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## 7 Re-Generation

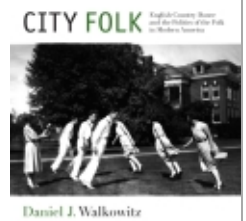
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## Re-Generation

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It really depends on what you mean by “folk.” I don’t think origins matter very much. . . . Obviously, a lot of these dances have been composed at one time or another, so if the time happens to be the 20th century, why worry.

—Pat Shaw, 1970<sup>1</sup>

And in his own crazy English way of looking at American things, he [Pat Shaw] created American dances—so called American dances—that really were an English man’s view of American dances. And so he shook the world up, and it [1974] was a great year.

—Jacqueline Schwab, 1999<sup>2</sup>

Jacqueline Schwab, a self-described “nerd” who loved the folk trio Peter, Paul, and Mary and “the usual sixties,” attended Pinewoods in 1971 for the first time. She found a world still rooted in a mainstream culture: “Women weren’t allowed to ask men to dance. Men could ask women to dance. And women had to wear skirts to the dances. And there was even a bush patrol for scouring the bushes late at night so that there weren’t any extracurricular activities going on . . . and etc.” Schwab, who had been introduced to ECD through International Folk Dance, went on to have an illustrious career in CDSS and as a professional musician. She served as Pinewoods Camp manager, became the pianist for the leading ECD band Bare Necessities, and did the music for Ken Burns’s blockbuster PBS television series *The Civil War*.<sup>3</sup>

In that same summer of 1971, future CDSS national director Brad Foster arrived for his first camp visit. It was the heyday of the sexual revolution in the counterculture, and he remembered that Gadd prohibited unmarried couples from rooming together. He recalled the year as “a very hormonal year at camp.” “Some people said they got married so they could come and stay at Pinewoods in the same cabin,” although he added what seemed more likely the case: others just quietly “changed roommates.” No rules were posted, but

“there were traditions that you had to be aware of. Even if you were never told, you had to follow these things.”<sup>4</sup>

As these anecdotes suggest, the entrance of dancers such as Schwab and Foster who came of age in the Sixties into the urban dance communities and the pavilions at Pinewoods turned the world of country dance upside down in the 1970s. But at the same time as the social profile of the dance community changed, so did its repertoire—and it did so across the country as groups of converts to country dance in cities and college towns from the San Francisco Bay Area to the City of Brotherly Love and points in between made CDSS a robust national organization.

For many who remembered those years, the controversial 1974 visit to Pinewoods Camp of the pioneering dance choreographer and teacher from London—Pat Shaw—was the transformative symbolic moment. As Kate van Winkle Keller recalled, Shaw’s call to innovation upset many traditionalists. Keller, who went on to become a leading historian of Playford and Colonial American dance, had her inaugural visit to Pinewoods that year and remembered the consternation that Shaw’s visit occasioned among many CDSS leaders: “His ideas challenged their insistence that to have a uniform dance community there needed to be uniformity in teaching and dance interpretation. Pat’s ideas undermined this uniformity but encouraged budding American choreographers . . . to follow his lead as he similarly inspired English teachers.”<sup>5</sup> For many others, and most especially those of a new generation, Shaw’s appearance was empowering. Typical is the view of the caller and musician Gene Murrow: “The effect of his prodigious talent, strong presence, and point of view was, in effect, to give us all permission to make this material our own.”<sup>6</sup> For Shaw argued that the “folk” were as much expressions of contemporary and urban peoples as they were of “primitive” peoples in some distant, rural world; Shaw could not have been more forthright: folk origins do not matter very much.

Although Shaw was not an academically trained folklore theorist, his view reflected a profound and growing alternative among anthropologists and folklorists to the colonial, linear paradigm that had dominated folklore studies—and to the thinking of country dance revivalists. The formative work in folklore and modern anthropology at the end of the nineteenth century by Lewis Henry Morgan and James G. Frazier essentialized the peasantry and traced cultural evolution from peasantry to “civilization.” Written from the donnish corridors of Cambridge (both in Massachusetts and in England), the “folk” origins of civilization were located in northern Europe; “race”—by which folklorists meant “not Anglo-Saxon”—was tied to tribal and not “folk” cultures. In

this tradition, folk dance revivalists focused their travels on Scandinavia and the British Isles, and the folk revivals remained decidedly Eurocentric.<sup>7</sup>

Shaw's view of a contemporary, urban folk reflected a new, more dynamic, interactive, and reflective perspective on both culture and the folk that had been advanced in the first half of the century, notably, by cultural anthropologists at Columbia University: Franz Boas, Margaret Mead, and Ruth Benedict. Their work and that, subsequently, of anthropologists such as Clifford Geertz and Edmund Leach challenged the hegemony of the dominant paradigm. While they won many adherents in the scholarly world, their work penetrated popular discourse much less. Indeed, when Shaw visited the United States, the two views remained contested within folklore studies, and many traditionalists in organizations such as CDSS remained wedded to "peasant authenticity."<sup>8</sup>

Shaw's view of the folk, then, reflected struggles within folklore generally, and while it empowered some, it threatened others, most especially those committed to preserving what they imagined to be Sharp's legacy: the Playford tradition. To be sure, Shaw's view did little to reverse the Anglocentric character of ECD; it was, after all, a community dedicated to Anglo-American dance, not international dance. But Shaw set in motion the development of a new "modern" genre of dances in the spirit of historical English Country Dance, leaving it to choreographers to interpret how that historical "spirit" or "tradition" would be represented in the newly written "folk" dances. The result was the emergence by the century's end of a new subset of ECD: Modern English Country Dance (MECD).

### *Signs of Change*

The last years of the second revival brought new people into CDSS well before Shaw's visit. Entering ECD in 1966, Gene Murrow remembered it as a moment of change that challenged the prudish Victorian tone that had been set by the older generation of upper-class women who led it: "It did loosen up in the '60s, as many other things did."<sup>9</sup> For although the majority of newcomers entered the ECD community in the 1970s and 1980s, well after the folk revival had ebbed, enough began to filter into it in the late '60s and early '70s to create a stir. The continuing role of longtime leaders and a familiar repertoire muted the changes for old-timers, at least for a while, but ultimately the entrance of left-liberal folkies of the second folk revival who found a new home in the Country Dance and Song Society of America in increasing numbers precipitated fundamental social changes in the history of the country dance community.

A survey conducted early in the twenty-first century of 171 dance enthusiasts at ECD national camps (on both coasts) and at special local events, which probably drew disproportionately large numbers of more committed CDSS members, provides a telling profile: a quarter of the sample had begun ECD prior to 1980, and 84.1 percent described themselves as liberal or left-wing. In fact, though the sample is small, four of the fourteen (28.6 percent) who began ECD before 1970 described themselves as left-wing. Equally significant, approximately three of every ten (29.5 percent) were Jewish or Italian. And while the data did not distinguish those of Irish descent, anecdotal evidence and dancer reminiscences note their relative absence, even in cities such as New York and Boston with large Irish American communities and Irish immigrants.<sup>10</sup>

Several developments coincident with the left-liberal “softening” of the oppositional character of folk culture at the end of the Sixties helped stimulate the move of many new people into CDSS. Some simply joined country dance groups where programming mixed historical ECD dances with traditional dance, contra, and squares. But for some others, the move was a lateral one from a world of English and American folk ballads or from a love of classical music. For many others, however, it was an extension of New Left political culture, a byproduct of the back-to-nature counterculture, and an alternative to the growing nationalism of ethnic groups that had displaced the International Folk Dance movement. In interviews, many longtime dancers at the end of the twentieth century told of having been introduced to English Country Dance through the folk revival in song or in contra or International Folk Dance. Typical of some who were first exposed to contra dance on campuses or from back-to-nature hippie sites of the counterculture were the experiences of the new leaders of the Boston ECD community, the musician Peter Barnes and the teachers Art and Helene Cornelius. Barnes, who authored the bible of ECD tunes (popularly known simply as “Barnes”), was singing in a Boston coffee house when introduced to contra dance; the Corneliuses found their way to ECD after introductions to square dance and international dance in the Cambridge area.<sup>11</sup>

The emergence of a contra revival in New England helped transform the U.S. country dance community, including that of ECD. Square dance introduced some people, like the Corneliuses, to ECD, especially in the immediate post-war era, but it played a relatively small role in the changes that rocked the ECD community in the 1970s. As noted earlier, the wartime and postwar square dance revival moved away from vernacular country dance and developed into the modern choreographed hybrid known as Western or Club Squares.

Instead, in the late '60s, Dudley Laufman, the head of the New England-based “contra boom,” galvanized a vibrant young generation that had moved into New Hampshire and Vermont towns and villages with a new energy and attitude. “American” dance was hardly new, of course, and the Appalachian squares remained a popular and integral part of the country dance scene, especially of course in southern dance settlements such as at Brasstown and Berea. But the Dudley style, described by Gene Murrow as “‘slow’ with lots of clogging and a very grounded, earthy style,” encouraged a particularly thrilling personal showmanship with “incredible variations” as individuals clogged, stepped, and twirled as they and their partners moved up and down the line. Young people flocked to “Dudley dances,” and many of these folks, in turn, joined CDSS affiliates where they could do more of these dances and other kindred forms. The entry of these dancers onto the urban CDSS dance floors in the early '70s did more than change the profile of the typical dancer; their attendance brought new energy and expectations as well.<sup>12</sup>

Migrants from the contra boom infused what may have been an even larger number of new dancers who had moved laterally from International Folk Dance. The largest number of those interviewed traced their folk dance experience back to international dance on a college campus in the '60s and '70s.<sup>13</sup> While most also cited their participation in International Folk Dance as part of their more general involvement with the left-liberal political culture of the era, they were less explicit about why they had left that dance movement to start ECD—and most did eventually leave rather than do both. Reasons could be social, political, physical, aesthetic, or a combination of factors, but speaking years later when they danced on aged feet and knees, they lauded as attractions the Baroque, Renaissance, and classical music and ease of dance, all markers of their distinctive bourgeois class culture. Moreover, dancers' repeated celebration of the supportive dance community as a “haven from a heartless world”—to reprise the title of a popular 1977 book by the historian Christopher Lasch—suggests how politics of the dance space also informed their attraction to ECD.<sup>14</sup> For, as foreshadowed in the preceding chapter, International Folk Dance by the late 1960s increasingly changed its focus from proletarian to ethnic imaginings and, more particularly, to a fascination with an ethnic regional culture: the Balkans. Led by the charismatic and pioneering work of dance collector and teacher Dick Crum, “Balkan dance”—an amalgam of dances from southern and eastern Europe—increasingly came to dominate the International Folk Dance repertory after 1965. In the “Balkan craze,” dances of other lands continued to be done, but coincident with the decline of the driving political concerns of the Sixties, dancers' delight

increasingly came from mastering the intricate steps and identifying with the Balkan cultures. But learning the dances could be a challenge. The steps, often demanding and complicated, required concentration, regular practice, and some physical agility. In the International Folk Dance tradition, usually only a few dances were taught every evening, and dancers learned dances by standing behind experienced dancers and imitating the steps. For some dances and dancers, that process worked fine; for others, it was frustrating, especially as the Balkan craze led many groups to develop a cadre of exclusive experienced dancers who provided little encouragement to newcomers.

English and American Country Dance were welcome alternatives, albeit, with the nationalism of the Celtic revival, not so much for Irish or Scottish dancers. Yet, in the political culture of back-to-nature contra dance, the ECD dance floor was an alternative and oppositional space, a rural community retreat from fast-paced, materialist, urban capitalist culture. English Country Dance had no such political meaning, but to newcomers from International Folk Dance moving into CDSS, which represented both English and American dance, the ECD venue could be imagined as an extension of the contra boom and, for the more politically radical, a bridge back to the proletarian politics of international dance. Indeed, even as the ECD community lost its oppositional character, dancers saw it as an alternative left-liberal cultural space. But the nationalist imperatives of “Englishness” and “Americanness” and racial liberalism complicated this perspective and could ironically find the community reinforcing the dominant white, Anglo-Saxon national legacy.

But English and American dance held many aesthetic attractions as well. Some American dances such as “The Virginia Reel” were familiar, as were squares. English Country Dance was also famously “easy on the knees,” an attribute not lost on dancers with aging joints. The dances required little more footwork than skipping and felt safe for newcomers who did not think of themselves as graceful or coordinated. The dances had a few intricate patterns that required geographic and geometric sense, which is accessible for academic types. New dancers might find the patterns disorienting, but they were regularly repeated in different dances, and as important, every country dance was taught and prompted. And finally, unlike the recorded music in the international dance, by the '60s, English and American dance was increasingly done to wonderful live music, with energetic contra bands and English musicians playing tunes drawn from classical and Baroque composers.<sup>15</sup>

As the survey suggested, many of the ECD newcomers were Jewish, and some of them undoubtedly came with background in Israeli dance. For as the international impulse behind the international dance community waned,

another national dance tradition was invented to coincide with the making of a new nation: Israeli dance. Doris Humphrey began Israeli dance at the 92nd Street Y shortly after the war, and by the 1960s, as the number of Jewish college students grew, Israeli folk dance grew on and around college campuses in cities such as Cambridge, Berkeley, and New York. In addition, the increasing identity that some Jews had with Israel after the 1967 Sinai War may help explain the increased popularity of Israeli dance in the 1960s. Contrarily, some left-wing “peace” Jews who had identified with Kibbutz socialism saw the post-1967 Israeli government’s policy and its cultural politics as increasingly imperialist. For them, alternative recreational dance communities such as in country dance could represent a congenial alternative political and social space.<sup>16</sup>

The entrance of many Jewish dancers into the ECD community, both from Israeli dance and probably more so from International Folk Dance, in which they appear to have been disproportionately active, democratized what had been an Anglo-Saxon elite movement.<sup>17</sup> The newcomers gave ECD, which had been a fundamentally Anglo-American national tradition, an international characteristic: the new adherents were not necessarily doing their “own” ethnic dances; in English Country Dance, the dancers were increasingly white-ethnic transplants from the counterculture familiar with doing “other” people’s dances. But embracing the Anglo-American dance tradition also testified to these white-ethnic Americans’ assimilation. This tradition was now “theirs,” not an “other’s.” Thus, the Anglo-Saxon elites that had dominated ECD leadership and constituted the backbone of the rank-and-file dancers now found themselves part of a more diverse but not unfamiliar white dance community, though one from a wider middle-income professional class. White ethnics entering the dance community confirmed their whiteness in making the white Anglo-American dance floor their own. At the same time, it is important to remember that in the 1970s, Jewish migration into the Anglo-American dance community coincided with the souring of Jewish–African American race relations (and the story was largely the same for Italians and other white ethnics entering the dance community). These conflicts provide a racial context to the place of race in the country dance community, which its adherents came to celebrate as a safe urban space in the following decades.<sup>18</sup>

### *Culture Clash*

Reminiscing about the era, those who were new to the community offer a prevailing narrative that is less about change than about a culture clash.



Regardless of their point of entry to the ECD and American dance communities, with their apparent comfort with the whiteness of the country dance movement, post-1970 newcomers shared a sense that as children of the counterculture, they had found a safe haven. But newcomers and old-timers found that there was much that they did not share. ECD stalwarts greeted the white-ethnic newcomers with mixed feelings and a rather familiar set of traditional attitudes. The leadership had long sought to bring a younger generation into ECD and welcomed their addition to the movement. But old-timers also maintained a class and cultural distance from the youth culture that was not so different from the way they characterized the Sharp generation's paternal relationship to these young people's immigrant grandparents half a century earlier. In the first half of the century, EFDS and its American Branch had looked to ECD as an Anglo-Saxon tonic for immigrant customs and behavior that they found troubling. The counterculture, however, with its florid dress (or more provocatively, braless mini-dresses), long hair, bare feet, lack of deference, and "loose" morality, was equally a world apart from that of the Victorian/Georgian era in which Sharp's and Gadd's generation had been reared.

New dancers vividly remember arriving at Pinewoods or dancing in their local communities and confronting censorious old-timer leaders, and most notably Gadd, monitoring the dance floor and dance community. Dancers agreed that National Director Gadd, who celebrated her eight-first birthday in 1970, was personally puritanical. Stories of her patrolling the bushes to prevent any hanky-panky at summer dance camps in the early 1970s have become camp folklore.<sup>19</sup> Yet these stories as told by the younger generation have tended to minimize or forget that Gadd had been by all accounts a lovely dancer and guiding force for forty-five years in the establishment of the American Branch and CDSS.

Tradition and the burden of CDSS's proud history also made it difficult to implement changes, even as it became increasingly apparent by the late '60s to some CDSS leaders that the new era had brought a new constituency with its own expectations and interests. Age was catching up with the seemingly indomitable Gadd, and she was slowing down. Genny Shimer and Sue Salmons, who had been dancing since the 1940s, often shared the teaching responsibilities with Gadd. CDSS was Gadd's "life," however, and loyalty and a sense of decency made it difficult to move to replace her, even though it had become apparent to some members that she was continuing to teach "a little too long."<sup>20</sup> One of those who later succeeded Gadd summed up the problem CDSS faced in moving forward: Gadd was "an incredibly single-minded person . . . , [who was] resistant to new things and giving up control."<sup>21</sup> As a

first step, in April 1970, CDSS created the new position of Assistant Director for Fieldwork and Special Services. Paul Skrobela, one of the several New York dance teachers, assumed the position as an interim appointment until, in November, CDSS appointed to the post a twenty-two-year-old young man fresh out of college: James E. Morrison.<sup>22</sup>

Morrison's social profile resembled that of the intellectual-artistic establishment that peopled CDSS; however, he broke the mold of the British-born matriarchy that had been running the American ECD show for fifty-five years: he was young and male, had been reared in both the American and English traditions, and was born in America. A graduate with a degree in English from Dartmouth, which was probably the most conservative school in the Ivy League at the time, gave him respectable bone fides. But Morrison was a musician and a dancer whose youth and "keen interest in both the American and English traditions" also made him an ideal bridge to new dancers. Morrison had been weaned on the Berkeley Folk Festival in 1963, and as a Dartmouth undergraduate, he fulfilled a "community service" requirement by attending the John C. Campbell Folk School to work with "the poor." The Campbell School nurtured in him a newfound love for both traditional and historical Playford dance and Appalachian squares, and afterward, back at Dartmouth, he sought out contra dances. Morrison became a regular in the "contra boom." In fact, at Dartmouth, he helped host a "Dudley dance." So CDSS, in adding Morrison to its staff, signaled its commitment to youth and an enhanced repertory. Gadd supported Morrison's appointment, although she had no way of predicting the changes that would ensue. But while Morrison brought into the leadership a particular passion for the contra dances that reoriented CDSS, he shared with traditionalists a love for the historical, traditional, and ceremonial dances.<sup>23</sup>

Morrison did not have long to wait before he could draw on his energy and vision in leading CDSS. When Gadd retired in 1972, Genny Shimer took the helm as national director, but with two understandings: First, Gadd had to agree to stay out of the executive office. Morrison remembers Gadd as competitive with women and agreed that though this decision must have been personally devastating for Gadd, it was necessary if any change was to take place. Shimer's second condition was only that her appointment be short-term, as her husband, Jack, was retiring, and they had plans to travel.<sup>24</sup>

Shimer, with the youthful Morrison as her assistant director, was an ideal choice to effect a transition within CDSS. She had been a stalwart within the New York dance community for over twenty-five years and a regular teacher at Pinewoods, at the Berea College's Christmas Country Dance School, and

at the John C. Campbell Folk School. British born and trained in ECD, she was a familiar face to old-timers in CDSS, and at age sixty in 1973, she was one of their generation.<sup>25</sup>

Three developments in particular during Shimer's tenure as national director marked the beginning of a new participatory, democratic regime in which CDSS established itself in fact as well as in name as equally representative of American and English Country Dance. First, the council that had been running the local New York group, over which Gadd ruled, reorganized in 1973 as the New York Dance Activities Committee (NYDAC). According to Shimer, the change was made to allow "for more membership involvement."<sup>26</sup>

Second, a new generation of American dance callers and the infectious spirit of the contra revival became fixtures at Pinewoods and increasingly in local dance communities. Ted Sannella had begun regular Pinewood appearances in the late '60s, and Dudley Laufman arrived at camp a few years later to transform the dance floor. In that regard, Gene Murrow thought Pinewoods in 1973—the first year after Gadd's retirement—especially memorable. Sannella called contra one week, Laufman called it the second week, and Morrison called southern mountain squares both weeks. And the mood on the dance floor was electric: young, in some accounts libidinous, contra dancers brought a sexual energy of the counterculture with the new style and panache of the second contra revival. Wildly exuberant with high energy, the Dudley contras emphasized style very different from what young people perceived as the fussiness of ECD and the childishness of traditional community dances, but it was style nonetheless. The new place of American dance in CDSS was symbolized in the 1973 publication of Laufman's *Let's Try a Contra*. CDSS had previously published ECD recordings and two ECD books by Gadd; it now signaled to the growing community of contra dancers that it could be their home as well.<sup>27</sup> In 1976, Morrison added a sixth week to the Pinewoods summer program exclusively for American dance.

Dance forms, like all cultural forms, constantly evolve, of course, and are themselves changed by contact with one another. Thus, as the arrival of the contra revival transformed Pinewoods, Gene Murrow has suggested how Pinewoods in turn transformed Dudley dancing. "A high point for us dancers, imagine, was the 1st couple down the center and back—the 1s doing incredible variations on clog steps as they moved down and turned to move up—the inactive 2s relishing the opportunity to do solo clog routines on the sides." But Laufman and Sannella encountered "quick and light" English dancing, "vigorous traditional dances" being "encouraged" by Jim Morrison,

and singling southern mountain squares and running sets. By the end of the summer, Murrow notes, Sannella was writing contras and triplets with English figures such as heys and gypsies, and Laufman was calling some English classics such as the three-couple set dance “Prince William” and the longways dance “Childgrove” at his Dudley dances. The result was a new blend of the communities and a new “zesty” contra form: “Soon the contra tradition, via Ted [Sannella] and Dudley and others, would embrace the figures, flow, and faster tempi of the English and Southern Mountain dances, culminating in the ‘zesty contra’ style.”<sup>28</sup>

The third development during Shimer’s tenure affected Pinewoods itself. Richard Conant announced in 1974 that the Conant family had decided it could no longer operate the facility and was prepared to sell it at a reasonable price to a nonprofit organization. The camp was, of course, a CDSS institution, and the original two-week programming in the 1930s had grown into summer-long use. Lily Conant had invited Boston-area groups to use the camp, the Country Dance Society’s Boston Centre used the camp for annual weekends early and late in the summer, and the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society of Boston used it for a weekend as well. CDSS, however, was the major tenant. Not surprisingly, then, CDSS members responded enthusiastically to the opportunity to ensure that the camp—with its twenty-five unspoiled acres of woodlands, two ponds, and four open-air dance pavilions—would remain a CDSS fixture. A fund to raise \$265,000 was begun, and in 1974, Pinewoods Camp, Inc.—a CDSS-led consortium of its previous users—assumed the deed.<sup>29</sup>

And then came Pat Shaw.

### *The Coming of Pat Shaw*

The arrival of a well-established figure who was himself from the older generation cut right to the heart of the ECD tradition. The generational culture clash brought new attitudes, mores, and energy to CDSS dance floors, and especially to the American dance events, but the arrival of Pat Shaw at Pinewoods in the summer of 1974 constituted a revolutionary challenge to the Playford historical repertoire that had been the core of the movement’s claim to represent Anglo-American folk culture.

Patrick (Pat) Noel Shuldham-Shaw, the leading musician, choreographer, and interpreter of English Country Dance of the mid-twentieth century, had never been to United States. Independently wealthy—recall his mother had chaired the fundraising committee for Cecil Sharp House—he led a life of

modest gentility, residing quietly in an unpretentious house in North London's Hampstead Village, long the home to bourgeois intellectuals and artists. Sharp had lived not far away half a century earlier. Reared in a dancing family, he was devoted to country dance, and his talents were in wide demand, both in the United Kingdom and in Belgium and the Netherlands, to which he often traveled.<sup>30</sup> Shaw could be found calling a dance one night and playing his accordion the next. Moreover, unlike the dances Sharp had collected from villages or reconstructed from the Playford manuscripts in the British Library, many of the dances Shaw taught were from the approximately 141 of his own invention.

But as long as May Gadd was firmly in control, few of Shaw's dances made it onto dance programs. According to Sue Salmons, Gadd, ever the Sharp loyalist, disdained the "invented" dances and blacklisted "Maggot Pie," a pathbreaking 1932 book of twenty-five newly composed "contemporary dances in the Playford style."<sup>31</sup> But with Gadd's retirement from the scene, one of the new generation of dance teachers, Fried Herman, renewed her long-frustrated efforts to get Shaw invited to Pinewoods. As noted in chapter 6, twenty-five years earlier, as a Dutch émigré to England, Fried had lived in Shaw's home, where she did some light housekeeping. With the support of his friend and student, Shaw won his invitation to America, and Pinewoods was, as dancer folklore has it, never the same.<sup>32</sup>

The folklore surrounding Shaw and his visit is Bunyonesque. Jacqueline Schwab remembered him as a "great charismatic guy," "a creative force" with an "imposing large presence—physically and charismatically . . . [who] had us all sort of following him around like lemmings." Shaw stayed with Arthur and Helene Cornelius for a few days before and after camp, and Arthur remembered him as "amazing, a genius I would say. And he loved to drink, a definite drinker. But, he could do anything. He could sing. He composed dances [and tunes] on the spot, partly he played instruments and, of course, he was a tremendous influence on everything, not only on the dances he composed, but an influence on how to dance and the music."<sup>33</sup>

Shaw's iconoclastic views and teaching did not come as a complete surprise to Americans, however. Despite Gadd's best efforts, several of Shaw's inventive dances had found their way onto local U.S. dance floors prior to his visit. Art Cornelius had learned and "loved" two Shaw pieces from the mid-'60s, "Margaret's Waltz" and "John Tallis's Canon." "The latter was a clever musical and dance figure 'canon' where dancers on one diagonal perform the dance four counts behind the other two dancers and one musician plays for each pair of dancers. The complexity of the round, and the break



“Bottoms Up!” Pat Shaw with Genny Shimer at Pinewoods, 1974. (Photo: Helene Cornelius)

with partner-centered patterns signaled how Shaw was in fact reinventing and expanding ECD—indeed, faster and farther than many dancers found comfortable.”<sup>34</sup> Indeed, Shaw had gone back to the Playford manuscripts and taken a fresh look at Sharp’s interpretations, putting questions about style, authenticity, and the meaning of the folk back on the table. Moreover, Shaw had not masked his contrarian view that the folk were not simply a “peasant” tradition but could be an expression of a modern, twentieth-century people. Challenging Sharp and the traditionalists who adhered to his position, Shaw trumpeted his view that he did not “think origins matter very much” in a 1970 issue of the EFDSS journal.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, arriving at Pinewoods, an air of anticipation—excitement mixed with wariness—greeted Shaw. Kitty Keller, herself still a relative newcomer to Pinewoods, found herself between “two torrents of new information”: “when he [Shaw] came to Pinewoods, I think people were afraid that he was going to change everything that we had learned, which turned out not to be the case. But, what he did was open our eyes. And we didn’t know anything. So what Pat showed us made so much sense. But what we learned in Gay’s

[Gadd] classes and other people's classes made such sense too." Many others fell into one camp or the other, but the abiding significance of Shaw's visit was it authorized new choreography, new ways of thinking about steps and figures, about bodily carriage, and about the division between American and English dance.<sup>36</sup>

Shaw's reinterpretation of a canonical step in English Country Dance called "siding" became a lightning rod for antipathy toward the changes that Shaw offered and that his visit represented. Cecil Sharp had reconstructed siding from his initial reading of the Playford manuscripts, and his instruction had been the gold standard since the 1910s. In Sharp's version, a couple face and swirl past each other by the left shoulder in four steps making a J-pattern (callers sometimes refer to this as "banana siding") and then pass back the same way they came. In fact, Sharp had himself suggested in the introduction to the sixth country dance book that he may have been wrong in his interpretation of the siding, but his choreography had become entrenched in the dance community, and Sharp chose not to reconsider the step.<sup>37</sup> But Shaw, returning to look at many of the same publications Sharp had studied, reached the opposite conclusion. In Shaw's version, which came to be called "Pat Shaw siding," partners came forward four steps to meet (not pass) by the right shoulder, retreat four steps, and then repeat the pattern to meet by the left shoulder. Sharp's sweeping version allowed for more movement, but, as the musician and choreographer Jacqueline Schwab notes, Shaw's way "has more musical art that's choreographically correct. . . . [It may be] less sensual, but [it is] stronger."<sup>38</sup>

Shaw's visit, though surrounded by controversy, had a profound impact on the dance community. Shaw left a legacy for dancers and choreographers, opening up a performative space in which new dance choreographers could experiment with style and tempo, footwork, and patterns. He also enriched the repertoire with theretofore unknown dances that he had collected or constructed.<sup>39</sup> But as important, his choreography and instruction for the dance punctured the rather rigid authorial cocoon that CDSS leaders such as Gadd had wrapped around English Country Dance in particular. Using inventive choreography that borrowed both from English and American dance styles, Shaw breached stylistic lines that had divided the two dance traditions, and often their respective devotees, into rival camps. Some of Shaw's dances had an American signature, in name, vigor, and patterns that particularly endeared him to many local dancers. During his American sojourn, Shaw wrote dances that commemorated people and places in the American dance community, dances subsequently published in two collections, *Between Two Ponds* and *Pat Shaw's Pinewoods*. Two dances are illustra-

tive of his playful spirit and inventiveness: “Quite Carr-ied Away” was a pun on a beloved CDSS administrator who worked at Pinewoods, Joan Carr, and “Levi Jackson Rag,” which celebrated Shaw’s visit to Levi Jackson State Park in London, Kentucky, integrated “balance and swing” from American dance with a cake-walk-like rag more usually associated with American country music and introduced the dance into the English repertoire.<sup>40</sup>

Art Cornelius’s memory of Shaw’s transformative effect was typical: Shaw’s dances and teaching gave ECD “a whole new sort of look. It was a lot of Anglo-American stuff. He incorporated a whole lot of American things, swinging and various other things in his dances, which was hardly done at all, before that. And also the kinds of complexities introduced in dancing, sort of taking various figures to a new level. Using different formations and stuff like that, and that’s influenced every composer since then.” Schwab’s recollections mirrored those of Cornelius: “And in his own crazy English way of looking at American things, he created American dances—so called American dances—that really were an English man’s view of American dances. And so he shook the world up, and it was a great year.”<sup>41</sup>

Shaw not only “shook the world up,” however, he created a new dance world. For Shaw’s willingness to rethink what had been passed on as tradition opened the floodgates for a stream of new composers and choreographers on both sides of the Atlantic, one of the most influential and prolific of whom was his former housemate-cum-protégé and the sponsor of his American visit, Fried de Metz Herman. Shaw’s views on the inventiveness and universality of folk traditions, which removed the sanctity of the “peasant” past and gave equal weight to the “folkie” present, gained popular currency among the new generation who made up the dance community. Thus, Gene Murrow, reminiscing twenty-five years later, noted that “every year, at the same time in the same place, we do certain dances here at Pinewoods. Certain people come to this and they do these dances, so I say we are the folk.”<sup>42</sup>

Being constituted as the folk gave would-be composers and choreographers permission to express their own culture as much as that of the Playford era, but it also resurrected an age-old tension between folklore as the preservation or creation of tradition. How would the new dances be integrated into the English Country Dance repertoire if they were written in (sub)urban America or London in the late twentieth century and consisted of figures that bore at times only scant relation to “traditional” steps? Gene Murrow’s answer—and as one of the leading callers, musicians, and record producers on both sides of the Atlantic, his view had considerable currency within the dance community—was that “for the present, what feels right to present-day



twenty-first-century Americans preserves the essence of the aesthetic of the English country dance—the figures, the kinds of interactions.”<sup>43</sup>

The “essence of the aesthetic” can be elusive and debatable, though, and the enthusiasm for the new made some anxious about preserving the old. The contrasting views of two of the grande dames of ECD in the late twentieth century United States—ironically, women who shared the teaching leadership of the suburban New York dance community in Westchester County—illustrated the conflict. Christine Helwig, who devoted herself to reconstructing the old Playford dances, worried in 1999 that the new choreography was jeopardizing the old repertoire: “there are many, many dances written today and some of them are lovely, but I’m very anxious to see the old dances from the Playford, you know, continue to be taught and enjoyed. I think it would be a tremendous loss if those early dances did not continue to be done and taught and relished for what they are.”<sup>44</sup> Fried Herman, however, saw herself as part of what like-minded dancers increasingly referred to as a “living tradition.” Fried insisted, “I always advocate . . . you should dance all the old dances,” but in a 1999 interview she emphasized her own preference for the new dances: “I couldn’t possibly understand people from the 1600s. . . . Inside I’m not from the 1600s—I’m from 1999. And so I think that we should really show ourselves the way we are and feel and that’s what I’m trying to do” in writing “new movements from the old style” but “with a new name.”<sup>45</sup>

On the difference between Helwig and Fried, the dance community voted with its feet and settled the matter largely in Fried’s favor. Tensions around the issue continued, but the victory of the “new” was expressed in the emergence and eventual triumph of many new “historical” dances in a modern idiom. Ironically, however, for all their differences, in their teaching, choreography, and dance reconstructions, both women helped nurture the elegance, graciousness, and measured movements of a new Modern ECD, a dance style with its own tempi, embodiments, and character. Sharp, it will be recalled, recorded dances in 1915 with 134 beats per minute, a pace that had dancers leaning forward on the ball of the foot in the running step. In the MECD era, the same dances were typically played at approximately three-quarters that speed, with 104 beats per minute. And in keeping with the slower tempi, few dances were “danced” with the running step; rather, dancers walked and skipped. The dances also encouraged a more vertical, composed posture, rather than the Sharp demonstration teams’ forward slant immortalized in the 1920 photographs (see page 151). Romantic and more languid waltz or triple-time dances increasingly predominated. These dances encouraged flowing arms and gliding, in most exaggerated form resembling Sharp’s

hated ballet style. Equally important to the success of the new dance form was its convergence with the taste of the younger generation. The generation of computer geeks who increasingly constituted a core constituency in the dance community took special delight in complicated figures, such as those advanced in Pat Shaw's new dances. Shaw's visit, then, marked the beginnings of MECD as a new dance form for the age. Shaw stimulated a passel of talented musicians and choreographers who developed its repertoire, and a new young audience stood ready to embrace it.

### *Becoming National*

The change in leadership of CDSS had helped make Shaw's visit to Pinewoods possible, and in the wake of his visit, the new leadership moved energetically forward with the same spirit. Shimer, as she had promised, left the post of national director in September 1975 after less than three years, and James E. Morrison, at the age of twenty-seven, was appointed director.<sup>46</sup>

Morrison's elevation as director could not have come at a more auspicious time for CDSS. If CDSS was to hold the hundreds of new baby-boomer recruits from the folk revival, it had to find a way to honor their interests in contra dance and tolerate the cultural attitudes of the Sixties they brought with them. At the same time, of course, CDSS could not afford to alienate the older and more conventional (and sometimes prissy) members who had led the organization until then. It was not always easy, and in retrospect, it appears Morrison focused his energy and new programs on attracting and holding the new dancers.

Morrison's tenure was brief but momentous. Feeling that CDSS needed to become a truly national organization, he sought to move the national headquarters out of New York, where it had been based since 1915. For most of the century, the largest two groups had long been in New York and Boston, and Morrison felt the movement would never be seen as national as long as it remained under the de facto control of the local group. Morrison had personal reasons that were equally compelling though: a small-town and country boy reared in Berkeley, California, and schooled in New Hampshire, he had recently married and did not want to raise a family in the city. So, when CDSS refused to agree to move its national offices out of the city, Morrison resigned in June 1977 and moved his family to Charlottesville, Virginia.<sup>47</sup>

However brief, Morrison's tenure as national director coincided with what one member of the CDSS executive committee recalled as "the biggest expansion of country dancing in all its forms." The membership had stagnated

for many years at about seven to eight hundred members in about twenty groups, mostly in and around East Coast cities; during the 1970s, the membership and number of groups doubled to nearly thirteen hundred members in some fifty centers. Like the youthful new director, the new members were also young and dynamic. Morrison consequently related well to the younger generation wearing “bell bottoms and with long hair” who were increasingly exploring country dance, and he created new programs in American dance and morris dance in particular, which appealed to them. He brought Dudley Laufman to Pinewoods, and when Laufman ran afoul of Gadd, Genny Shimer, and Marshall Barron—the ECD music and dance leaders—and wondered whether he should just pack up and go home, Morrison counseled him to “just ignore them.”<sup>48</sup>

Morrison had an interest in historical dance as well, and during the bicentennial he spawned “a little movement” in colonial dance. But he remembered that his focus was to “invigorate programs” and “bridge contra dance and the old-time music scene” with CDSS’s traditional emphasis on ECD. In addition to the enlivened weekly and weekend events that added more American dances, Morrison created a touring demonstration group, the American Country Dance Ensemble, and added an American Week at Pinewoods.<sup>49</sup>

The expansion of American dance in the late 1970s and 1980s had unintended but profound consequences for the unique shape of what came to be understood as English Country Dance in the United States. As the community of American dance enthusiasts grew, their numbers made it possible to sustain more dance events. As important, the contra dancers began to constitute a self-sustaining community of their own. Of course, many enjoyed English dance as well and did both; but many found the ECD pace too slow and style too formal. And their preference was matched by those favoring the Playford-style dances, among whom were older dancers who found the gentler dance tradition easier on tired feet and aching joints. As a result, the longstanding “English” dance evenings began to deemphasize American contras and squares (as well as the more active traditional dance rants, reels, and jigs). By the mid-’80s, while British country dance evenings continued to mix historical, traditional, and American dances, country dance communities across the United States had largely separated the two genres into separate evenings. For instance, in New York, “English” dance—reconstituted as largely only Playford-style dances—was done on Tuesday night, and Saturday night was reserved for American contras and squares.<sup>50</sup> Ten years earlier, an evening dance mixed the two forms, and some dancers probably never distinguished one set as English and another as American. Over time, the

separation was sustained by instructional structures: dance teachers apprenticed only within each tradition, and as time passed fewer of the new generation of English teachers learned how to call American dances.<sup>51</sup>

In addition to Morrison's support for American dance, he helped stimulate a morris dance revival in the late 1970s. Morris dance had, of course, been the staple of early folk revival, and Sharp early established a demonstration morris team. It was traditionally an all-male tradition, but Sharp had broken with patriarchal tradition and supported women morris dance performances by Mary Neal's *Espérance* girls and by many of his female teachers, including May Gadd. Morris dance had continued to be taught as part of the ECD syllabus, and every weekly dance in New York and elsewhere typically began with a morris class. But many enthusiasts periodically desired to start morris teams that could perform on their own, not unlike the Headington Morrismen who first excited Sharp's interest in country dance in 1899. The Morris Ring was one such federation of enthusiasts, though Gadd and Kennedy generally resisted the idea of separate morris clubs, feeling they would dilute EFDSS and CDSS; they wanted all groups under their umbrella. The Morris Ring was also all male, which only excited further opposition from Gadd, who was herself a morris dancer. She supported morris dance for both men and women, but under CDSS auspices.<sup>52</sup>

Morrison reversed Gadd's longstanding opposition to independent morris teams. The Pinewoods Morrismen had existed in the previous decade, but their affiliation with the camp had facilitated their acceptance. The Village Morrismen, a local New York group that Morrison thinks Gadd saw as a "threat," dissolved in 1969 after only eighteen months and shortly before Morrison arrived in the city. Morrison initiated a new revival of the form with the creation of independent clubs across the country. As early as 1973, the Binghamton Morris Men and the Cambridge Morris Men started, and the next year, Morrison helped form the Greenwich Morrismen, a team that lasted until 2007. Four months later, Ring O'Bells, a women's team that also flourished, formed. Soon after, the Pinewoods Morrismen reorganized as a club and, serving as a training ground for morris dancers who passed through the camp, spawned a national movement of clubs. By the end of the decade, longsword and rapper performance teams were forming. Gadd remained skeptical of their independence—and even more of the women's "manly" attire in pants—but when the teams affiliated with CDSS, any residual reservations seemed to disappear.<sup>53</sup>

Perhaps the most fundamental change during these years was the explosion of country dance groups across the nation and the character of that

growth. CDSS became the organization for a national leisure activity of an expanding professional-technical white-collar class that was of the city, and it was often located in the suburban periphery of it. ECD, with its vacation schools, balls, and dances, had long been a playground for the well-to-do and a major leisure activity. But by end of the century the core of dancers was drawn from a broader social swath of affluent professionals and technical workers. This class's investment in consumer accoutrements embraced and heightened the development of the country dance movement as a consumer industry. Starting in the 1970s, CDSS—and its behavior mirrored that of some International Folk Dance leaders such as Michael Ginsburg and Karl Finger—began to sell dance books and records and promote special local events to dancers from across the country, and the making of a “folk dance industry” grew apace in succeeding decades.

The role of what historians understand as the new middle class of white-collar professionals in CDSS also helped make the movement more national. Many Americans moved often, and even if these dancers and dance teachers were more settled in stable jobs than others of their class, those who resettled in new communities helped build a national movement with a national dance idiom and ties. But as CDSS became a truly national movement—and with Canadian members, in truth a North American movement—its members often had an attenuated relationship to the city: urbane, with a love, for instance, of the Baroque and Renaissance music used in ECD dances, new post-1980 dance groups drew from white ethnics (many of whom Anglo-American elites in the American Branch had not always considered white)<sup>54</sup> who worked in the city but had moved to suburban split-level and ranch homes to fulfill the middle-class dream. Not surprisingly, then, many of the new groups settled and danced in “safe” havens in the shadows of the city.

### *The Modern Country Dance Nation*

While new groups appeared in many of the major urban centers between the late 1960s and the mid-1980s, unlike in New York, they more often centered in the suburban periphery near the dancers' homes. Substantial contingents sustained groups in cities such as Philadelphia, San Francisco, St. Louis, Washington, DC, and Baltimore, but it was in the suburbs such as Westchester and Western Ontario (near New York and Toronto, respectively) and around college towns where ECD had long been supported, such as Princeton, Swarthmore, Ann Arbor, Pasadena, Durham, Palo Alto, and Berkeley, that groups increasingly established roots. A brief history of four such sites gives

a sense of the urbane but suburban pattern of development and the political impact of the new generation from the era of the second folk revival.

In Philadelphia, the dance community has moved back and forth over the city and suburban line. By the late '70s there were three Philadelphia groups that focused on ECD: Perdue's, Germantown Country Dancers, and Swarthmore English Country Dancers. The oldest group, Perdue's, was named for Perdue Cleaver, who initiated the group in 1946 (although it celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 2004). The group met in Philadelphia at the home of a local dance couple. When their hosts moved to California, the group met in the barn owned by the uncle of another dancer, and from there it moved to churches in a suburb west of Philadelphia in Media, Pennsylvania.<sup>55</sup> Germantown Country Dancers was organized in 1971 by Hanny Budnick, a local ECD enthusiast. By the next year, the group had live music and a regular meeting place for its weekly dance: the Germantown Friends School gym in the Germantown section of Philadelphia. Budnick also promoted a performance team in middecade to dance at local events and spur interest in ECD. In 1976, the team was a natural choice to help celebrate the American bicentennial. Invited to perform at the Philadelphia Folk Fair and at the pre-opening of the Old City Tavern, a reconstructed colonial inn, the team developed a colonial repertoire and continues in the present as a colonial demonstration troupe, the Colonial Assembly. Germantown Country Dancers eventually moved to Calvary Episcopal Church, because one of the members knew the pastor and his wife, but as one Philadelphia dancer remembered it, because of "some minor crime incidents and a large perception of possible crime," the group moved to the Friends Meeting House in suburban Lower Merion, Pennsylvania.<sup>56</sup>

The location at a Friends facility was not happenstance. The location of many groups in houses of worship was often simply a matter of finding a cheap rental with a good wood floor, and someone with a connection to the church or temple might also be able to negotiate a good price. But the Society of Friends had a long association with the ECD dance movement: Quaker schools such as Earlham College (which Elizabeth Burchenal attended) and Swarthmore College, which tended to be internationalist in outlook and British identified, often hosted ECD groups, and in that regard, the third local Philadelphia group was based at suburban Swarthmore College. Proud that it was the oldest extracurricular institution at the college, the Swarthmore College Folk Dance Club taught Scottish, English, and contra dance. The club also sponsored longsword and morris classes and hosted the first of its annual Scottish and English country balls in 1971.<sup>57</sup>



Perdue Cleaver's Gilbert and Sullivan Night during Pinewoods' "Talent Night," 1963. Left to right: Perdue Cleaver, Jack Langstaff, Elizabeth Copstein. (Photo: probably by Stan Levy; Jack Shimer Collection, courtesy of Joan Shimer and David Millstone)

The history of the Bay Area Country Dance Society (BACDS) tells much the same story but, like the history of the American West, reflects also the role of migrant dancers. Song Chang and his postwar successors had incorporated English and square dancing into the international scene and into the Folk Dance Federation of California, and a Scottish group started as early as 1946. The Stanford community around Palo Alto seems also to have sponsored ECD events periodically over the years, and contra and Scottish groups met irregularly. A Stanford graduate student, Nick Harris, who had attended Dudley dances as an Amherst undergraduate, started a regular Stanford contra dance in 1974–75. Around the same time, Harris started an ECD dance in Berkeley. There also seem to have been longsword and rapper teams in the Bay Area. But these were local groups that operated in isolation from one another, or almost like private clubs, and it was the arrival in Berkeley of a dance enthusiast from Pasadena, Brad Foster, that transformed these fragments into a regional CDSS dance community.<sup>58</sup>

Foster had been taught country dancing as a high school student in Pasadena by Mary Judson, another of the grande dames of the ECD community, and she was the one who also arranged for his first visit to Pinewoods in 1971. Arriving to study architecture at Berkeley in the fall 1975, Foster plunged into the local country dance scene. Chuck Ward had started an ECD group in San Francisco in late 1968 or early 1969, which was taught by Tom Kruskal, a Pinewoods regular. Kruskal departed from the area in 1975, however, just as Foster arrived, and Foster became the new leader and teacher for the San Francisco Dance Society. At approximately the same time, a square dance group formed in Santa Cruz (which later morphed into a contra group), and an English group started up in San Jose. Foster called squares for the Santa Cruz dance, and in 1978 he took over the Stanford contra dance.<sup>59</sup>

Then, in 1980, the success of the first West Coast summer camp—Alta Sierra Camp near Kings Canyon National Park in the Sierras, in Mendocino, California, which had a week devoted to English Country Dance—set Foster thinking. If he, with his wife’s help, could bring together dancers from the region for the camp, the same logic made sense for an umbrella regional organization. The small groups of dancers in Palo Alto, in Berkeley, and in the East Bay often did not constitute a critical mass needed for a successful dance. In 1980, though, the development of the interstate highway system and mass media gave the region a new coherence, and Foster proceeded to capitalize on it, creating a new federation of area dance groups, the Bay Area Country Dance Society (BACDS). BACDS helped network all the area dancers so they could attend one another’s evenings of contra or English dance and also come together to sponsor special events that required greater numbers. In 1981, BACDS added an American Week to its summer program, and in 1986 it inaugurated a “No Snow Ball,” a playful nod to the local climate and East Coast migrants’ memories of Playford balls. At its founding, BACDS networked country dance groups in San Francisco, Berkeley, San Jose, Santa Cruz, and Palo Alto. Foster recalls, however, that by the mid-’80s the groups had mushroomed and sprung up along the peninsula and throughout the East Bay and North Bay. Like Foster, however, many of the musicians and callers during BACDS’s early years had been trained at East Coast ECD centers. For instance, Bruce Hamilton, one of the leading area callers who also had a national reputation, was tutored by California’s Mary Judson, but after learning to dance at Swarthmore. The musician Stan Kramer came from a longstanding country dance family with roots at Berea, and his wife, Susan, who has played flute for decades, grew up in Berea and then lived and danced in Philadelphia. The leader of the Palo Alto ECD dance, Bob Fraley and his



wife, Ruthanne, met dancing in Princeton. And Jody McGeen, a transplanted New Yorker, apprenticed as a caller in New York under Genny Shimer and Christine Helwig.<sup>60</sup>

The history of the Princeton Country Dancers (PCD) is a more straightforward suburban tale, but its spinoffs document the canopy of supportive dance and extradance associations that nourished ECD members. In 1978, the caller David Chandler created the Princeton dance and called a mix of contra and English dances. Chandler, who was active on the CDSS executive committee, moved to central New Jersey to take a job at Rutgers University. He had been dancing in New York City and simply imported the mixed program model then in effect there to Princeton. Chandler's first exposure to contra dance, however, had been at the Fox Hollow Festival in upstate New York, where Dudley Laufman and the Canterbury Orchestra was the resident band.<sup>61</sup>

For the first year, Princeton dancers met at a school in Franklin Park, a town east of Princeton. "Somewhat later" the group named itself Princeton Country Dancers, quite possibly during the following year, when it briefly met on the university campus. But the need for a good wooden sprung floor and affordable rent required folk dance groups to be flexible about location, and for the first twenty years of the group's existence it moved constantly. Half the years were spent in churches in Belle Mead and Franklin Park; during the other half, the group met in a series of Princeton churches.<sup>62</sup>

Initially PCD danced to recorded music. Soon after, the group sponsored a pickup band, which nurtured a cadre of homegrown musicians in a community band, Rum and Onions, which explicitly drew on the Canterbury Orchestra as a model. Some local musicians formed a regular band, Tripping Upstairs, and in 1980–81, others served as the core of the band Hold the Mustard (HTM), a group that became one of the leading ECD bands of the era. HTM regularly performed at dance weekends and special events around the country and, with the release of its first recordings in 1987 and 1991, helped institutionalize a universal CDSS sound and tempo.<sup>63</sup>

The life of the PCD dance community only began on the dance floor. In addition to offering regular contra and English dances as well as an annual Winter Cotillion and special Halloween dance, PCD nurtured the flourishing of local ritual teams that usually met privately to practice. PCD dancers formed Millstone Ritual Morris (ca. 1980), Foaming at the Feet (a clogging team, ca. 1982), Shandygaff Longsword (1985), and the Griggstown (a neighboring town) Lock Rapper Team (1989). And in 1994, some members formed a Handsome Molly, a mixed team of men and women that reflected a radical political tradition. Molly Dance drew on an East Anglia tradition that PCD's

twentieth-anniversary history described as “originally done by men, some dressed women (mollies), all dressed in working clothes and stout boots, with faces smudged with charcoal for disguise, who would stomp through the villages on Plough Monday, boisterously mocking the dances of the gentry.” Bespeaking the affluence of its members, the continuing transatlantic character of the dance community, and the heightened place of leisure travel, within the first five years of its existence, Handsome Molly had performed in Toronto and East Anglia, England.<sup>64</sup>

PCD folk activities also extended beyond the dance, though, often drawing on other folk traditions. The Cotillion Singers, for example, with an “ever shifting repertoire of folk, rock and roll, seasonal and classical choral music,” debuted at PCD’s 1983 cotillion. Another group of dancers did Sacred Harp singing. The friendships forged during the dancing and singing, which in some cases even blossomed into love affairs, provided additional opportunities for dancers to come together to celebrate and support one another. In PCD’s first ten years, it counted no fewer than eighteen marriages among dancers and fourteen babies born to dancer families. Members frequently met at one another’s homes for potluck dinners. The Dancing Needles Quilt Guild drew on the folk tradition of quilting to celebrate the marriages and births, and the sardonically named Ladies Who Lunch formed as a mothers’ support group. During the ’80s, PCD members also created a Gardeners Seed Exchange and inaugurated its most significant and enduring community dance event: the Head for the Hills (HFTH) retreat. Originating in 1984, HFTH met annually at the Hudson Guild Farm in western New Jersey (until its closing in 1995, when the weekend moved to the Pocono Mountains). Today it remains a weekend of country dancing, singing, and partying—an occasion for a celebration of community—the bonding of friendships radiating out from the dance floor.<sup>65</sup>

The final stop on this tour of new dance venues spawned by the folk and contra revivals focuses on an extraordinary individual who, drawing on the left-liberal legacy of the Sixties, compels a rethinking of the ECD tradition even as he advances it. Traversing the United States several times and through several of the aforementioned sites, his life also illustrates the stretch of the revitalized CDSS to the South. The individual, Carl Wittman, is remarkably little known to contemporary dancers beyond his development of gender-neutral dancing, but his work was in fact shaped by the larger progressive political project that animated the second folk revival.

Raised in the New York suburb of Paramus, New Jersey, Wittman was weaned on the politics and folk culture of the second revival and New Left: he was a red-diaper baby whose parents were communists. He then attended



Carl Wittman teaching morris dance (and holding a morris stick), at Duke University, ca. 1982. (Photo: Laura Dacy, courtesy of Allan Troxler)

Swarthmore College, where a member of the physical-education staff, Irene Moll, introduced him to English Country Dance and morris dance, as well as Scottish and international dance. Moll, in fact, introduced generations of Swarthmore students to ECD from the 1950s to the late '70s, many of whom, like Bruce Hamilton, played major roles in the dance community. Moll ran a Friday-night international dance but emphasized, as kindred forms, Scottish and English Country Dance, and both became Wittman's leisure-time passion and complement to the political activism that consumed him then.<sup>66</sup> He spent summers in the South working for civil rights, and in 1963 he became an early member of the National Council of the radical Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). He coauthored with Tom Hayden "An Interracial Movement of the Poor" and published an organizing pamphlet in 1964, "Seminar on Marxism." He then moved back to New Jersey, where during the day he worked on SDS's pioneering community-organizing project in Newark, New Jersey, the Newark Community Union Project (NCUP), and danced with May Gadd at Duane Hall in New York two evenings a week.<sup>67</sup>



Carl Wittman and back-to-the-land friends dancing on the front lawn, Wolf Creek, Oregon, ca. 1974. (Photo: Boyd Peters, courtesy of Allan Troxler)

Changes in the New Left in the mid-1960s, however, and Wittman's responses to them, in time transformed the way many people experienced ECD. Wittman had married a college friend, Mimi Feingold, in 1966, and moving to San Francisco around 1968, he joined a commune of antidraft activists. But immersed in the radical sexual counterculture of late-1960s San Francisco, Wittman began to address his sexual identity. He had started to have sexual relations with men at the age of fourteen and grew increasingly unhappy with the homophobia and machismo of SDS's male leaders.<sup>68</sup> Resigning from SDS, Wittman began to come out as a gay man to friends, and in 1969, the couple separated.

In the next decade, as a gay man of the Left, Wittman became an anti-war activist, a pioneer for gay rights, and a convert to the counterculture. He turned in his draft card and in 1968 published *Waves of Resistance*, a primer for antidraft resisters. His most significant writing, however, was a manifesto he published the next year that became a foundational text for the gay liberation movement. A call to arms, *Refugees from Amerika: A Gay Manifesto* rejected both capitalist and socialist repression of homosexuality and the medicalization of gay identity. Convinced that hegemonic American culture was inhospitable

pitabile terrain, he bought some land in rural Wolf Creek, Oregon, where some gay men had been establishing communes, and moved there in 1971 with his lover, Steven McClave. Two years later, he began a long-term relationship with Allan Troxler, another conscientious objector (and Swarthmore graduate). In Wolf Creek, Wittman became an environmental activist and turned his attention to his longstanding passion for English Country Dance.

Wittman had never lost his love for country dance, and while in San Francisco, he and Feingold had attended Chuck Ward's English group and joined his Scottish team. In Oregon, Wittman began his own group in their commune, initially teaching it in the traditional coupled dance form. But, looking about them at the gay community of dancers, Wittman and Troxler began to speak of an alternative format that would make more sense for their group and be more inviting to them. So, drawing on a shared commitment to both gender and social equality, they began to experiment with a global language that substituted gender-free categories. Initially, to identify roles, they used the colors red and green on "pinnies" of cloth or paper (to "pin" to their shirts) as alternatives to the "men's line" or the "women's line." They later settled on the "left" and "right file." The focus was as much on gender-neutral language as on creating an inclusive environment, for they believed the problem of exclusion was as applicable to people who felt unwelcome in the dance community because of their race or class. Unfortunately, in the subsequent history, this latter thrust of the mission largely disappeared in practice; Wittman's efforts were known as "gender-free" dance.<sup>69</sup>

By 1978 internecine conflicts within Wolf Creek's gay and environmental communities had soured Troxler and, to a lesser extent, Wittman, and they had begun to think of greener pastures. In the next year, Troxler returned to Durham, North Carolina (he had been raised in Greensboro), where he had taken a production position with *Southern Exposure*, a progressive magazine committed to social justice in the South. Wittman followed him a year later, but not without having left behind the seeds of a gender-free movement that blossomed in Oregon and elsewhere. In 1980, Wittman choreographed for the Oregon Shakespeare festival in Ashland, where the lighting director was Chris Sackett and a member of the demonstration team was Michael Cicone. Sackett had cofounded Ashland Country Dance two years earlier, and the next year his wife, Brooke Friendly, helped found the Heather and Rose Country Dancers, a statewide federation of Scottish and English dance groups committed to teaching with "global dance" instructions that refer to people's positions rather than their gender. Cicone went on to lead the Boston Gender-Free English Country Dance in Jamaica Plain.<sup>70</sup>

The women's liberation and gay liberation movements were at the center of the identity politics that dominated left-liberal circles in the 1980s, but it would be misleading to suggest that gender-neutral dancing penetrated very far into the dance community. Even among the younger generation of dancers, patriarchal structures did not soften overnight. The idea of men dancing with men provoked reactions among many dancers that ranged from unease to consternation. Women, who often had to dance with one another because of the shortage of men, were more willing to dance with one another. But, as suggested earlier, Wittman won his share of admirers and followers. One of the straight old-time grande dames, Christine Helwig, was notably appreciative of both his work in reconstructing Playford dances and his inclusiveness. Moreover, to many women in particular, gender-neutral dance solved the problem of gender balance that had long been a problem in dance communities where men were frequently in short supply. And for others, Wittman's compelling personality and enthusiasm may have attracted them to the practice. In any case, though most CDSS affiliates never adopted gender-neutral terminology, gradually over the next decades, as a result of Wittman's influence, followers established several regular gender-neutral dance venues in the country, and the groups federated in 1988 as the Lavender Folk and Country Dancers.<sup>71</sup>

Perhaps the most famous local group was located in the city in which Wittman and Troxler settled: Durham, North Carolina. Located in the shadows of the Appalachian Mountains, Durham had a long and venerable history of country dancing—from southern mountain squares and clogging to contra dance. The Research Triangle of universities also provided a ready audience for folk dance. Arriving in 1981, Wittman continued his environmental gay rights activism, serving as codirector of North Carolina's Public Interest Research Group (PIRG) and cofounding the Durham Lesbian and Gay Health Project. But Wittman also turned his attention equally to ECD and Scottish dance, the twin forms he had learned two decades earlier at Swarthmore. Weekly he taught a class of Scottish and English dancing for the Durham Department of Parks and Recreation and then offered a biweekly separate class mostly for gay men. Both classes used global terminology for teaching. Within a year or two, the two groups merged into a single CDSS affiliate, the Sun Assembly Country Dancers. Taking its title from a popular Playford dance, the group was a mix of straight and gay dancers who did gender-neutral dancing.<sup>72</sup>

Carl Wittman died of complications resulting from AIDS in 1986. Just before his death, he finished a book called *Sun Assembly* that was published

posthumously a decade later. The book provided instruction for teaching two hundred Scottish and English dances with global terminology. As significant, he also left behind a core of dancers committed to his idea, both in Oregon and in Durham. Troxler and Pat Petersen, a New York transplant to Durham in 1982, led Sun Assembly Country Dancers after Wittman's death. More than twenty-five years later, the group, which still has a mixed membership of straights and gays, remains one of three major groups in the United States committed to gender-neutral dancing. In Oregon, Brooke Friendly and Chris Sackett have continued to run a gender-neutral dance that by the twenty-first century has mostly straight couples, and Michael Cicone, one of the other dancers who had learned from Wittman in Oregon, is one of a team of teachers of a Boston group that has mostly gay participants.<sup>73</sup>

### *Making CDSS “North American”*

When CDSS's board refused to move the national office from New York, Jim Morrison resigned to raise his children outside the city. His departure created an administrative vacuum in the organization, and CDSS decided to divide the job of national director into two positions. Morrison agreed to stay on as artistic director, largely to oversee Pinewoods programs. He operated from a “field office” in Charlottesville, Virginia; meanwhile the Executive Committee looked to hire someone from the arts management community who could function as an executive director. However, the hire, Nancy White Kurzman, neither danced nor seemed to the Executive Committee to understand it and was let go in 1980. Her successor, Bertha Hatvary, who had just joined the new New York Dance Activities Committee (NYDAC) teacher apprenticeship program, stepped down after a couple years as well, apparently by mutual agreement with the Executive Committee that the job was not one that suited her talents or interests. A search for a new director proceeded, and according to at least one member of the Executive Committee, the chair of the committee, Sue Salmons, functioned as de facto director until a new leader could be found. The Executive Committee scoured the membership and turned to one of the bright young stars of the movement who had already made his mark on the West Coast by building BACDS: Brad Foster.

On February 1, 1983, CDSS appointed Foster its national director. Foster both had taught in New York as a visiting caller and was a well-known Pinewoods regular. He was also a man with few ties to New York, and when the question of relocating the office arose again, he had less personal investment

in keeping CDSS there. In fact, his family lived outside the city in Connecticut, and he had an hour or more daily commute to the office. So, in 1986, when the landlord announced that the rent on CDSS's Barrow Street office in Greenwich Village would double, the organization and its national director had practical reasons to look for new accommodations.

In 1987, CDSS moved to Northampton, Massachusetts, not far from the site of the early summer schools at the Agricultural College, and two years later it moved a few miles away to its present site in Haydenville. The move forced NYDAC, New York's local dance committee, which was technically a subcommittee of the CDSS Executive Committee, to reorganize as Country Dance \* New York (CD\*NY), an autonomous chapter with a status no different from other local groups.<sup>74</sup>

Western Massachusetts was not Middle America, but if CDSS's relocation meant to signal that the movement was no longer New York-centric, its location was less than two hours from Boston and Pinewoods Camp. To be sure, it was not in the city, and the "village" ambience of the semirural area and its location amid a network of five colleges sited CDSS in an area that had been a traditional source of support for both American and English Country Dance. By virtue of being *not* New York or Boston or in another of the East Coast cities, the site did help CDSS represent itself as *national*. But, in fact, that description was problematic for the Canadian members of the organization. So, as a gesture to Canadian members of the organization, Foster's title was changed in 1989 from national director to executive and artistic director.<sup>75</sup>

But while the kinds of dances in the ECD repertoire narrowed as CDSS entered the last decade of the twentieth century, the organization expanded geographically: CDSS did not just cross the country; it crossed national borders and become a North American organization. For example, Canadian Tom Seiss and Portland's Mary Devlin each served as president of CDSS in the coming years. The movement they led, however, had taken on a new character that began to lead to two very different understandings of English Country Dance in England and the United States. In the United States, English and contra dance had become segregated for most country dancers into separate evenings, and an evening of English Country Dance now consisted of almost exclusively Playford-inspired dances. Ritual dances became the province of teams that met privately, and in part because the dance community was aging, fewer and fewer of the traditional village dances were done.<sup>76</sup> English choreographers also composed new dances in the historical tradition, but in contrast, American squares and contras and English traditional rants, reels, and jigs remained an integral part of the British country dance



evening, which often in its almost boisterous enthusiasm resembled a ceilidh or barn dance.<sup>77</sup> For as important as was the different repertoire, it was the new “modern” style and tempi of the Playford-inspired dances that characterized the new modern variant of ECD. The new mode informed the pace and style of how older dances were taught, as well those of the many newly written dances.

MECD both reflected and shaped the new generation of dancers reared in the second folk revival who had entered the dance community since 1970. Few had the activist pedigree of Carl Wittman, but many carried with them inherited left-liberal concerns with environmentalism, human rights, feminism, and social justice. For Wittman, the dance form and his political concerns had to be integrated; he demonstrated in his own life and work the radical position that the “personal is political.” The next chapter expands on how the culture of liberalism informed the American MECD dance community more generally.