

[Square Dances]

1

Dup. [Vermont?] 1938-9

Vermont

Mrs. Rebecca M. Halley

West Newbury, Vermont Square Dances - Play Parties

(Informant would not allow name used. I can furnish it if desired).

“Good [mawnin'?), ma'am, it do bit fair to be a good day,” he gave his head a quick twist to the side and a brown stream of “Tobacca” juice made a surprised blob on the roadside, raising a tiny dust cloud.

“Ye want dance calls, do ye? Wa-al naow, meby I can think some on 'em up. Uster do a lot of it when I was a young feller. Won't ye cone in and set? [Wa-al?] 'tis nice in the sun this mawnin'.”

“Wa-al naow, what do ye want? String dances or contra dances? Both on 'em? [Wa-al?] naow, can ye beat that?” He wheezed and chuckled like a badly fitted steam pipe, and casually shot forth his brown stream from puckered lips. A quick and hardly noticeable shift of quid and he proceeded.

“No. ma'am, we didn't have no fancy calls in them days. We called 'em plain, no rhymes or foolishment. They was Lem Tucker an' me. [We?] started dances round here, way back when I was goin' t' high. Yes sir, longer ago then I like to recollect. Then times they was a lot a them hard shelled [Mithodists?] round about an' they was dead set agin' dancin'. The young fry had to do somethin' so they uster git up parties round about and play kissin'

Library of Congress

games. My sakes, I swan, but some o' them games was 2 rough. I uster like to do some huggin' an' kissin' long o' the best of 'em, but I'd ruther it'ud be private. I'm a tellin' you naow, some of them nicer gals just wouldn't play. Too much fer 'em. [An'?] I've seen the times myself when I'd ruther watch than play.

“Howsumever that may be, Lem Tucker, him an' me started square dancin'. Lem he played the fiddle. He uster set cross-legged, like o' this,” and he squatted on the grass cross-legged and humped himself over an imaginary fiddle. [Again?] that quick bird-like twist and the juice settled slowly, drowning green blades. “An' when he got tired o' playin' like o' that, he'd lay himself daown flat on the bed on his back and shet up his eyes. He'd play like that; all by ear, mind you, for a evenin' through. I had to think fast to call, naow, to keep up on him.

“Them hard shelled [Mithodists?] was contarmation daown on round and square dancin'. Said they hugged the gals too much, that and them cards was 'aboninations o' the [devil?]. Wa-al the Devil got some o' them, I'll warrant. [?] wheezed and chuckled again and pounded his knee with his clenched fist.

“[?] Lem an' me, we [?] it a [classes?] Candy [Hull?]. Old [?] [?] [Swain?], [her?] [that's?] mother to [?] [Swain?], uster open up th' house along about once a week. [Nany's?] th' kitchen junket we hed, thur. [My?], [?], [?] didn't thought o' them days for years.

“Don't seem's though folks have such good times naow. [What?] there's where I got my wife. [We?] uster drive with a horse 3 when we was first married, out once a week, anyway, right along. Nothin' like a little rum to warm your insides, a good sharp fiddler, an a nice armful of woman t' swing here an' there. Whe-e-e-e, that quickens me up some jest thinkin' on it. I swow, I'd fergot all about it. Say, warn't that tornadic we hed awful? I thought we'd all be blowed galley wost. Tic-tic.

“No, I can't remember them games we played, but I can recollect the forfeits. My. my! We uster 'walk a cedar swamp.' Ye ever walk a cedar swamp? No, ye wouldn't of, that

Library of Congress

was way 'fore your time. Th' gal asked th' feller, he was way, 'tother end o' th' room, the questions an' he hed't answer truly 'yes' or 'no'. If he could answer 'yes' he took one stop forrard, an' if he hed to answer 'no', he took one step back'ard. When he got up so as be could reach th' gal, he could kiss her - if he could ketch her. > My, oh my! Warn't that fun?

“Did ye ever make a sugar bowl? No? Wa-al ye put yer fingers together to make a circle like this an' ye kiss right through it. I swan, some on 'em liked t' stay right thar.

“Wa-al I seen a few 'hot suppers' in my time. No champagne, but some pain without the sham. It's a funny old world, take it up one side and down t' other.”