

History of Social Dancing at Oregon State University

by
Davis Weymann

A PROJECT

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Oregon State University

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Abstract approved:

Catherine Dark

This paper presents a brief history of social dance at Oregon State University (OSU) and discusses its key elements and context. Social dance has been part of campus life at OSU since the university was founded. Initially, dance was a social activity and means to interact with others, but as social practices change it became an end in itself for communities focused on the enjoyment of dancing. The popularity of different styles, prominence in daily student life, and the social roles of social dance have all changed throughout OSU's history. Social dance has been shaped by changes within society and popular culture, but instruction and organization by students and faculty have been the most important influences within OSU. The goal of this paper is to provide historical context that will allow for greater understanding and appreciation of social dance by OSU students, faculty, and alumni.

Key Words: Social Dance, Oregon State University, Dance Clubs, Promenaders, Ballroom, International Folk Dance, Lindy Hop, West Coast Swing, Latin, Salsa, PAC Courses

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I understand that my project will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University, University Honors College. My signature below authorizes release of my project to any reader upon request.

Davis Weymann, Author

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Introduction

Corvallis College (now called Oregon State University¹ [OSU]) was founded in 1867 by the state of Oregon as the state's agricultural college [1]. Over the years, much has changed about OSU; it has grown considerably, expanded its curricula to include a wide variety of academic subjects and become more culturally, ethnically, and gender diverse. As the student and faculty population has changed, so too have social practices and social activities. One of these activities is social dancing. Dance has long been an important part of campus life at OSU and human society in general, and changes in the role and style of dance both reflect and impact social trends.

In this paper, social dancing is defined as dances that are performed by an interacting group of people primarily recreation. Some examples of common social dance styles are ballroom dancing, swing dancing, and most folk dancing. This definition does include some dance styles without strong partner interaction such as the *Twist* and disco. It does not include dances that are performed primarily for their artistic value, such as ballet and modern dance. A glossary of terms and dance styles is included at the end of this paper.

The practice of social dancing, and ballroom dancing in particular, may appear to be old and unchanging. While it is clear that the popularity of social dance has risen and fallen, the styles can seem timeless. However, a glance into the history of social dance will show that social dancing is as complicated and ever-changing as other social activities, and has evolved alongside social morals and norms.

¹ In this paper, "OSU" will refer to Oregon State University throughout its entire history, including previous names

This paper presents a brief history of social dancing at OSU. I hope that this context will allow for greater appreciation of social dancing as currently practiced at OSU as the most recent manifestation of a diverse history. Other types of dance will be acknowledged, and they have interesting histories of their own, but this paper will focus on social dances.

This paper presents a generally linear history based on available historical information. A summary of my research methodology appears at the end of this paper. Because of the limited information, details of small trends within dance culture at OSU are not represented, and the general trends presented cannot reflect the experiences of all individuals. Additionally, global and national movements may have differed from trends at OSU and the local area. This paper focuses on the OSU campus, but some information on regional and national trends is included for context.

History

Early OSU (1860's – 1910's)

The earliest officially sanctioned dance events at OSU were in 1897 [2], but there was most certainly organized dancing in the area before then. The US congress designated OSU as Oregon's land-grant college in 1868. At the time, Corvallis was a rural town of about 1000 people having first been settled in 1845 [3]. Pioneers on the Oregon Trail brought dance with them, and it was not uncommon for evenings to be filled with fiddle music to accompany various styles of country contra and square dances, jigs, and couples' round dances. The farmers, loggers, and miners of the rural west continued to dance these styles. Generally, men significantly outnumbered

women in rural areas and populations were spread out, so inter-town dances were an important means for courtship and social gathering. Informal non-partner dances such as jigs were danced at evening gatherings of laborers, and they could be enjoyed without traveling to nearby towns to find female partners [4].

As is the case now, many early attendees of OSU came from the Portland area, which exposed campus to some of the city's cultural influences. Portland was founded at a similar time as Corvallis, but Portland grew considerably larger. There is documentation of balls being held in Portland in 1849, and the city supported multiple dance academies and masters through the 1850's and 60's [4]. Combined with existing traditions of dance in rural Oregon, dancing would certainly have been a part of Corvallis life even if there was a lack of campus-based dance events and instruction.

When OSU was founded, it had a general curriculum of math, science, history, and languages, and was open to both male and female students. In 1871 the college expanded to focus on agriculture, and was re-named Corvallis State Agricultural College. In 1888 the department of Military Science and Tactics was added to the course catalog along with expansion of the "Household Economy and Hygiene" department for young women [1]. Military presence and education began at OSU in 1872, but the school lacked dedicated military professors until around 1894 [5]. The presence of the military department was important to the development of dance at OSU because dance was first taught by military personnel, and early balls were largely held in association with military department.

The first recorded social dancing at OSU took place in 1897, according to an interview of a professor Johnson in 1927. The few unmarried men in the college faculty were interested in learning to dance as a means to meet women, but they knew of no dance instructors in the area. Lieutenant commander Clarence Dentler², who was stationed as a military professor at OSU, offered to instruct the men in social dance for a small fee. The faculty men also recruited a student to play violin for the lessons. After a few lessons in the basics, the men invited some women acquaintances to join them for evening dances in the old mechanical building [2]. These women acquaintances already knew how to dance, which was presumably the reason why the men wished to learn. The women's knowledge of dance also indicates an existing culture of dance in Corvallis before these lessons.

Shortly after these early dances, the OSU faculty decided to hold five official dances each year at OSU for Thanksgiving, Christmas, George Washington's birthday, spring, and summer. Student groups were not permitted to independently hold their own dance events, so these five annual balls were the only officially sanctioned social dance events on campus [2]. Most of these annual dances were hosted by student organizations. For example, the junior class held the Junior Hop in the spring and the Battalion of Cadets held the Battalion of Cadets' Ball before Thanksgiving. It was common for dances to have dedicated student officers who were in charge of organizing things such as ticket sales or decorations. Dance usually also had adult chaperones to oversee the event, and honored guests who were sometimes event sponsors [6].

² Dentler was promoted to colonel in 1916 [7]

Until around the mid-1910's, balls at OSU followed a fairly regular format. Dances started with a Grand March, ended with a dance called *Home, Sweet Home*, and included a mix of waltz, two-step, Schottische, Lancers, and polka dances [6]. These dances were some of the more common at the time in the USA, and the popularity of these dances were likely a reflection of the times trends and the knowledge of Lieutenant Dentler. Dentler graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point in Highlands, NY in 1884 [7], which is where he likely learned to dance.

A Grand March is a formal ceremony historically performed at the start of balls. In the march, couples walk down the room following a leading couple, then split into two inward-facing rows that the trailing couples walk through before joining the outer rows. A dancer would participate in the Grand March with their date if they had one, or select a partner at the start of the dance. Partnering for the first dance usually implied that the chosen partner was favored above other attendees, which could play a role in social interaction and dating. Traditionally, Grand Marches were a way to show off the attire of participants and was a convenient time to announce honors guests [8].

It is not clear from the archive information what the dance *Home, Sweet Home* was, or how it became tradition for it to be the final dance at balls. *Home, Sweet Home* was listed as a waltz on dance cards³, so it may have simply been a regular waltz danced to a song named *Home, Sweet Home*. There is ballad by that named that was composed in 1823 and became quite popular in the USA, particularly during the period of the civil war [9] [10]. While these early OSU dances happened over 30 years after the

³ More information about dance cards is provided in the next paragraph

civil war, the ballad's popularity and the dance's name makes a connection probable. The musical timing of the original song is not compatible with a normal waltz, but it is possible that a waltz adaptation was played. However, the name also could have referred to a particular dance step, and a variety of modern line dances in country and ballroom styles also go by the name today [11]. It is reasonable to infer that *Home, Sweet Home* referred to a line dance or round dance accompanied by its namesake song.



Figure 1: Dance card from the 1897 Cadet Ball. Decorated in the shape of a cadet's cap, the inside lists the styles of dances to be played and has space for attendees to plan their partners. Courtesy of the Memorabilia Collection, Special Collections & Archives Research Center, Oregon State University Libraries, Memorabilia Box 193

Early OSU dances included the use of dance cards. Dance cards are small paper cards or booklets with space to write a schedule of partners for a dance. Dance cards also served as invitations, meaning that guests could meet with and plan partners before the night of the ball. Often not every partner would be planned out; archived dance cards usually had blank spaces or a note to dance with “whomever,” but some busy dancers would

entirely fill their cards before the event [6]. In modern conversational language, one may refer to their “dance card” when talking about their scheduled activities and priorities, particularly if they are busy and their “dance card is full” [12].

Not surprisingly, these dances in the early 1900’s differed greatly from recent social dance practices at OSU. With specific ceremonies starting and ending the balls, a fixed schedule of five balls per year, a program of what are now considered traditional ballroom dances, and the use of dance cards, these dances would be quite formal from modern perspective. However, one should not conflate formality with being stuffy or somber. Dances included the lively and up-beat styles of Schottische, polka, and two-step, and yearbooks describe balls as highly anticipated, merry social events [5]. Contrary to what some people may think today based on modern portrayals, balls throughout the USA were often mirthful events [13], so the tone of the OSU dances was not unusual.

In 1908, the university catalog included “folk dances” in the advanced physical activity class for women in the physical education department. While we know that dances were taught at OSU before this, this was the first time that the university itself offered dance instruction. However, these early classes included little to no instruction in style and technique. These lessons in “folk dances” included simple dance movements that were loosely based on ethnic dances, and were taught alongside harmonic movement, marching, running, artistic gymnastics, and other physical activities that were considered appropriate for young women⁴ [14]. These

⁴ The practice of teaching traditional dances from other cultures was first formalized in the USA around 1933. Instruction in “folk dance” before then often little resembled actual dances from other cultures [18].

simple dance courses were offered for women from 1908 to 1927, but no social dance classes were listed [1].

Ragtime Era (1910's – 1920's)

The 1910's were a period significant change for dance styles nationally and at OSU. Ragtime dances were becoming popular nationally, and foxtrot was first recognized as a dance in 1914 [13] [15]. OSU seems to have stayed on the forward edge of this national trend. Foxtrot appears on dance cards from OSU in 1914, and ragtime was specifically mentioned in the 1915 yearbook. Foxtrot quickly gained popularity at OSU and was by far the most danced style at OSU during the 20's [6].



Figure 2: A drawing from the 1910 yearbook (pg. 360) that accompanied a poem about the Junior Hop. The poem describes all ages of students attending along with faculty, and that the room with decorated with flowers and drapes. The poem also mentions “Home, Sweet Home” ending the night. Courtesy of the OSU Yearbooks Digital Collection, Special Collections & Archives Research Center, Oregon State University Libraries.

World War I was a major event of the 1910's, and it certainly impacted life at OSU. Surprisingly, there are only a few references to the war in OSU yearbooks from the time [5]. Events of military significance were significant to dance because dances were still held primarily in association

with the military department, but it seems that WWI did not have a major impact on the development of dance at OSU.

Moving into the ragtime era, some of the previously popular dance traditions and styles faded, with Schottische and Lancers vanishing from dance cards, and dances no longer ending with *Home, Sweet Home*. However, the waltz remained popular at dances, and usually was the second most frequently danced style after Foxtrot. While *Home, Sweet Home* may have faded, the final dance at balls was still usually a waltz. The tradition of having a “last waltz” as the final dance is still practiced at OSU ballroom dances [6]. Additionally the 20’s saw the lifting of the five dances per year restriction set by the university, and student organizations started holding additional dances [2]. Each class (freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors) started holding their own annual balls. These balls often had specific themes for decoration and costumes, and there was significant competition over which class could host the best event. Dances were also held by fraternities, sororities, dormitories, and colleges within the university such as engineering and agriculture [5]. From the 20’s through 30’s, it was common for yearbooks to have a section dedicated to listing and describing dance events from the year. The large number of dance events and the emphasis placed on them by the student body indicates that social dance events were a major part of student life.

While dance was important for student life, the university did not yet offer classes in social dancing. One can infer the students arrived at OSU with some knowledge and could learn more from each other and professional instructors in Corvallis.



(a)

(b)

Figure 3: (a) 1920 Freshman Dance, taken shortly before the grand march, (b) 1928 Co-ed Ball, which was strictly for women students; no boys allowed. The Co-ed Balls had costume themes and some of the women are dressed in male clothing. A few male faculty are visible in the photo, presumably as chaperones. Courtesy of the OSU Yearbooks Digital Collection, Special Collections & Archives Research Center, Oregon State University Libraries.

The university hired Betty Lynd Thompson in 1927 as an instructor for women's physical education. This was an important development for dance at OSU because Thompson's education was in modern dance, a genre of western artistic dance with roots in ballet, and she was hired expressly for dance instruction. Immediately after her arrival, she founded the dance program at OSU which held classes in modern, folk, square, tap, and ballroom dance. Dance classes were held in newly-constructed Women's Building [16], which is used for dance classes to this day.

Thompson focused on the instruction of modern dance, matching her educational background. She founded OSU's Orchesis chapter, a national honor society for artistic dance, which held annual recitals that were popular through Thompson's 45 year tenure at OSU [5]. Under Thompson, the modern dance program at OSU grew and shaped the lives of many students. In 1992, the dance studio in the Women's Building was dedicated to her by former students and Orchesis members [16].

Thompson's career is relevant to social dancing as well as modern dance. She was the first instructor to teach ballroom dancing at OSU, a class which has been continually taught since then. Once a formal dance program was established, expanding dance instruction at OSU became much easier and the program has continually grown in the number of students and the number of styles offered. The Women's Building was built with space to accommodate social dances, providing a better venue for dances than the dorm hall and the co-opted academic buildings. All co-ed balls⁵ were held in the Women's Building, and it remains the location of most dance classes and many social dance events at OSU. Construction of the Memorial Union was completed in 1928 and included a ballroom and lounge in which social dances were regularly held [17] [5]. University administration must have felt that dance was important enough to the university's mission to justify investing in the dance program and space.

During the 30's and 40's the use of dance cards remained widespread, but their design and purpose changed. Dance styles were no longer listed next to each line, and it was common for space to be instead dedicated for writing poems and memories about the dance [6]. They became less important for formally structuring dances and instead served as invitations decorated according to the dance themes, and as keepsakes of the events. From my research perspective, the omitting of dance styles makes it more difficult to accurately judge the popularity of specific styles, but the simplification of dance cards and reduction of exact planning hints that dance culture was becoming less regimental and more casual.

⁵ "co-ed" referred to female students and events put on by the female student organizations, as opposed to its modern definition of referring to both genders

Hosting social events in general was an important function of fraternities and sororities, and most chapters held at least one house dance each year. In 1933, sororities started holding Nickel Hops, also called Hello Dances, as fundraisers where male guests paid a nickel to dance with one of the sorority sisters for 15 minutes [18]. Nickel Hops increased in popularity and became staple sorority events, and they were featured prominently in yearbooks and school newspapers as a beloved tradition through the 40's and 50's [5].

As with any popular social activity, small economies formed around social dance. Throughout history covered so far, sound recording was an immature technology, thus music for dances was provided by musicians. During the 30s, vinyl records became common and they were utilized for dance classes, complementing but not replacing pianists. However, live bands continued to be a necessity for social events. There were at least three bands in Corvallis that were frequently hired to play at dance events by Greek societies, student groups, and the university. In 1933 when these bands agreed with each other to increase their rates, prompting fraternities to complain of price gouging without fair competition [18]. Advertisements in the school newspaper promoted dance events in downtown Corvallis, spiffy dance shoes, and head-turning ball gowns.

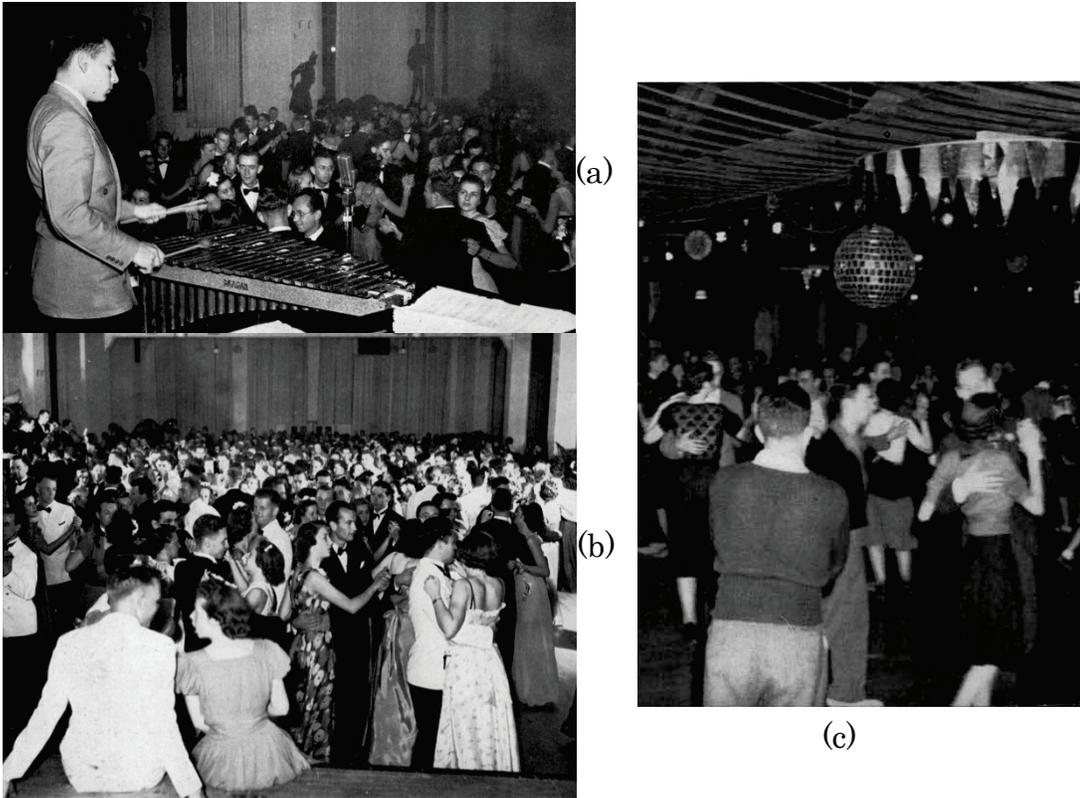


Figure 4: Photos from the 1940 yearbook. (a) “Isle of Paradise” themed formal dance. (b) Senior Ball. (c) 15th annual Junior Bust dance, where jitterbug was featured prominently. Courtesy of the OSU Yearbooks Digital Collection, Special Collections & Archives Research Center, Oregon State University Libraries.

Swing Era (1930’s – 1950’s)

Nationally, the 30’s through 50’s were the swing era, defined by big bang swing dances like Lindy Hop, Jitterbug, and single-, double-, and triple-time swing [19]. These dances made it to OSU no later than 1940. It is difficult to distinguish between dance styles in photos, but the characteristic swing hold increases in frequency in yearbook photos between 1940 and 1950. Ballroom and barn dances continued to be practiced alongside swing, and different styles of dancing were done at different events [5].



(a)

(b)

Figure 5: Photos from the 1943 yearbook. (a) Foresters' Ball. (b) Formal dance in the MU with fairytale theme, Cinderella's pumpkin sits behind the band. Courtesy of the OSU Yearbooks Digital Collection, Special Collections & Archives Research Center, Oregon State University Libraries.

WWII had a major impact on life at OSU. The number of male students sharply dropped at the start of the America's involvement in the war, and wartime economy and culture changing everyday life at the university. After the war, the number of male students sharply increased to numbers higher than they were previously [20]. While the war tightened budgets and university attendance dropped, dances continued and were prominent in yearbooks [5]. They were likely seen as important for student moral and the moral of soldiers on leave.

Immediately after the end of WWII in 1945, Erma Weir first appears in the school's catalog as an instructor of women's physical education. Weirs' main interest was in folk dancing, which was one of the first dance classes offered at OSU (in 1908) and had remained in the course catalog since. Weir also taught ballroom dance, and the social dance program grew considerably during her tenure [21]. In 1946 she notably started the

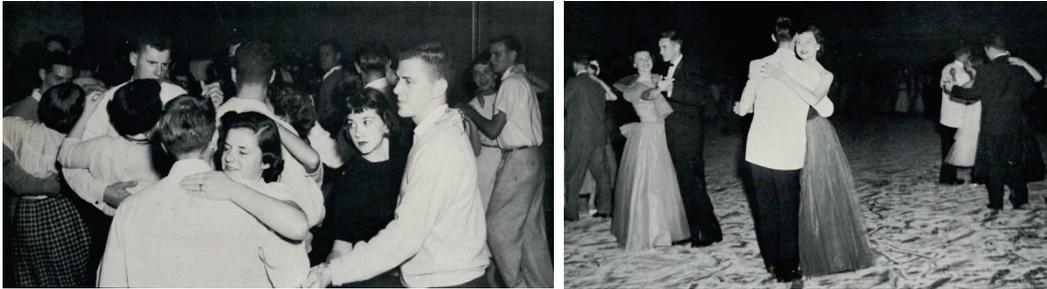
Promenaders, a student group that held regular events where students could learn how to dance in a fun environment [5] [22].

The Promenaders were the first official student group dedicated to social dance, and the advent of the Promenaders signifies a shift in attitude towards social dance. Dances had been a major part of campus life for decades, but the focus had always been on the events and socializing, while dancing was just a consequence of these activities. The basis of this inference is that whenever social dancing was written about in yearbooks or newspaper articles, discussion was about the themes, number of people, notable guests, beautiful or clever attire, etc. Few people wrote about the skill of dancers, how a new style was popular, or how fun the music was to dance to. Considerable effort was put into decoration, costumes, and invitations/dance cards. Overall, one gets the impression that dancing was the justification for the events, but students cared only a little for the dancing itself, while the real fun was the socializing and the pomp and circumstance of the events.

In contrast, the Promenaders gathered for the sake of learning and enjoying dancing, and their social interactions came as a consequence of that shared interest. While the group was founded under Weir, it was organized and run by students, meaning that the leadership rotated every few years, and the focus of the group could quickly change according to the interests of its members.

At its inception, the Promenaders focused on folk dance, but the group expanded its interests and offerings to include line dances and square dances outside of the folk genre, and some round dances. During the fall after the club's founding, it held its first annual folk dance clinic on the

initiative of the club’s president. The first clinic, and the ones that followed, were day-long or multi-day events where participants learned and shared dance patterns. The number of attendees grew each year. In 1952, the event filled the MU ballroom, drew people from in and out of town, and had different sessions for different dance styles. Handbooks containing summaries of dance patterns were available at each session. While the participants clearly took learning dancing seriously, the focus remained firmly on enjoyment. The 1951 clinic handbook specifically warned attendees that “we can wear ourselves out from the overtime necessary to learn all these new patterns; then our dancing ceases to be a recreation” [23]. Weir maintained a similar emphasis in her classes, focusing on the “folk dancing fun” in her handbook written for students taking her classes and reminding students that “there may be several different ways of doing the dances. No one way is the right way” [24].



(a)

(b)



(c)

(d)

Figure 6: (a) 1955 “Fusser’s Frolic”. Fussing was slang for dating, indicating that the event was organized for finding dates. (b) 1955 Jr-Sr Prom, a few couples dance within a circle of observers, likely related to choosing prom royalty. (c) 1950 Theta Chi “Red OX Stampede” house dance. (d) 1950 ATΩ ski retreat at Timberline. Courtesy of the OSU Yearbooks Digital Collection, Special Collections & Archives Research Center, Oregon State University Libraries.

During the early days of the Promenaders, students were less concerned about distinguishing between what we now call folk, square, and ballroom dancing. They participated in a variety of social dance styles even though the group's focus was on folk. Through the early and mid-50's, the social dance scene at OSU developed and grew, and groups of students began specializing in either folk or square dancing, preferring one style over the other. As the styles became more distinct, the club became internally divided and eventually split into the Promenaders Square Dance Club, and Promenaders Folk Dance Club [22] [25] [26]. The splitting of the club indicates that the growing scene was then able to support two student dance organizations with specialized interests. While the groups were more specialized, they were not exclusive and students could and did participate in both groups. The square dance club retained the name of the Promenaders, while the folk dance club would eventually be called the International Folk Dance Club [22].

Cultural Shifts in the 60's and 70's

The 60's were a period of great social change. The civil rights movement became increasingly influential and had wide-ranging impact beyond its primary goals of racial equality. At universities, students demanded greater independence through social and legal means, and the policies of *in loco parentis*⁶ were being abandoned [27] [28]. Young adults increasingly were rejecting tradition and authority, encouraged by popular youth culture to "do your own thing" [29].

⁶ Latin for "in place of a parent", it refers to the legal authority/responsibility that universities were granted over students and the strict control that they maintained over student life

This youth culture was one of the many components that lead to the explosion of popularity of the *Twist*. The *Twist* is a simple dance move of a counter-body twisting movement of the hips and upper body, and was a national dance craze starting in 1960 and lasting through 1962. The *Twist* was danced socially but did not involve physical contact between dancers; a complete departure from the ballroom and swing styles [30]. Nationally, the rise of the *Twist* and its many off-shoot dances caused a rapid decline in the popularity of traditional partner dance styles such as ballroom, latin, and swing, which were considered out of style [29].

OSU also saw this trend away from traditional social dance. Dance cards disappeared through the 60's, being viewed as stuffy and old-fashioned [6]. The Co-ed Congress voted to stop holding Nickel Hops in 1967, citing declining popularity and the majority of students feeling that they were not worth the time when there were better fundraising options available [31]. Dance attendance dropped, and their prominence in yearbooks sharply declined [5].

Social dancing did not die, however. While square, ballroom, and swing dancing may have fallen out of mainstream culture at OSU, classes in them continued to be offered and they were still danced on campus with regularity [1].

Folk dancing had a different image than ballroom or swing, and folk dancing did not experience a significant downward trend. Most folk dances were not partnered dances and many could be danced together in groups, which could allow for even greater “independence” than the *Twist*, which was normally danced with two people, even though there was no formal partnering. Additionally, exploring “natural” life and traditional

culture was encouraged during this period, which aided interest in folk dance [32].

The Folk Dance Club continued to practice folk dancing through the 50's and 60's, but there was a period from 1960 to 1963 where square dancing largely stopped due to Erma Weir retiring from square dance calling. However, the Square Dance Club was revived in about 1963 when a student with prior square dance experience took over leadership and started calling at dances [25].

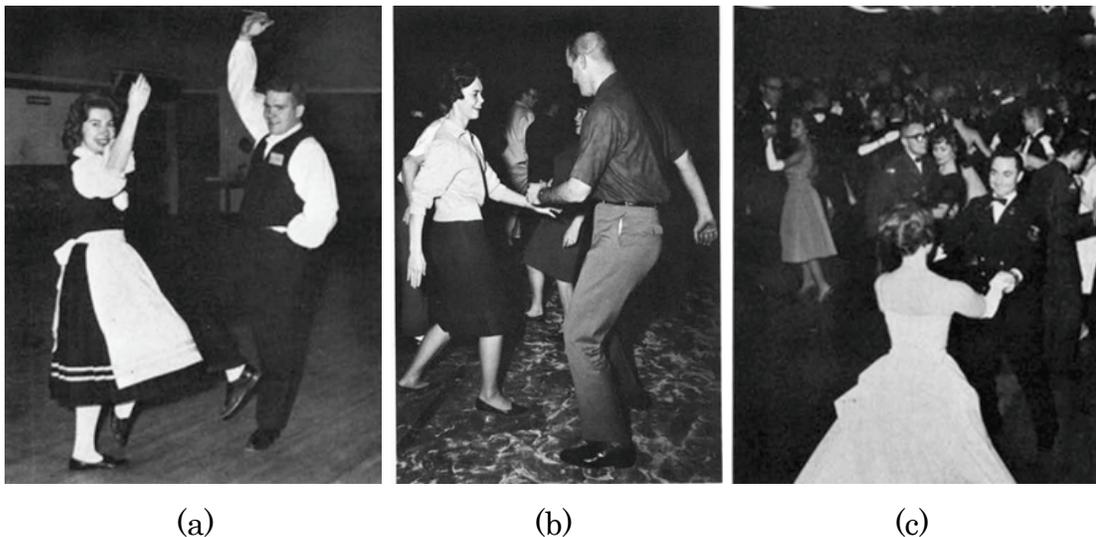


Figure 7: Photos from the 1962 yearbook (a) the Promenaders International Folk Dance Club, (b) couple doing the *Twist*, (c) Military Ball. Courtesy of the OSU Yearbooks Digital Collection, Special Collections & Archives Research Center, Oregon State University Libraries.

Through the mid and late-60's, square dance grew in popularity at OSU, with leadership of the Promenaders passing down from graduating students to younger members. There was a significant population of high school students who did square dancing in Oregon, and some of them were actively recruited by the club to come to OSU. At the time, the styles of square dance done by youth and adult groups were significantly different

and the Promenaders facilitated a transition between the two, holding dances in both styles. The size of the Promenaders Square Dance Club began declining in the late 70s, largely due to a national decline in the popularity of square dance among high school and university students. In the early or mid-80's, the student caller and leader graduated without a replacement, greatly weakening the club [25]. The club continued to exist in some capacity until 1990, at which point registration records discontinued [22].

While square dancing may have been declining in the late 70's, Folk dance was reaching another peak in popularity. Erma Weir's retirement in 1974 had a major impact on folk dancing at OSU [21], but folk dance remained popular in both Corvallis and Eugene, with large annual international dance festivals being held in both cities. In Corvallis, there were community organizations for folk dancing for all age groups, which provided interested students with many opportunities for dancing several nights a week. The folk dance club had international ties as well. They brought in a well-known Swedish dance group for a workshop in 1976, and the folk dance performance team went on a three-week international tour in Sweden the next year. In 1981, the team went on another tour, this time in Finland where they performed as a guest team⁷ in a large international folk dance competition [26].

After an extended run in popularity, student interest in folk dancing started a decline in the late 80's and printed email records about folk dancing in universities around the country indicate that the club was

⁷ In dance competitions, it is common for there to be an exhibition performance by a non-competing team. These performances can provide variety and focus more on entertainment than the competition performances, and help network dance communities.

struggling to maintain sufficient attendance by 1993 [33]. The International Folk Dance Club dissolved around 1994 [32], but folk dance did not cease in Corvallis. Folk dance events are still regularly held in the Corvallis area by organizations like the Corvallis Folklore Society, which was established around 1977 [34].

Diversification in the 70's and 80's

Under Weir, the university's dance program had expanded to include beginning, intermediate, and advanced classes for both ballroom and folk dancing. Weir's successor was Kathy Kerr, hired in 1974, who continued to teach these classes and established much of the curriculum on which the university's current ballroom classes are based [32]. Kerr became the faculty advisor for the dance clubs and increased the diversity of dance courses offered [1] [35].

Kerr's classes focused on partnering and lead-follow communication, with the intent that after the ten weeks, students could use general skills to adapt to a variety of dance styles. She also distinguished more between folk, square, and ballroom dancing. Similar to how folk and square dancing became more separated at OSU in the 50's, ballroom began distinguishing itself in the 70's. As before, students began specializing in preferred styles and desired greater focus on their style of choice at events. In response, Kerr formed the Ballroom Dance Club. Now there were three student groups: The Promenaders Square Dance Club, the International Folk Dance Club, and the Ballroom Dance Club (BDC) [26].

We can't speak of dance in the 70's without mentioning disco. The disco fad was prevalent in Corvallis and was popular in the area for a few years. Folk dancers would participate in disco-style line dances in between folk-

style dances [32], and there was a discotheque⁸ on the southern edge of the city. However, prevalence of disco was short-lived and the style seems to not have had significant long-lasting impacts. Disco was not included in classes to any significant extent, and the style was danced on campus only occasionally [26].

The 1980 yearbook mentions the “uncool” perception of organized events such as dances, and declining attendance to school dance events. Only some special events such as the formal Valentine’s Day dance did not have decreased attendance [5]. However, this perception of general events did not seem to impact dance clubs to the same extent, likely because they catered to a smaller target audience that maintained an interest in dance.

A national re-emergence of social dance began in the early 80’s, and it was boosted into the public mainstream by an increasing presence of dance in movies such as *Footloose* (1984), *Dirty Dancing* (1987), and *Strictly Ballroom* (1992). A few carloads of Kerr’s students and BDC members took a “field trip” to see *Dirty Dancing* in Albany, which helped boost interest in the club [26]. On a national scale, Lindy Hop was re-gaining popularity in urban centers in New York and California, Mambo had been revived as salsa dancing in Florida and LA, and ballroom was making a general comeback in cities [29].

Kerr continued teaching at OSU until 1989, at which point she accepted a position at a different university, meaning that OSU needed a new social dance instructor. There had been other social dance instructors at OSU such as a notable grad student who came to OSU with considerable experience in dance. He frequently helped Kerr in classes and taught

⁸ A dance club, particularly with lighting systems for disco dancing

during Kerr's two-year sabbatical in 1981-1983, but graduated before 1989. OSU also had a sizable modern dance program, but the social and artistic dance programs had separated considerably and both grown in size since the 30s when Thompson taught both [26]. An instructor named Don Allen was hired as the primary social dance instructor and maintained the program until 1990, at which point Cathy Dark, who still teaches at OSU, was hired [36].

Recent History (1990's – 2015)

Since the 90's, social dancing at OSU has become increasingly diversified and different communities have grown and changed simultaneously and independently of each other. Additionally, more details can be learned about recent history because people still remember events. Presenting this history in a strictly chronological order would be confusing because many stories were happening at once, so this section has been divided up by dance styles.

Relevant to all styles is a quick summary of the growing number of classes and instructors within the Physical Activity Courses (PAC) department. When Kathy Kerr left OSU in 1989, Don Allen filled the position for a little over a year, then Cathy Dark was hired. At this point classes were offered for three levels of ballroom, two levels of folk, and one level of country western.

Physical education had long been part of the university's baccalaureate core, with students required to take at least three credits of PAC courses before graduation. Dance courses were treated largely the same as other PAC courses, and many students took them to fill their PAC requirements. In 1990, the requirement was changed to taking just one PAC course

before graduation, and a new “Lifetime Fitness for Health” course was added [1]. This change reduced registration to PAC courses in general, but particularly impacted dance courses.

Shortly after being hired, Dark implemented a variety of changes within the dance program to better cater to student interests and increase registration for dance courses. Many PAC courses, including dance, were registered as 75-minute blocks, which prevented students from registering for classes scheduled an hour after a dance class. PAC classes only included 50 minutes of instruction and the extra time was added to make sure that students had time to shower before another class started. While leaving time for showering is important for courses such as swimming, it was not needed for dance courses. Dark reduced the time to 50 minutes, which allowed students to more easily fit dance courses into class schedules [32].

Dark replaced the outdated record player with a CD playing sound system with full-sized speakers, and added a microphone for use during lessons. She purchased new music that was more popular and easier to dance to, and started advertising efforts to increase student awareness of and interest in dance courses. After a few years, she started changing the selection of dance courses offered to better align with changing student interests [32]. Early changes included adding latin in 1994, then dropping international folk and adding West Coast Swing in 1995 [1].

Registration for PAC dance courses increased through the early 90's. As classes filled, additional instructors were added. Around 1990, Barbara Lauris started teaching social dance classes. Lauris' background was in modern dance and she was initially hired to teach modern dance courses

and exercise courses like palates. Lauris became more interested in social dance in the early 90's, which made starting to teach social dance an easy transition [36]. In 1995, the department grew again when David Feinberg, who was originally hired as a pianist for dance classes (both social and artistic), was brought on as an instructor. Like Lauris, Feinberg was already working at OSU before expanding to teaching dance, and he in fact learned to dance at OSU [37]. In 1997, Marc Green was officially hired as an instructor after previously helping Cathy with dance classes [29]. Most recently, Mark Baker, an OSU alumnus, was hired in 2010 [1] [32].

All of these dance instructors have unique areas of expertise and styles of teaching, and they have contributed to the development of social dance at OSU in different ways.

From 1990 to present, the number of PAC dance classes has increased considerably. There were fourteen sessions⁹ for dance courses fall 2002, then thirty-two in fall 2014, not counting performance teams. The numbers of sessions offered in different styles and their proportions have changed over years. Ballroom has always had the largest number of sessions, but sessions in country western have increased to the same level in recent years. Swing and salsa also have had greater than average numbers depending on the year. There is some relationship between the numbers of course sessions and general popularity of a style on campus, but it is not a direct correlation [38].

⁹ A single course can have multiple identical class sessions offered at different times during the week, and students register for one session. These numbers are the total number of sessions offered for dance courses.

Ballroom

Around 1989, ballroom dance had a small boom in popularity after a few years of steady growth. Women greatly outnumbered men in classes and at Ballroom Dance Club (BDC) dances, but interest increased among men as they were promised that dance was a great opportunity to meet women. Popular styles at BDC dances were waltz, Foxtrot, Cha-Cha, tango, and single-time swing¹⁰.

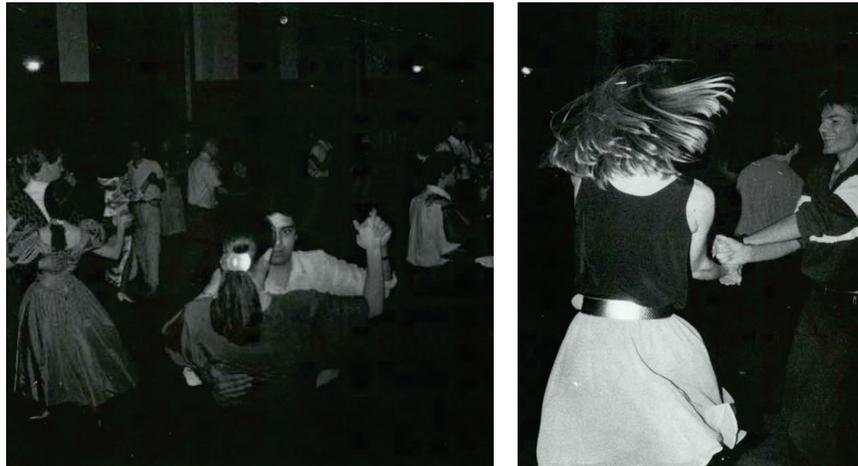


Figure 8: Photos from a two-page feature on the Ballroom Dance Club in the 1992 yearbook. Courtesy of the OSU Yearbooks Digital Collection, Special Collections & Archives Research Center, Oregon State University Libraries.

As more students became more experienced dancers, they became interested in learning new styles. Dark started teaching styles like Lindy Hop, salsa, samba, and rhumba, expanding the variety of classes offered as the number of interested students grew. Average weekly dance attendance for the BDC doubled from 50 to 100 people within the 1990

¹⁰ Swing and Cha-Cha are not “ballroom” dances by most technical classifications, but technical classifications are of little importance to casual student dancers. Single-time swing and Cha-Cha were taught at OSU as part of the ballroom dance classes, and thus students wanted to dance them at BDC events [39].

academic year, and the popularity continued to increase for the next few years [39].

During this period, a small group of students had become interested in learning more about performance ballroom dance, and they learned and practiced routines together. Dark suggested forming a performance group, offering to choreograph routines and teach. The group became the Cool Shoes dance team, and would perform at BDC dances and community events in the area. Cool Shoes provided students with a means to take ballroom dancing to an advanced level, and contributed to a trend of students seeking out advanced instruction. Through the mid 90's and mid-2000's, the BDC hosted annual workshops that would bring a professional dance instructors to teach at OSU. Workshops with pros require significant monetary and organizational commitments, and require support from a community with a strong interest in social dance [32].

There were some students, like those who performed with Cool Shoes, who sought out additional opportunities to dance outside of campus. Some would drive to other cities like Eugene, Newport, and Portland to dance more nights a week in a variety of styles. Some dance venues were created in/near Corvallis as well, such as in 1998 when a handful of Cool Shoes members started holding weekly dances at Lakepark Roller Rink¹¹. These events eventually grew to include hundreds of people. Every few years, a new individual would take over leadership and organization responsibilities, and dances continued in this manner until around 2008, at which point rent became too high and dances ceased at the location [40].

¹¹ Part of Lakepark Entertainment Center in Lebanon, which closed in 2009

In 2011, a beginning-level ballroom dance team called New Shoes was formed to provide an entry-level performance team for students who wanted to get into ballroom dance in earnest but didn't have enough experience to join Cool Shoes. Additionally, Mark Baker was brought in by the department to teach advanced performance technique courses. The increase in opportunities to perform and compete in ballroom facilitated an increase in student awareness and interest in performance ballroom. Each year the teams hold auditions for new members.

Ballroom dance remains popular at OSU. The Ballroom Dance Club holds weekly dances along with a few weekend events each term, each with lessons beforehand. This is similar to how the folk and square dance clubs operated in the 70's. Popular dance styles are waltz, West Coast Swing, Foxtrot, single-time swing, Cha-Cha, Nightclub Two-Step, Hustle, and American Tango. Other styles are also regularly danced such Salsa, rhumba, Viennese Waltz, polka, samba, quickstep, Lindy Hop, and Argentine Tango. Often, multiple styles can be danced to the same song and it is common for attendees to know only a few to a handful of the dance styles, but some experienced dancers will participate in all styles with varying degrees of proficiency.

Country Western

Like Ballroom, country western dancing increased in popularity nationwide during the 80's. This rise was partly due to popular media such as *Urban Cowboy* (1980) featuring country western culture. In 1983, Kerr started teaching country western dance classes after returning from a two-year sabbatical in Texas. These classes consistently filled and became particularly popular among certain circles of agricultural students. In about 1985, a group of these students started the Country Western Dance Club to create more opportunities for them to dance. The

club was initially successful, but quickly dissolved as the music and fashion fad faded and the club's leadership moved on [26]. However, Kerr continued to teach country western dance classes, and Dark continued those classes after Kerr left OSU. Dark increased focus on traditional country western dance styles with the intent of being more inviting to the rural students who grew up with the traditional style, as opposed to the more modern styles [32]. Country dance picked up again in the early 90's and the dance club re-formed as the Country Western Swing Club in 1993.

The popularity of country western dance and the success of the club have continued to follow a cyclic pattern, being up for a few years, then fading, then repeating. The club dissolved again in around 2000, then re-formed in 2007 and experienced about 4 years of popularity, then shrank down for about 3 years. This current 2014-2015 year has seen a rapid growth of country dance both on campus and around Corvallis [22] [32].

The cyclic pattern of country dance seems strongly related to the popularity of country music, but trends within OSU are also influenced by the strength of the club, which is often a reflection on the strength of its leadership. That being said, maintaining strong leadership is easier when the club has a large pool of student members to choose leaders from, and maintaining motivation within leadership is easier when more people are interested in the club. Thus, club success, club leadership, and general popularity of country culture are all inter-related factors.

West Coast Swing

West Coast Swing was first taught at OSU around 1994 by Barbara Lauris. Lauris learned West Coast Swing in Portland in the early 90's and brought what she learned to OSU, which is the first known time that the style was danced in Corvallis [36].

It's worth noting that West Coast Swing is a fairly young dance style and looks different now than in the 90's. West Coast Swing was first recognized in the 60's, having evolved from the many swing, blues, and rock styles of the 40's-60's [15]. In the past decade, West Coast Swing has become smoother and more grounded, and the popularity of fusion with blues and latin styles has increased.

The popularity of West Coast Swing grew within the ballroom dance community and some students started specializing in the style. From 2003 to 2005, interest in West Coast Swing both as a social and competitive dance quickly expanded and a community of passionate "Westies" formed. These Westies would travel between cities to dance, similar to the dedicated ballroom dancers of the time. In response to the increase in popularity, the West Coast Swing Club was formed in fall 2005, branching from the Ballroom Dance Club similar to how the Promenaders had branched into two clubs in the 50's. The West Coast Swing Club started holding its own dances in 2006 [40]. The club quickly grew and some students competed at high levels in West Coast Swing; a couple even went on to become professionals. The competitive West Coast Swing scene at OSU is smaller now than it was in 2005, but West Coast Swing is still quite popular on campus. The West Coast Swing Club plays exclusively West Coast Swing music for an hour every Wednesday immediately after the Ballroom Dance Club dance (which also includes West Coast Swing in the mix of ballroom, latin, and swing). The club also holds a few weekend events each term.

Salsa

Salsa was first taught at OSU in 1996 as part of the newly added latin dance class, and was danced within the ballroom community. Salsa

became more prevalent in the early 2000's when Cuban Salsa lessons began being taught in Corvallis by two dancers from Eugene that later formed the Rumbanana Cuban Salsa performance group in 2006 [41]. Rumbanana gained presence on campus by performing with Cool Shoes and teaching [33]. From 2011 to 2013 there was a Cuban Salsa club on campus that would hold free semi-weekly Casino Rueda practicas. Casino Rueda is a style of Cuban Salsa dancing in a circle with a caller announcing the next dance pattern, somewhat similar to how calling in square dancing is done. The club was founded by two students who taught at and organized the club, but the club didn't grow enough to develop new leadership and discontinued upon the founders' graduation. Salsa's biggest hub in Corvallis is currently Impulse Bar and Grill, which was founded in 2009 and holds Cuban salsa nights with instruction by Rumbanana's founders every Tuesday [42].

East Coast Swing and Lindy Hop

Swing dancing has been present to some degree on campus since at least 1940, and likely some time before then. Single-time swing (sometimes called East Coast Swing) was included in Kerr's ballroom classes, and swing was and still is danced within the Ballroom Dance Club.

Swing dance remained primarily part of the ballroom dance scene at OSU up through the early 90's, then swing and Lindy Hop in particular experienced an increase in popularity. In 1998, Gap launched their incredibly successful "Kahki Swing" commercial which featured Lindy Hop dancers. The commercial boosted interest in Lindy Hop and swing both nationally and locally [29] [43]. In response to the increased interest, a swing class was offered by the PAC department, which filled with both students interested in Lindy Hop, and with students who thought they were signing up for country western swing. New students came to OSU

with interests in swing and Lindy Hop, having learned them in high school in groups such as Corvallis High School's own Lindy Hop group [32]. Swing PAC classes were added as more permanent fixture to the general catalog in 2001, with another being added for Lindy Hop in 2003. At various times through the 80's and early 2000's, there were dance venues in and near Corvallis that held swing dance, such as the aforementioned Lakepark Roller Rink, and weekly swing dances which were held in the McNary residence hall [5] [44]. A community formed around swing dancing and, as with other styles, students who were particularly enthusiastic would drive to events in Portland and Eugene on a regular basis [44].

As West Coast Swing became popular in 2003, the popularity of Lindy Hop declined and there was a period from around 2005-2009 where swing was rarely danced in Corvallis outside of PAC classes and ballroom events. Then a small community of students started to re-form around Lindy Hop, which founded the Corvallis Swing Society in 2010. The Corvallis Swing Society differs from the other clubs mentioned thus far, in that it is not a student organization part of the university. It is currently run by community members and OSU alumni living in Corvallis, although a significant number of students do participate in the organization [45].

Blues

Modern blues dancing is a very young dance style, adapted from Lindy Hop between 2000 and 2003, largely as a way for exhausted Lindy Hop dancers to continue to dance late into the night¹² [46]. Blues dancing caught on in Portland around 2003, and in 2009 it was brought to

¹² There were earlier partner dances done to blues music also called blues dancing, but modern blues dancing is dissimilar enough to be very distinct.

Corvallis by a student who started teaching lessons at a dance studio in northern Corvallis. Knowledge of the class spread almost entirely by word of mouth, and early adopters were a mix of experienced dancers who saw blues as a cool new trend, and new dancers who thought that the style looked fun [47].

After about half a year, a member of the Ballroom Dance Club leadership helped found the OSU Blues Club, which brought the dance style onto campus. After about a year of being almost entirely managed by the original two students, the club adopted a leadership structure similar to the other OSU dance clubs and soon started working closely with the Corvallis Swing Society [47]. In 2015 the Blues Club stopped hosting independent dances, but the Swing Society continues to incorporate blues into their events, particularly during late nights similar to how blues was danced during in its early days in the 2000's.

Other Notable Styles

Other small dance clubs have existed at various times, and certain styles have gained followings without forming official students clubs. For example, In 2012, an OSU professor and her husband revived the Argentine Tango Club and held lessons and events on Mondays. The Argentine Tango Club was first founded during the late 70's or early 80's during a brief period when the style became notably popular among ballroom dancers [26]. The club discontinued again when the professor left OSU the next year in 2013. Portland and Eugene both have sizable Argentine Tango scenes. Another example of a style that has formed a small following without a dedicated club is Balboa, which has been taught by Marc Green. Presumably other such communities have previously existed without leaving written records.

Discussion

Discussion of the Role of Social Dance

When Corvallis was founded, balls were major social activities in the cities of the east coast, serving as a means to support social activity, meet potential spouses, and provide entertainment. In the rural west and on the Oregon Trail, there were no large ballrooms, but American folk dancing filled these same roles with the added component of keeping spirits high in difficult physical conditions.

We can infer that folk and ballroom dancing was occurring to some degree in Corvallis before 1897, but they were not prominent on the OSU campus. When balls began to be held at OSU, they were the major social events on campus, similar to the function of balls in cities. The advent of a proper dance instruction program in the late 1920's likely influenced the nature of dance on campus, but its main role as the supporting element of balls remained the same. The formation and growth of the Promenaders dance club in the late 40's indicates an emerging subculture of social dancing outside of the context of the mainstream culture of balls. This divide sharpened in the 60's when popular culture sharply shifted away from traditional social dancing.

After the 60's, mainstream social events retain the name of "dances" and do include dancing, but of a different style. Specifically, these dances are simple and easy activities such as the *Twist* and its offshoot dances, then freak dancing which progressed to the "grinding" common today. While modern clubs seem totally different than the ballrooms of the 40's, they serve remarkably similar roles: providing structure for social gatherings, entertainment, and finding potential romantic partners. Additionally, the way waltz was perceived as an overly sexual and scandalous dance of the

youth in the early 19th century bears remarkable resemblance to parents' views on grinding in the early 21st century.

Traditional social dances lived on in sub-cultures where enjoying dance was the focus. This culture was passed through the continually changing student body primarily by PAC instructors and passionate students or other individuals. This brings us to present day.

The history and evolution of social dance raise the question of what the current role of social dance is at OSU. To phrase that in a way that is more easily answered: why are students practicing traditional social dance? The answers vary from student to student, but common reasons are that dancing is a fun and accessible social activity that builds friendships, teaches self-confidence, is physically active, and reduces stress¹³ [44] [36].

Colleges are extremely social environments, so the social element of social dance does not make it unusual. However, dance has many elements that set it apart from common college activities and make it appealing to some students. Social dance lacks elements such as drinking and hook-up culture¹⁴ that some students wish to avoid occasionally or entirely but are common to many college social activities. Social dance doesn't require large time commitments, it is low-pressure and non-competitive, it doesn't require strenuous physical training, and lessons plus PAC classes

¹³ See *Basis for List of Reasons Why Students Dance* in the appendix for information on how this list was developed.

¹⁴ Hook-up culture refers to the expectation of casual sexual encounters, which is common at many parties and bars/clubs, but can make uninterested individuals feel uncomfortable, harassed, or unsafe.

eliminate the need for prior experience. It is “accessible” in the sense that it is a safe activity that almost anyone can participate in.

Social dance involves a unique type of social interaction. Dancing with a partner is a very personal interaction with a lot of verbal and non-verbal communication. Both partners must be able to understand what movements their partner is intending, which requires paying close attention to their partner’s body. Because of the physical contact in dance, both partners also must establish and respect their physical boundaries from social, sexual, and physical safety perspectives. In essence, a successful dance requires trust. Social dance teaches people how to trust and be trustworthy, both of which are valuable social skills.

The level of trust and communication required in social dance helps create a positive community and builds friendships. It also can bring together romantic partners; in recent history social dance at OSU has been a major contributor to at least dozen marriages. For students who are shy or generally introverted, dance classes are a way to “force” them to interact with others and make new friends. The communication and trust requirements of social dance make dance an excellent activity for meeting friends and developing social skills.

Dance builds self-confidence in a variety of ways. For the shy or introverted students, the personal interactions of dance force them out of their comfort zone and are great for building social skills and confidence. Dance is also a highly visible activity with many challenges and nuances. Inexperienced dancers (the majority of new students) often feel self-conscious when learning, feeling that spectators are negatively judging their errors. This discomfort dissipates as students grow as dancers and

gain confidence in their own skills, and more importantly learn that other dancers are just like them and are not passing negative judgement. It is common for faculty dance instructors to witness major personal growth within students as they learn to dance [36].

The physically active nature of dance makes it appealing for students who want an easy way to get some exercise, which is often desired in our often sedentary lifestyles. While social dance usually isn't physically strenuous (although some dance styles certainly can be), it involves enough activity to maintain an elevated heart rate and amounts to a significant level of exercise over a three hour long dance event. It also builds muscle control, balance, coordination, and good posture.

Final on our list, dance has stress-reducing qualities that come from the mixture of enjoyment, socialization, and physical activity. Students' studies can put them under a lot of stress, and dance is a healthy stress outlet.

There are a variety of other reasons why students may choose to dance. High school graduates who are entering college have reached an important life milestone having recently become legal adults and often first moving away from home. Because of this perceived transition into adulthood, students may desire an "adult" activity that they can enjoy, such as social dance. Students who participate in leadership within dance clubs develop leadership and organizational skills which can transfer over to professional environments. Dance is an activity for all ages, so students can continue dancing long after graduation.

In summary, dance has found a role at OSU as a fun and uniquely healthful activity that contributes to physical, mental, emotional, and social wellness in a way that few other activities can.

Discussion of Key Influences

On a very wide scale, long-term changes in society have driven transitions in the style and purpose of social dance. Such influences include changing practices in courtship and dating, manners for social interaction, and how frequently people gather and how easy it is to do so.

Trends in popular culture such as music, movies, and dance fads have influenced OSU's dance culture at various times, usually by creating a sudden surge in the popularity of specific dance styles after they were incorporated into a piece of popular media. Generally these surges quickly faded as the popular culture shifted, but sometimes there were subtler lasting impacts. An obvious example is the *Twist*, but smaller bursts were connected to media such as the TV shows like *So You Think You Can Dance* (2005) and *Dancing with the Stars* (2005), movies like *Dirty Dancing* (1987), *Swing Kids* (1993), and *Urban Cowboy* (1980), and songs like *Macarena* (1992). If the initial burst was built upon by another driving influence, the fads could provide a boost to longer-lived trends, such as what happened with social dancing in the mid-80's.

Different dance styles and communities have also influenced each other. New dance communities have repeatedly grown within existing ones, eventually branching out if they became large enough. There is a lot of interplay between different communities. The growth of one community means an increased population of student dancers that may become interested in other styles, and changes within one community may shape

another if there are shared members. While there has been rivalry at times between different communities, the majority of interactions have been cooperative and the growth of one community generally benefits the others. As each community has gone through their own changes, they have influenced and been influenced by the overall shape of social dance at OSU.

The most critical factor in maintaining a vibrant social dance community at OSU has been motivated individuals. Many students will try social dancing if given the opportunity to, but the opportunity must be readily available and their experience must entice them to come back. Creating such an environment is not an easy task and has required initiative from people who are passionate about dance. One example is Betty Thompson, who essentially founded the dance program at OSU and changed dance from a background activity at school events to an activity that students were interested in by organizing performances and giving better instruction. Erma Weir greatly increased attention on social dance and created space for students to take greater initiative and grow their community. Leadership within the Promenaders went through great lengths to organize large events, and demonstrated community unity and dedication by actions such as pooling resources to purchase professional lessons for one or two students who would then teach what they had learned to the rest of the club. Subsequent and current dance instructors at OSU have consistently worked hard to make learning to social dance a fun and approachable activity for students, and provided stability when student organizations waivered. Student clubs are hard to manage and require dedicated leadership. When leadership faltered, clubs struggled and some outright collapsed. When lead by a passionate and motivated

individual or core group, clubs thrived, occasionally in the face of declining popularity elsewhere.

One of the reasons why individuals have had such an impact on dance culture at OSU may be that the nature of the university makes it possible for a single strong personality to quickly gain a following and impact the entire community. OSU has a continual flow of new students without dance experience or existing habits. The continuous graduation of students and modest size of OSU and Corvallis limit the number of competing influences that can grow and sustain themselves compared to cities like Portland or Seattle. Traditions are maintained within OSU student dance clubs, but they must be passed on new student populations every few years and are therefore fragile. This relative lack of large and persistent influences creates an environment that any charismatic instructor or organizer (faculty, student, or otherwise) can quickly become a dominant influence within the microcosm of the OSU dance community. This phenomenon can be observed in things such as the unique “Corvallis style” of blues that developed between 2009 and 2013, modeled from the styles of the few people who taught blues in the area.

Since the hiring of Weir and the founding of the Promenaders in the 40's, PAC courses and student organizations have been particularly important to social dance at OSU. While student organizations introduce many students to dance, most first learn to dance in PAC classes. Classes offer students an easy way to become familiar with dance in an environment perceived as less intimidating than starting at a social dance event without prior experience. The variety and number of PAC courses offered in social dance grew greatly in the 90's, as did the number of instructors to teach those courses. There were a variety of reasons for this growth. The

already increasing prevalence of dance in popular media and the growing national trends certainly increased student curiosity in dance, leading more students to try it. However, the bigger influence was students wanting to continue dancing after that initial exposure and encouraging their friends to join them. Many of the students who sign up for PAC dance courses do so after recommendation by peers, which speaks highly of the department's instructors.

Students learning to dance in PAC courses creates demand for social dances, which is where the student organizations become very important. As the name indicates, social dancing is really about dancing in a social setting, and student organizations have been a successful method for hosting dance events. Additionally, the flexible and student-led nature of student organizations allows them to adapt faster and to a greater extent to changes within the student population than is feasible within the PAC program.

In short, PAC courses and student organizations are two complementary factors that have been critical to the growth and continuation of social dance at OSU. Both rely heavily on motivated individuals. The sum of these individuals is the driving force behind social dance at OSU.

Conclusion

Social dance has been part of student life at OSU since its founding, but its role has shifted with changing social norms. It has gone from a basis for mainstream social activity, to supporting a community focused on the enjoyment of dance itself. The style and role of social dance has been shaped by changes within society and popular culture, but the underlying driving force has been action by individuals.

It is difficult to predict the future of social dance at OSU because many factors can quickly change the culture, but it will doubtless continue in some form or another for years to come.

Methodology

Most information for this thesis was obtained from either personal interviews with current and former OSU faculty and students, or OSU archives such as yearbooks, general catalogs, university administration records, and newspaper articles. I tried to accumulate as many sources as I could to confirm previous findings and fill information gaps, then combined them into the story presented in this thesis. Citations indicate the most relevant sources of specific pieces of information, but most of my inferences about student perception of dance and approximate dates were made by drawing on a variety of sources.

I relied heavily on digital archives of yearbooks and general catalogs because they contained relevant information and were easy to access and search. Yearbooks provided a sense of how the student body regarded dance based on how frequently dances were mentioned, photographs, and how dances were described. General catalogs provided a record of the courses offered and faculty hired by the university. The number of courses offered and their skill level gives a rough sense of how popular certain dance styles were.

For recent history, personal interviews were excellent primary sources. Asking multiple people about specific dates or events helped clarify memory uncertainties, and interviews can provide a combination of general impression and detail that is difficult to get from archives.

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Appendix

Glossary of Terms

Artistic dances: Styles of dance primarily practiced for artistry and/or performance such as ballet, modern, and jazz.

Ball: A social ballroom dance event, usually with connotations of formality such as fancy dress or costume.

Contra dances (contry dances): Line dances where dancers form two separate lines generally facing each other and perform mirrored steps.

Line dances: Dances performed in groups arranged in lines with mostly pre-arranged steps. They can be danced with or without partners, depending on the particular line dance.

PAC: Physical Activity Courses. The name refers to courses themselves, and the school department that runs them. The PAC department is part of the school of Public Health and Human Sciences.

Partner/couples' dances: Dances performed exclusively as couples, independently from other couples.

Round dances: Dances with continual movement forward around a circle.

Social dances: Dances that are performed by an interacting group of people for primarily recreational purposes.

Stationary dances: dances where there is no continuous progression and dancers remain in the same approximate area.

Glossary of Dance Styles

Ballet: A classical artistic dance characterized by highly technical posture and movement.

Casino Rueda: A style of Cuban Salsa danced in a circle with a caller announcing the next pattern that dancers should dance. Dancing frequently switch partners, moving around the circle.

Cha-Cha: A partner latin dance from Cuba, adapted from Mambo by adding three quick steps (“cha cha cha”) [13] [19].

Charleston: A swing dance originating in the 1920’s involving lots of kicking motions. Was later incorporated into modern Lindy Hop [13].

Country dances: A term modernly used for dances performed to country-style music including line, square, and round dances.

Country western two-step (Texas two-step): A round dance originating in the 1980’s where both partners face forward in line of dance.

East coast swing: A swing dance from the 1940’s based on Lindy Hop, but with a different time rhythm and no breakaway step [15].

Folk: A general term used to describe culturally traditional dance styles from specific regions. At OSU, the main styles were Irish, German, Palestinian, and American [26].

Foxtrot: A round partner dance from 1914. Originally consisted of jerks, hops, kicks and capers to ragtime music. Modern version is much smoother and bares more resemblance to waltz [13].

Freak (dirty dancing, grinding): An urban style of dance typically done by the youth involving close physical contact and sexually provocative movement [48].

Jig: An energetic folk dance usually danced without a partner [13].

Jitterbug: Another name for Lindy Hop, but sometimes also used to describe other swing dances [13].

Lancers: A quadrille (square) dance with military-like salutes and dances at opposing corners proceeding past each other in a manner reminiscent of jousting (hence the name) [13].

Lindy Hop: A swing dance from the 1930’s, often danced in a highly energetic manner. Includes the “breakaway” where the partners swing away from each other before returning to a close hold [13].

Modern: A broad genre of western artistic dance with roots in ballet.

Polka: An energetic partner round dance originating in the early 1800's involving partners rotating around each other while hopping and simultaneously proceeding forward [13].

Salsa (Mambo): A stationary partner dance originating from Cuba. Multiple styles existing, primarily distinguished as American or LA Salsa, and Cuban Salsa.

Schottische: A dance in the style of a slow polka [13].

Square (Country western square): A country dance that is danced in groups of four. It is often danced as a series of named patterns that are called out by a "caller", who can either plan out the order of moves or decide on the fly [25].

Two-step (1890's a ballroom): An energetic round partner dance requiring two steps per beat. Danced to marching tunes and includes repeated hops, springs, and gallops [13].

The *Twist*: A non-partnered social dance consisting of counter-body rotation of hips. It was often danced by couples facing each other, but without physical contact and minimal co-ordination. Popular from 1960-1962 [30].

Two-step (pattern): A dance step consisting of stepping to the side, bringing feet together, and then stepping in the same direction [19].

Waltz: A round partner dance with smooth movements and patterns of three steps. It was considered scandalous during origins in late 18th century due to body contact of partners [13]. It is now widely regarded as the de-facto ballroom dance.

West Coast Swing: A swing dance identified in California the 1960's, based off Lindy Hop [15].

Basis for List of Reasons Why Students Dance

I claim that common reasons why students dance are that dancing is a fun and accessible social activity that builds friendships, teaches self-confidence, is physically active, and reduces stress.

I developed this list based on discussion with OSU faculty and alumni that I conducted specifically for this paper, and from personal interactions with members of OSU's dance community over a four year period. There are a wide variety of reasons why a student may choose to start and continue social dance, and various factors will influence individuals, but these reasons seem to be major factors in the majority of cases.

While this list is based mostly on my own supposition, some published research on social dance in different communities has suggested similar conclusions. For example, Cynthia Murcia et al (2010) performed an online survey of non-professional European dancers and found that dancers felt that social dance had emotional, physical, and social benefits, and also boosted self-esteem and helped them relax [49]. Carroll Brown (2007) found that shag dancers in North Carolina were primarily motivated to continue dancing because they built long-lasting friendships because of it [50]. Other studies have found that dance reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression [51] [52].

Supplementary figures

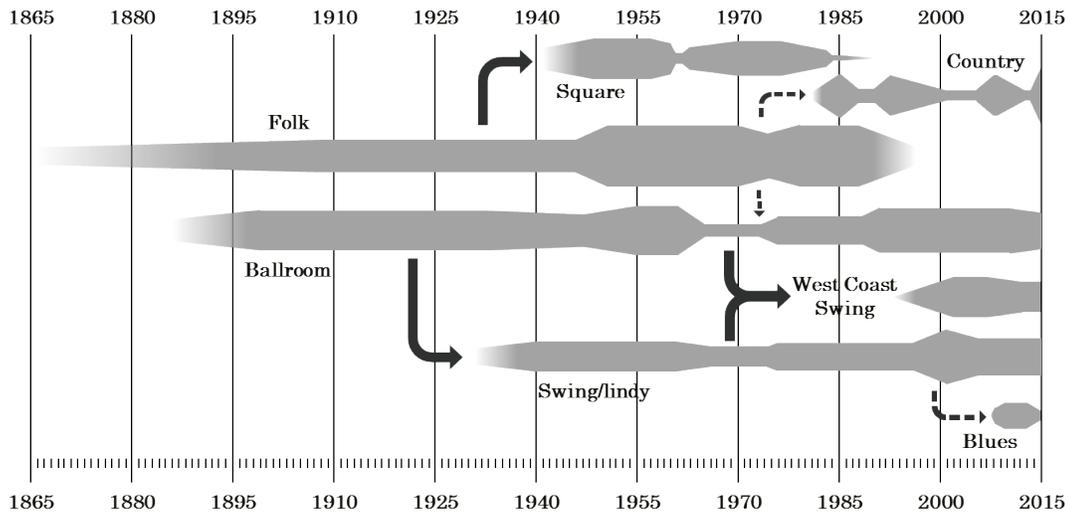


Figure 9: Timeline of dance style prevalence at OSU. The thickness of each dance style's line is roughly proportional to the popularity/influence of that style at OSU. Solid arrows indicate that a new community directly branched from a pre-existing community. Dashed lines indicate where one community/club was a major source of supporters for a new style but was not critical to the new community's formation. This figure is useful for envisioning trends throughout OSU history and comparing styles, but it is by nature based on supposition and inference, and should not be considered quantitative.

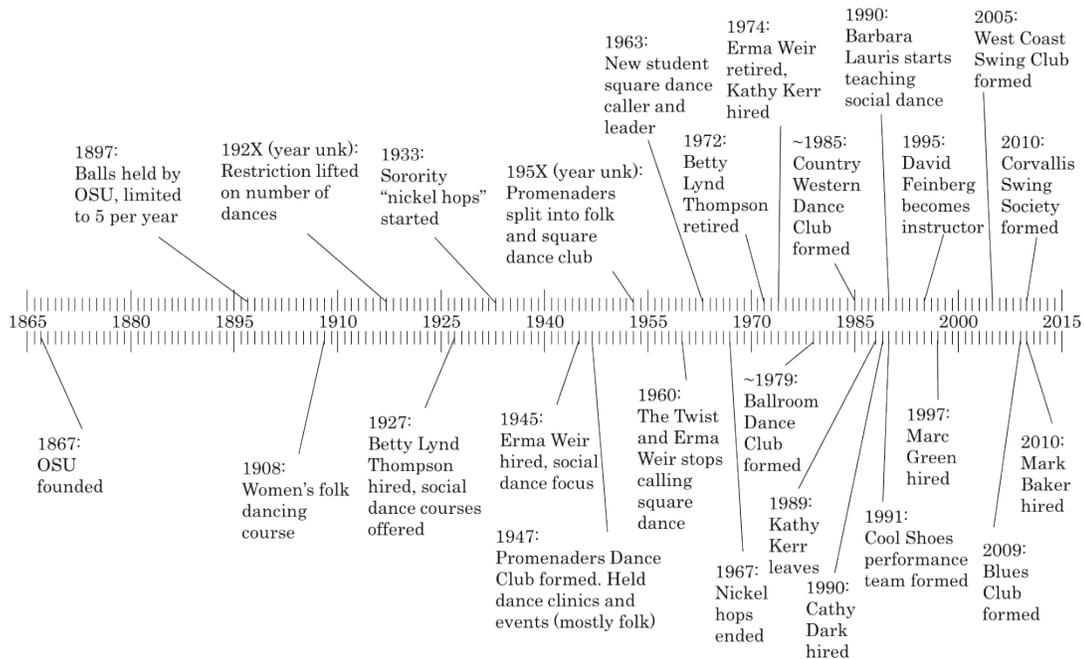


Figure 10: Timeline of selected key events. Some dates are approximate.

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