



Country Dance and Song Society of America

Founded 1915

English and American Folk Music and Dance

55 Christopher Street, New York, New York 10014

212 / 255-8895

February 4, 1976

Mrs. Grace Wolff
2357 Willowgrove Avenue
Dayton, OH 45409

Dear Grace,

Thank you for the maps, flyers, and letters I have received from you and Florence Seger. It all seems quite clear to me what is expected.

I will not, unfortunately, be able to get to Dayton until Saturday morning. I suggest we set the musicians' rehearsal for 11:00 a.m. Will this rehearsal be at Lohrey Center? I would be happy to have guitar or a recorder included in the band; although these were not commonly used as dance instruments in the 18th century, I don't object to using them today.

You ask about the arrangements of an 18th century ball:

Partners, often acquired by drawing numbers, were engaged for the entire evening. The dancing usually started with minuets, danced by a single couple at a time, followed by country dances, cotillions, and reels. The lady standing at the head of the country dance set named the next dance, and since only the first couple danced the figure to start, the others learned by watching. This couple would take their place at the bottom of the set for the next dance. There was of course no prompting or teaching. Most balls were presided over by a master of ceremonies or "manager," whose authority was absolute. The manager was sometimes distinguished by a red sash worn diagonally over the shoulder. It was common to provide supper at around 10 or 11 p.m., followed by more dancing, which often continued to quite late by our standards (1, 2, or 3 a.m. - sometimes till daylight the next morning!)

I will be happy to do a question and answer period on Sunday.

I have sent a syllabus of dances to be taught to Florence Seger, as well as the CDSS mailing list for the states of Indiana and Ohio. I hope the latter is not too late to be of use.

Thursday and Friday nights before the workshop I will be staying with Bustin Dillon of French Lick, Indiana, and could be contacted there in an emergency. Otherwise, I will plan to see you Saturday, the 14th of February; I'll go straight to Lohrey Center in time for an 11 o'clock musicians' rehearsal unless I hear otherwise.

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