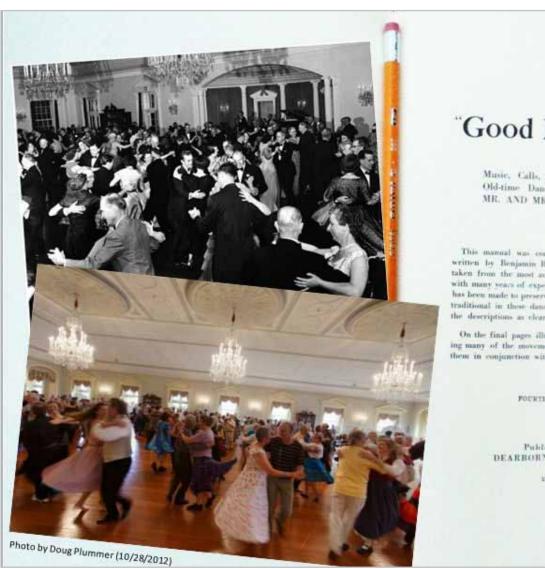
"Good Morning, Michigan!"

Henry Ford, Benjamin Lovett and Lovett Hall

by Rick Szumski



"Good Morning"

Music, Calls, and Directions for Old-time Dancing as Revived by MR. AND MRS. HENRY FORD

This manual was compiled and descriptions were written by Benjamin B. Lovett. The material was taken from the most authentic sources and combined with many vector of experience in tracking. An effort has been made to preserve all that is characterious and traditional in these dances, at the same time making the descriptions as clear and concise as possible.

On the final pages illustrations are presented showing many of the movements. You are urged to study them in conjunction with the directions given.

FOURTH EDITION

Published at DEARBORN, MICHIGAN

2945

Photos for this article used by permission of the Henry Ford Musuem and by Doug Plummer. Top left: Dancing in Lovett Hall, 1940s; bottom: the seventy-fifth anniversary, October 2012; right: Good Morning: Music, Calls, and Directions for Old-time Dancing as Revised by Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ford, 1943 edition.

Many people credit Henry Ford with inventing the modern automobile, but that honor officially goes to Karl Benz. What many people do not credit Henry Ford with is leading a major revival of traditional music and dance in the first half of the twentieth century. To honor that accomplishment, two callers, two bands, and 350 dancers converged upon Lovett Hall in Dearborn, Michigan on October 28, 2012 to celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of Lovett Hall. This historic and magnificent dance hall was built by Ford for what he called "old-fashioned dancing." Built with style, the hall can hold up to 500 happy dancers enjoying the Burmese teakwood sprung dance floor, magnificent Czechoslovakian chandeliers, a vast second floor balcony, a stunning red-carpeted stairwell leading up to the ballroom, and no support columns to impede the dancing. Local oral tradition holds that the floor is sprung by valve springs from Ford engines. Perhaps this is partially true because the teakwood floor is actually mounted to iron rails and supported by coil springs giving it a very lively feel.

How is it that the man we know for his Model T, modern production line, vast River Rouge Complex, and famous five dollar-a-day wage enjoyed traditional dancing so much that he built such a dance hall? It all started when Henry Ford attended old-fashioned dances as a young man and developed his lifelong love of dancing. It was at one of those dances that he met Clara Bryant who became his wife. Like the rest of America, the young couple became preoccupied with all the exciting changes going on at the time and gradually lost touch with dancing. Raising a family, starting an automobile company, and building the largest manufacturing facility the world had ever seen, the Rouge Complex, kept them very busy indeed. Wealth and fame followed, but all this was somehow not enough. One day Clara suggested to Henry that they attend an old-fashioned dance like the ones they remembered from their youth. They searched but found that no traditional dances were being held anywhere nearby so decided to run their own dance. It failed because they didn't have the right music and couldn't remember the dance sequences.

Ballrooms and the Dancing Master

Henry was developing an interest in historic ballrooms at the time and began buying inns and restoring them. One such inn was the historic Wayside Inn in Sudbury, Massachusetts. After the inn, and more importantly, the ballroom were fully restored, the Fords decided to try out the ballroom with an old-fashioned square dance. In searching for a caller they discovered a well-known caller named Benjamin Lovett. Ford and Lovett met for the first time in October 1923, kicking off what would turn out

to be a two-decade traditional dancing partnership whose rewards we still enjoy today. Henry convinced Benjamin and his wife Charlotte to move to Dearborn where they would call and teach dancing and generally promote traditional music and dancing. Charlotte, a caller, dance instructor and accomplished dancer herself, worked alongside her husband in what became their life's work together. Lovett Hall was named to honor their accomplishments.

The Lovetts' first task was to find out how the early dances were done and compile all this knowledge. Ford sent a team of researchers, led by Lovett, to conduct the research, gathering information from interviews with callers, former callers, musicians and their notes. Their effort culminated in the publication of Good Morning in 1926, a book which documented the music and dance traditions of the Fords' youth. It was called *Good Morning* because many of these dances had been "asleep" for decades and were now being reawakened. Without a doubt, some of this music and these dance sequences would have been lost forever had they not been documented in Good Morning. With the textbook complete, the Lovetts began teaching quadrilles, gavottes, schottisches, mazurkas, minuets and waltzes, as well as square and round dances to local school children. All of this was free to the students and generously funded by the Fords. Both Ford and Lovett came to see the dance training as a means of teaching other life skills. They felt music and dancing was a healthful way to find happiness and an occasion to learn cleanliness, courtesy, good citizenship and proper social skills.

Class sizes grew and the Lovetts soon had a staff of twelve to fourteen callers whom they had personally taught. The dance programs were refined and formalized, so much so that they were adopted by the physical education programs of many local schools. These dance programs eventually spread to nearly half the elementary school systems in the country with tens of thousands of students now learning traditional dance. As the dancing master, Benjamin was even called "Professor" by Henry because of all his instruction. It didn't stop there; many universities requested Benjamin or one of his staff to come instruct them for a week, often culminating in a grand formal ball, and, again, all free of charge since the Fords funded it. Benjamin was the first caller to be recorded as Henry wanted a recording for teaching purposes in schools, and Henry asked his friend Thomas Edison to make the recording for him.

Hand Me a Wrench or Take Hands Four?

Within the Ford Motor Company there was a blurring between automotive engineering and dancing. Many Ford employees often went to the Fords' dances [see Editor's note at end]. They might then find themselves doing engineering work in the morning and be summoned to the Engineering Laboratory in the afternoon by Henry himself who would go over some dance steps with an employee whose dancing skills had been lacking at the recent dance. While not officially on the Ford Motor Company payroll, the Lovetts and their staff comprised Ford's Department of Music and Social Dance, certainly an odd part of an organization that builds automobiles. A section of the Engineering Laboratory was sectioned off for dancing and Benjamin conducted many of his dance classes there prior to Lovett Hall being built in 1937.

It was from the Engineering Laboratory that

The Early American Dance Music program was broadcast which featured Ford's own Early American Dance Orchestra. The live Saturday night broadcast provided music calling and simply either for enjoyment or for small communities which didn't have access to a band or caller to have their own dances. All they needed was a radio, access to a barn and willing dancers. program conducted twice each Saturday. an early broadcast for the East Coast and then a later one for the

West Coast. Henry insisted that these broadcasts be live—a recording would not do. The broadcasts only lasted about a year and a half, ending in 1945 when they couldn't be justified as a means of selling automobiles.

Henry put together his orchestra, carefully choosing the instruments to give it just the right sound. The Early American Dance Orchestra, or the Henry Ford Dance Orchestra as it was sometimes known, performed for many of the Ford dances as well as many of the classes the Lovetts and their staff taught. The band traveled widely and performed often. While Henry was never part of the band, he often would rehearse with them playing his \$75,000 Stradivarius just for fun.

So Henry Ford is to contra dancing what Lloyd Shaw is to modern square dancing. Known as the father of modern square dancing, Shaw's *Cowboy*

Dances, published in 1939, was similar in many ways to Good Morning in that it documented many dances that otherwise would have been lost. [Editor's note: Similarly, Cecil Sharp's books about English country dance, morris and sword, published earlier in the century, were invaluable in saving many of the English dances from oblivion.)

The 75th Anniversary Dance

- The theme of the recent seventy-fifth anniversary Lovett Hall dance was "Something Old, Something New." This theme came across in the selection of callers, bands and dances. The performers

> for the first half were Glen Morningstar, Jr. and the Ole Michigan Ruffwater Stringband. This band is roughly patterned after Henry Ford's Old Fashioned Band and has put much effort into listening to Ford Orchestra recordings from the 1930s and 1940sto duplicate arrangements their and styles. Glen called some dances and the played band some tunes from the Good Morning collection. After the break, the mantle was passed to Danika Murray and Fiddlefire, both from Michigan and both

Michigan and both from a younger generation charged with keeping these wonderful music and dance traditions alive. Almost all the members of Fiddlefire are also members of the same family, the Panning family. The anniversary dance featured some very old dances and also some modern dances, a nod to the fact that innovation and creativity continues to evolve today and remains very relevant to a younger generation of dancers as it was in Ford and Lovett's time.

The smiles and joy evident at the anniversary dance indicated just how meaningful these traditions are today. The dance began with a grand march leading dancers into the hall led by the Cawthon brothers playing bagpipes; it ended with a beautiful waltz. In between there were smiles, laughter, warm embraces and joyful dancing. The Fords and the Lovetts certainly would have been proud. Traditional dances are currently a rarity at Lovett Hall, but



Benjamin B. Lovett (far left) teaching children to dance in Lovett Hall. The baton was used to set the tempo for musicians.

there was a great one there on the last Sunday in October. Dancers traveled from many American states and from Ontario, Canada to join in the celebration. The afternoon concluded with dinner where new friendships were made and old ones renewed. This grand occasion concluded yet another chapter in Michigan's very rich dance heritage.

Editor's note: Ford's employees' attendence was compulsory—first for Ford's executives, and then when they "began 'to get it right,' so was attendance for all at Ford's Friday evening dances." (Dance Magazine, 1997: "Henry Ford and the Revival of Country Dancing")

Congratulations to Lovett Hall on its seventy-fifth anniversary, and thanks to the Michigan folks—the many enthusiastic and talented people who have kept the traditions alive over the years.



Clara and Henry Ford (right foreground), dancing at the dedication of Lovett Hall on October 26, 1937.



Rick Szumski is a dance enthusiast and dance organizer from Ann Arbor, Michigan. He is employed by Ford Motor Company as a sound and vibration engineer and works just across the street from historic Lovett Hall. Much of

the history for this article came from <u>Henry</u>
<u>Ford and Benjamin B. Lovett: The Dancing</u>
<u>Billionaire and the Dancing Master</u> by Eva
O'Neal Twork, Harlo Press, 1982

A Lesson from Scottish Country Dancing

by Jamie Tanner

When we dance as a group and you give me your hand, It doesn't matter if your skin is dark or light If you are old or young If you are gay or straight If you are a man or woman If you are Christian or Atheist If you are Democrat or Republican None of that matters as we dance I care that your grip is firm That you support me as I support you That you help me when I forget a step and I'm ready to help you if you need it That we work together with all the people in our set To make the dance happen, to make it work That you smile at me when I smile at you That set of dancers is our little world for a few minutes One made up of different people getting along and making something wonderful happen For that short time we dance together in harmony With smiles and laughter If only we could remember this when we exit the dance floor and leave the hall And try to dance through Life With all these diverse and wonderful people

With smiles and laughter

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The CDSS office mascot, Mr. Pins, kitted out for one of his special holidays, shows off the new CDSS water bottle. The bottles and a tote bag with the new logo are available at www.cdss.org/store.