Charlie Lennon that inspired it, I only request that the band play a set of "swingly" jigs. The tune is widely known but I don't like to assume that all musicians play it. The name of the dance also reminds me of the night in 1996 when I shared the stage with Debby and Ruth, both handsome young maids.



SUE ROSEN started dancing contras, squares, and English Country Dance in the 1970s and has been calling and writing dances since the 1990s. She lives in the Boston area with her musician husband Bruce.



"GENTS BOW, LADIES KNOW HOW"

Submitted by Jerry Bellows

I'm a 10th generation New Englander with a passion for the history of the traditions of our ancestry. Originally from England, via Concord (1632), my family settled in Marlborough and Southborough. I currently live in Worcester (MA).

This video history from the Monadnock Folklore Society with its pictures, tunes and descriptions, connects my heart and soul into the amazing community energy that has sustained our families through the songs and dances for generations past and will continue in the future. Some of the tunes have been played for over two-and-half centuries. We are blessed with such a beautiful tradition! (Video [here](#).)

As a side note Benjamin Bellows, who surveyed the border between New Hampshire and Massachusetts was a 5x-great uncle. He, with his friends and family, settled in what became the town of Walpole (NH) in 1753. Perhaps they, too, danced to these tunes.



Jerry describes his entire into Contra Dance music:

I have played and taught recorder for many years and in 2017 was recruited/called/shanghaied into joining the Berlin (MA) Country Dance Orchestra.

What a wonderful moment it was to discover the joyous vibrancy of the contradance tradition and the amazing warmth of the participants. With



encouragement from my new-found friends in Berlin, I began to explore the larger welcoming world of contradance dancing and playing the old and new tunes.

I met Sandy Lafleur when she was calling a dance in Worcester (MA) and she invited me to come sit in with the Milford (NH) contradance band.

These days I'm at home practicing and learning new dance tunes. When we get through this historic time of social distancing I will be back to socialize, dance and play the music. Who knows, maybe by then I'll have learned the whole book by heart!

"Gents Bow, Ladies Know How" posted through the courtesy of the Monadnock Folklore Society. For more videos from the M.F.S. subscribe to their YouTube channel.

MYSTERY SOLVED

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

So, this would be simple enough – just google Wizard of Oz and Red Wing. No luck. Hmm. I rented the movie and hit the big music parts – running through the poppy field and a few others. Again, buptkus. Well, okay guess I was wrong.

Fast forward a number of months, Jim (spouse, mandolin) Sandy (friend, dulcimer) and I (bass uke) were playing music, socially distanced, on the porch. Playing “Red Wing” it hit me – holy moly, this is Schuman’s “Happy Farmer”.

Back to the movie I went. Happy Farmer/Red Wing is played at start of the film when Dorothy is running to the farm, then when Toto gets away from Miss Gulch and also during the tornado. A slight variation is the song “The House began to Twitch” which Dorothy sings to the Good Witch and the Munchkins to explain how she ended up in Munchinkland in the first place. Due to copyright issues, I can’t link the movie, but check at 2:14, 10:12, 17:40 and 23:47.

“The Happy Farmer” was written by the German composer Robert Schumann in the late 1840s, as part of a collection of short, easy pieces that he wrote to help his daughters learn to play the piano. Titled *Album for the Young* it was published as his Opus 68. A more accurate translation is “The merry peasant returns from



1911 recording of Red Wing on a cylinder ([here](#))

work”. Many violinists, pianists and cellists recognize “The Happy Farmer” as that’s how it is titled whenever it appears in the repertoire of the Suzuki Method.

“Redwing” was written in the early 1900’s by Kerry Mills. He was a Tinpan alley composer who penned “Meet Me in St. Louis” and “At a Georgia Camp Meeting”. It appears that he lifted, note for note, Schuman’s “the Happy Farmer” as the A part of “Red Wing”. Please compare and contrast and enjoy: Paul Lizotte plays “Red Wing” and Jimmy Otis, the Schuman. ([Music here](#))



KATE MCCLURE lives in Lyndeborough, NH with her family and is the happy new adoptive mother of Sage a rescue border collie/lab puppy (and Australian cattle dog?) from Texas.

Many thanks to Milford Contra Dance Musicians Paul Lizotte and Jimmy Otis for their recordings of the music in this article.



CROSSWORD By Amanda Rafkin

Crossword editor for USA Today

ACROSS

1. Herb used to season stuffing (and also the name of Jim and Kate's new puppy)

5. The Grimmerie and Elphaba's hat, in "Wicked"

7. Teensy-weensy

8. Milford Contra _____ newsletter

9. Talk back to

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| | | | | 6 |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | 9 | | | |

3. "Who's ____ Take Me Home?" (Rod Stewart song)

4. "The Iliad" and "The Odyssey," for two

6. Catches a glimpse of

DOWN

1. Drove too fast

2. Some are restricted

Click [here](#) for the solution to this month's puzzle.

Talk crosswords with Amanda on Twitter at [@amandarafkin](#)



SUGGESTION BOX

Forward your feedback, article ideas, and personal updates to Sandy Lafleur at strumma@aol.com. Prefer the phone? Call Kate at 654-9854

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