

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

Revisions, March 2016

Original:

Chapter 1, page 11: In 1842, some years after the city of Lowell had sprouted along its northern edge, the town of Chelmsford built the basement of what would eventually become today's town hall. This basement was above ground, built of brick, and was heated by a large wood stove. It served—rather inadequately—as the town meeting house until the building itself was erected in 1879.

Chapter 4, page 45: Then, there are the circular dances. The diagram at right comes from an 1858 dance manual published in Boston and written by Elias Howe, a former Lowell mill worker and an inventor (see box).

Chapter 4, page 45: These are all contra dances, at least two of which—Money Musk and Fisher's Hornpipe—date back to the eighteenth century. Lady Washington's Reel, popular in Lowell all through the 1800's, may be based on the older Washington's Reel. Some dances have changed significantly from their original form while others have not. Perhaps some were altered to liven things up once the elaborate footwork began to disappear.

Revised:

Page 11: In 1842, some years after the city of Lowell had sprouted along its northern edge, the town of Chelmsford built the basement of a new meeting house. This basement was above ground, made of brick, and was heated by a large wood stove. It served—rather inadequately—as town hall while the structure above housed religious services. This arrangement continued until an entirely new Town Hall building was erected in 1879.¹

Page 45: Then, there are the circular dances. The image at right comes from an 1858 dance manual by Elias Howe, a musician from Framingham, Massachusetts who authored and published numerous music instruction books.² (an obituary for the wrong Elias Howe has been removed; references to Howe on pages 81 and 91 have also been corrected)

Page 45: These are all contra dances, at least two of which—Money Musk and Fisher's Hornpipe—appear by name in dance manuals as far back as the 1700s. But the manuals are inconsistent. A bit of dance history shows why. When the nineteenth century began, dance figures were primarily mixed and matched to suit any given music. It was during the 1800s that specific sequences of figures began to be regularly paired with a specific piece of music and came to be known by that tune's name. This was a somewhat haphazard process. Two entirely different dances might routinely be done to—and take their name from—the same tune. Or a single sequence of figures would use different tunes in different locales and end up with multiple names. By mid-to-late century the dances listed above (with the possible exception of Speed the Plough) seem to have been fairly standardized.

Additional corrections:

Chapter 2, page 18: The intersection referred to as “today's Merrimack Square” is currently known as Kearney Square.

Chapter 4, page 53: The Lancers' Quadrilles has been traced back earlier than 1850 to the opening decades of that century.

Chapter 10, page 147: The upper image is a Corte con Cruzado rather than a Scissors. The lower image is indeed a hands-free Scissors.

1: Waters, *History of Chelmsford, Massachusetts*, 685. Also: http://www.chelmsfordgov.com/CHCwebsite/Meeting_Halls.htm and <http://www.uuchelmsford.org/about-us/our-history.html>, both accessed February 28, 2016.

2: Herndon, Richard (compiler) and Edwin M. Bacon (editor). *Boston of Today: A Glance at its History and Characteristics with Biographical Sketches and Portraits of Many of its Professional and Business Men*. Boston: Post Publishing Company, 1892 (archive.org), 265–266.