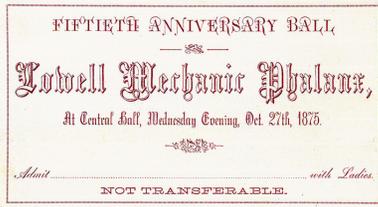


At right, from top to bottom:

The Shattuck/Burbank Building on Prescott Street, shown 1893. The top floor held dance facilities until it was remodeled following a 1903 fire.



The former Freewill Baptist Church—by that time the Museum Building and home to Central Hall—on Merrimack opposite Central Street, circa 1880.



Old City Hall on the corner of Merrimack and Shattuck, shown here well before its 1895 remodel.



The Boston and Lowell Rail Depot at the corner of Merrimack and Dutton; it also held Huntington Hall. The photo is from 1905's *Views of Lowell*, despite the building having burned down the previous year.



Merrimack House, circa 1870, across the way from Huntington. This early hotel hosted numerous balls through the 1800s. An adjoining theatre, the Music Hall, opened in 1866 and regularly included dance acts on the bill.



At one time or another, many of Lowell's most iconic buildings contained halls hosting dances. Even the oft-touted Freewill Baptist Church ended its days housing both a dance hall and a vaudeville theater. In 1833, Old City Hall held a Union Ball that began at 4:00 in the afternoon and finished up at 6:00 the next morning. Dozens of halls across the city offered floors suitable for tripping the light fantastic. Enclosed here is a guide to almost two dozen halls in the central downtown area, as well as several related sites.

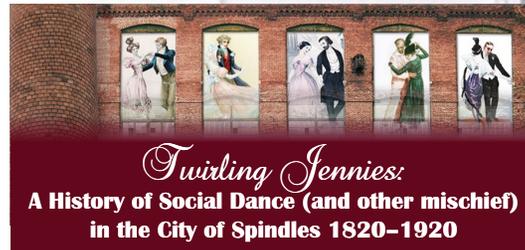
The Long-Lost Dance Halls of Downtown Lowell: A Walking Tour

Background image:
Colonial Hall c.1899.

Excerpted from
*Twirling Jennies: A History of Social Dance
(and other mischief)
in the City of Spindles 1820–1920*

By Ruth Evans.
Co-researched with Charles Worsley.
Available online and at select locations.

www.twirlingjennies.com



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Controversial and pervasive, dancing—both participatory and performance—was a significant part of Lowell's social scene throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth.