

# Scottish Country Dancing? ...never heard of it.

By Marshall McLaughlin from Sentinel Article - 08/11/2011

Whether you know it or not, Scottish country dancing is part of your history. North Carolina was the destination for large numbers of migrating Scots in the pre-Revolution years of the 1700's, and the migrants carried their dance and their music with them wherever they went. Clogging has definite roots in Scottish and Irish step dancing, and Square dancing traces roots back to Scottish country dancing. In his book *Cracker Culture: Celtic Ways in the Old South*, Grady McWhiney cites diaries and travel journals from the 1700 and 1800's that reveal the Southerner's love of dancing. One traveler noted, "After dinner we danced cotillions, minuets, Virginia and Scotch reels, country dances, jigs, etc., till ten o'clock." The repertoire of traditional Appalachian music still includes many old Scottish tunes such as "Flowers of Edinburgh," "Dead March," "Bonnie Prince Charlie" and "Soldier's Joy." Whether you sense it or not, the dance and music of Scotland is in your blood.



Even though it is in your blood, you might not know what it is. When most people think of Scottish dancing, they visualize a high-kicking, kilted figure with arms arched overhead. That is the image of Highland dancing, and it is a form of dance done by individuals and usually as a competitive activity. So then, what is Scottish country dancing? To begin, its deep roots are documented in the literature of Scotland as early as the late 1600's. It is tradition. It is social. It is music. It is friendships, and most importantly, it is fun. It is the ballroom dancing of Scotland.



Scottish country dance is danced in groups of couples called sets, and during a dance each person will have the opportunity to dance with all of the other people in the set. It is a vibrant form of dance that embraces both the traditional and the contemporary. A typical dance program may contain dances devised in the 1700's as well as new dances. Partners are not necessary. Age is no barrier, and dancers will encounter all ages from seniors to adolescents on the floor. This is one reason why Scottish country dancing appeals to families looking for a wholesome activity in which the entire family can participate. Scottish country dancing has waxed and waned over the decades and is currently enjoying world- wide popularity due, primarily, to the efforts of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society.



If you would like to tap into your history, there are several Scottish country dance classes in the area. The classes meet weekly, and normally they are free. One of these classes, The Madison County Scotch Hoppers, meets in Hot Springs on Thursday nights from 7:00 – 9:00 PM. For additional information on Scottish country dancing or to get more information on classes phone Marshall McLaughlin at (828) 622-0071.