



# Larrys Corner

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This is called Larry's Corner because when I teach I stand in the corner so I can see everyone.

If you want to read dance stories they are under Headlines or Larrys Corner.

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Do you have any likes or dislikes, stories, or helpful hints for dancing? If so, write it down and give to Larry Ablin or Barb Johnson. We will add it to one of the future News letters.

If you would like to tell us how you became interested in dancing, write it down and give to Larry or Barb, we will add your picture with it and put it in one of the future Newsletters. If you have anything you would like to write about, just write it up and give to Barb or Larry. We enjoy writing something for you.

Come Dance With Us

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## What Is Swing?

According to Dancing USA magazine (Kerchmar, NOV.1994 P.3), traditional closed couple dancing began in the United States after 1860, when young people moved from the rural environments to cities looking for employment. Alone for the first time, many young adults sought public meeting and dancing places. Because the newer dances, the waltz (Vienna) and polka (Czech), allowed closer-than-usual spacing between partners, large segments of the public condemned this behavior.

Closed couple dancing became acceptable after 1912 when people began performing the waltz, the one-step, the tango (Spain), and other dances. In 1920, Arthur Murray marketed dance lessons through the mail making them affordable and standardizing dance steps.

Another major influence to social dance was a new style of ragtime music, emphasizing syncopation in melody line. The early jazz sounds originated as a result of Irish and African-American music forms, much of which originated from the Louisiana bayous and New Orleans. Harry Fox fashioned a dance called the Foxtrot in 1912, which led to the development of the Charleston in the Roaring 1920's. The music evolved into swing-jazz during the 1930's, and attracted big bands, large dance halls, and acrobatic dancers called jitterbugs, lindy-hoppers named after pilot Charles Lindbergh, and swingers. By 1936 the swing was popular throughout the United States.

Swing dancing continued to grow, but took on unique styles of each geographic areas. The diversity in the evolution of swing dancing is reflected in its names: Jive, Jitterbug, Lindy, Push, Whip, Shag, East coast swing, West coast swing, Imperial, Jamaican, Bop, etc. The music for swing dancing is as diverse as the dance styles. The Shag dancers dance to "Beach" music, the Boppers dance to rhythm and blues, push dancers like blues and classic disco music, lindy dancers like faster big band swing music. Swing dancing is a reflection of our cultural diversity. They have a tri-ethnic community with a mix of Hispanic, Anglo, and African-Americans. The dancers who come to the dances are ballroom dancers, country western dancers, Latin dancers, hustle dancers, shaggers Carolina and Balboa, boppers, etc. But what are swing dancers? Is there only one kind of swing dance music? No! Is there only one correct style

of swing, shag, bop, or push? No! How come there is so much intolerance to the other dance styles and music?

Thus, we need to discuss the threat to our very being in the dance world - the threat that has been splitting up clubs around the country, like our nation during the civil war! What is SWING (and its derivatives, shag, bop, etc.)? Some dancers are quite insistent that only one style of swing music and dancing is proper for their club. It is my view that the music should reflect the diversity of all styles of swing dancing, not limited to the view of a few vocal persons. So next time you are cursing the DJ for playing something different, think about your own intolerance. Diversity in music and dances provides a richness in variety, and allows the most personal freedom to dance and have fun. And that is the prime directive - to DANCE and Have FUN!

## Origin of Swing Dance

Some people believe that swing dancing originated with the Texas Tommy, which was a kick and a hop three times on each foot, followed by a slide and then a breakaway where partners separated and could do what they wanted before returning together. Others say it's a combination of the two-step and the Charleston, which both have a basic 8-count pattern but inter change rock steps and kicks at various times. The Charleston has a breakaway section while the Two-Step stays in closed position for the entire 8 counts. Other dances that had an influence on swing dancing were the Carolina and Balboa Shag, Black Bottom, Big Apple, Scrontch, Varsity Drag, Mouche, Suzie Q, Ballin'The Jack, Shim Sham Shimmy and Truckin'. Also having an influence were fad "animal dances" such as the Turkey Trot, Buzzard Lope, Possum Trot and Grizzly Bear.

Many of these dances became popular due to some special event. The Texas Tommy appeared on Broadway in "Darktown Follies" in 1913; the Turkey Trot appeared in Vernon and Irene Castle's Broadway show "Sunshine Girl" in 1913, the Charleston appeared in a black Broadway musical "Running Wild" in 1923 and the Black Bottom appeared on Broadway in George White's "Scandals of 1926." So if you get a chance watch the movies.

These early dances of the century were usually not accepted by white society because of their black origins and influences. Not until 1927, when Charles "Lindy" Lindbergh made his historic solo flight to Paris, was the black dancing accepted by the white society. Legend has it that one young man at the Savoy Ballroom in New York's Harlem was overcome with the thrill of the flight and joy in his dancing; when asked what he was doing on the dance floor he replied, "I'm flying just like Lindy," thus the Lindy Hop. Another legend has it that at a dance marathon at New York City's Manhattan Casino Ballroom on July 4, 1928, one of the surviving dancers was George "Shorty" Snowden, who did a breakaway or let his partner out and improvised a few solo steps. When asked by an interviewer with Fox Movietone News what he was doing with his feet, Shorty replied, "The Lindy."

## East Coast Swing

During the late 40's or early 50's, another form of swing dancing appeared on the scene: East Coast Swing. It is almost impossible to find anything written on this dance, probably because it wasn't really a new dance. East Coast Swing is nothing more than the Lindy Hop Without the Acrobatics. As the slotted version of swing in California became more popular, the major dance studio chains decided to call what the dancers on the East Coast were doing East Coast Swing, and what the dancers on the West Coast were doing West Coast Swing.

## West Coast Swing

Basically, West Coast Swing consists of 6-beat and 8-beat patterns some longer executed in a slot area on the dance floor, and can be danced to a variety of styles of music. It has enjoyed a rise in popularity in the last few years, due partly to the work of the U.S. Open Swing Dance Championships and the now-defunct United States Swing Dance Council. There are swing clubs-mostly West Coast Swing-in over half of the states. Some of them have their dance as a state dance. On January 1, 1989, West Coast Swing became California's official state dance. In Minneapolis, MN there are two clubs. Minnesota West Coast Swing Club, and Twin City Rebels club.

## The Balboa

One of the most difficult dances to get any history on is the Balboa. The following information is from Home of Balboa International. In reality there are four slightly different versions of this particular dance, which is basically indigenous to Southern California. One version originally referred to as Swing Bal was developed and danced in the 1930's in and around Los Angeles while at the same time the second version called Bal or Balboa emanated from and was actually named for the locale of Balboa, in particular the Rendezvous Ballroom on the Balboa peninsula, and spread in popularity to the Long Beach and Orange County area. The third version, the "Triple Step Bal," is most useful when an extremely slow number is played and the fourth version, the "One-Step," is utilized when the beat is too fast for any other dance.

Although they employ a similar basic step pattern, there is a difference in those basic patterns, necessitating a definite change in the overall technique. Though each version of the "Bal" allows for ad-lib step patterns relative to its own "basic step pattern," these ad-lib steps cannot be applied from one "basic step pattern" to the other; so, in effect, dancers changing from one basic step pattern to another go into another dance.

The Balboa is a complete and very versatile dance most often seen where swing, jazz or Dixieland music is being played. It can be performed to exceedingly slow music (30 beats per minute), extraordinarily fast music (over 300 beats per minute), or anywhere in between.

# DANCE FLOOR ETIQUETTE

**DANCERS! ENJOY DANCING TO THE FULLEST!**

**Let's All Practice Dance Floor Etiquette!**

**MANY DANCERS AND MANY STYLES OF DANCING CAN BE ACCOMODATED ON THE FLOOR AT THE SAME TIME, IF TRADITIONAL DANCE FLOOR ETIQUETTE IS FOLLOWED. LETS ALWAYS BE COURTEOUS, AND WE'LL ALL HAVE A GREAT TIME DANCING!**

