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## Why We Dance and Why We Don't

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*The Early American*

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To Florida and Back, Part IV—

## Melbourne Village Is A Unique Community, Now 20 Years Old

By Mildred J. Loomis

Melbourne Village, a planned community that grew out of School of Living ideas, deserves a much more adequate report and history of its nearly 20 years than I can give here. Close association with it, and several visits there over the years, make it a much appreciated and familiar place to me.

### History

Back in 1934, Mrs. George H. Wood, Miss Margaret Hutchinson and Miss Elizabeth Nutting, all three of Dayton, Ohio, became interested in productive homes and small community development as a way of reconstruction from the Great Depression. Ralph Borsodi became consultant to the Liberty Homesteads, an experimental project at Dayton in which the three women were involved. While not completely "successful," this project convinced the women that decentralist activities are more efficient and satisfying to participants than highly centralized ones. They continued to study and plan toward a community of which they could become part.

Some friends from the Dayton project joined them in planning, as did a realtor, a landscape architect and legal experts. In 1947, in Dayton, 21 persons became members of the American Homesteading Foundation, and took steps to purchase 100 acres near Melbourne, Fla. Members paid a membership fee, which entitled them to a plot of land (one to two acres) that they could use in accordance with

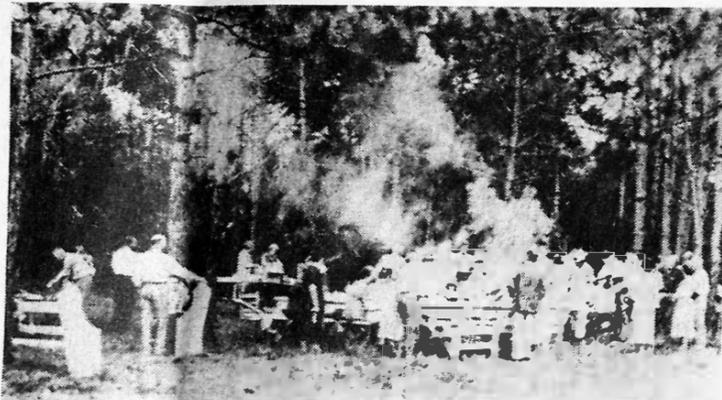
stayed; Elizabeth Nutting (president of the Women's Guild), busy at the finest earthworm and wheatgrass project I have seen, from which she daily takes the restorative wheatgrass drink to four aging friends. Bill and Helen Newcomb, two of the first homesteaders, are now selling real estate instead of milking goats, but brother Ralph is taking prizes in producing flowers and citrus and other fruit.

We much enjoyed visiting the 4-acre homestead of the Van Attas, a new young couple with four teenagers. They have a first-class citrus and peach orchard and a large vegetable garden, tomatoes carefully guarded from January frosts. They built their first home, which now provides rental income; and are now completing a large, lovely ranch homestead, replete with teenage projects and activities. Mrs. Marian Van Atta has written their story, *Homestead on the Missile Range*, and we hope to see it a popular book on the market soon. Mr. Van Atta (as are heads of other, younger families) is employed in nearby space work.

It was a delight to see the Mel Manthy homestead. Ten years ago this site was a series of rock piles and scores of potted plants nestled in this part of the Florida "jungle." Now it is a beautiful brick-stone-glass home, with attractive art and craft touches, and plantings indoors and out. Each home we visited—that of Bill Reece, Charles Haines, and others—was charming, personal and functional. While the homesteads do not look like those in the temperate zone, they are



Melbourne Village Homestead with Surrounding Citrus Grove



Melbourne Villagers Picnicking in Their Large Hammock

## Why We Dance and Why We Don't

By R. L. J. Fahey, Editor  
The Early American  
Oxford, N. Y.

Today's popular fad dances are the subject of much controversy, centering around the erotic movements of the Twist and its variations. What is overlooked is why our culture lacks the richness and variety in popular dancing that other cultures have had.

In less technically advanced cultures, men experienced the gamut of emotions in their struggle for survival. In love and hate, peace and war, birth and death, they were filled with emotions which compelled them to dance.

This is not the case today.

When, for example, does a person have an emotion strong enough to compel him to dance today? When his child is born in the security of a sterilized hospital? When God sends rain after a month of drought? When his son returns from a journey across the United States by jet? When a battle is won in Vietnam?

### Life Not Fully Lived

In each instance the individual is glad, of course, but this short-lived feeling comes nowhere near the brimming emotion of joy. In each case too, the individual is only partially involved. He lives his life up to a point and then lets the specialist, the machine, or an artificial environment take away the verve of complete involvement in life. Spontaneous dancing can't exist in a culture that promotes inanimate security.

### American Dance Background

The Puritan movement initiated in England was unique in its condemnation of all dancing, not even recognizing the "purity" of the ancient Hebrew dances so often mentioned in the Bible. This Puritan view dominated much of our new nation until the pioneer movement began. Spontaneous dancing might have grown out of the pioneer movement had not industrialization curtailed the growth of the rural communities.

As it was, the settlers quite naturally developed a community social dance, the square dance, which expressed the harmony of families (the couples) cooperating together in the community (the square). Square dancing not only represented community life but also made community spirit more intense.

### Effects of Industrialization

Then, toward the end of the last century, community spirit diminished because of the work and interests that industrialization promoted outside the home town. As life became more complex there developed a superflu-

ous diffusion of interests and dancing soon expressed the only strong feeling that remained, that of the mating urge.

Symbolic of the underlying change in society, a couple danced alone, isolated from the other couples on the dance floor. This form of the mating dance (mainly the waltz) still persists today, but the new forms, grown out of the jitterbug, are more prevalent.

### Dancing Today

Just as every popular dance reflects some of the stronger emotions toward individuals and society, today's dances are no exception.

Unlike the waltz, which emphasizes the harmony and oneness of love, the new dance styles emphasize only erotic love—the attitude projected by the entertainment media. The general conditions of boredom and impersonalness in modern life make society receptive to this attitude.

While this display of the erotic remains obvious, there are other trends in society explicitly expressed in the popular dances.

### Individualism in Dancing

A striking feature of the Twist is that it is essentially a dance for the individual rather than for the couple. There seem to be two feelings that this individualism indicates.

The first combines the lost sense of community, which causes a person to feel like an isolated island, and the inward revolt against standardization and conformity. An unnoticed and unloved child expresses this same emotion in his disobedience to his parents in order to get their attention.

The second feeling expressed is the contemporary emphasis on the equality of the sexes. No longer is it possible to distinguish special parts for male and female in these dances. Similarly in society, men have been losing family leadership and have been feminizing their attitudes. And women, while not yet leaders, have gained significant independence.

(It is worth noting that in the prosperous twenties the Charleston and its variations were popular. This was also an individualistic dance and the two trends toward conformity and feminization—Feminist Movement—were intense at the time.)

This analysis of dancing in America is not intended to condemn the modern fads; rather, it is to show the psychological losses suffered for the gains of technical progress. The health and depth of our emotions, as indicated in our dancing, seem to point to the need of living a more basic and natural way of life.

## School of Living Meetings Planned

July 2-4—Homestead Festival and Ohio Regional Meeting, Smart and Loomis Homesteads. Write to Rose Smart, 4998 Twin Creek Road, West Alexandria, Ohio.

July 5-Aug. 5—Intensive study for 8 to 10 qualified persons of Major (End All War) Problems of Living, at Lane's End Homestead. Mildred Loomis, discussion leader. Also training in writing, group process and personal dynamics. Students will maintain themselves in our building. Fee, \$10 a week.

July 16-17—Bay Area School of Living meeting with Pres. Leo Koch, San Francisco, at Friends Center, 2160 Lake St. (at 23rd), Contact Pat Herron, 600 Stanyan, No. 11, San Francisco, for further information.

Aug. 6-7—Los Angeles Area School of Living meeting with Pres. Leo Koch, at Anderson Research Center, 437 N. Kenmore, Los Angeles. For further information contact Paul Marks, Chm., Box N, Los Banos, Calif.

Aug. 24-28—SCHOOL OF LIVING ANNUAL MEETING AND WORKSHOP. Come early, set up camp, and assist in work and renovation projects.

Sept. 10-11—Michigan Area School of Living meeting, near Traverse City, Mich.

## How Can, cont'd

more important to Man's future well-being than is the Space Race.

But what can we prepare without knowing specifically for what we are preparing? First of all, we are assured of needing capital for initial investment, and still more of the same for helping to sustain ourselves, at least over the first few, highly critical years of adaptation. A practicing homesteader would be better qualified than I to estimate how much this should be, but I assume a good \$2,000 for each individual. We also should, ideally, somehow assure ourselves of ACCESS to still more money, over the ensuing years, in the form of salable skills. What constitute such skills, I would frankly be interested to list. Perhaps other readers have suggestions. It is crucial, however, that potential communitarians begin soon to amass such skills, whatever they be.

Secondly, experience in primitive living (i.e., camping) could never be less than invaluable to a homesteading enterprise. I would suggest that, not only could such educational camping activities be carried out individually, but that interested parties could experiment with living and working together even before they acquire land. They might perhaps spend a period of a summer camping together on state or Federally-owned parklands, while they also work out some of the aspects of their proposed community, to be founded, perhaps, the following spring. This would constitute a cheap and simple method of assembling and pre-testing a group, while training and honing them for their future venture.

(to be continued)

## Publications For The Homesteader

Go Ahead and Live!, M. J. Loomis and others, \$4, School of Living, Brookville, Ohio 45309. Herald of Health, Lamoni, Iowa.

Peace of Mind Thru Nature, \$1. Backwoods Journal, Paradox 5, N. Y. \$2 a year, sample 35c.

Hygienic Review, \$4 a year. Herbert Shelton, Editor, Box 1277, San Antonio, Texas.

California Homeowner, quarterly, \$2 a year. 1561 N. Gower, Los Angeles 90028

Dairy Goat Journal, monthly, \$2 a year. Box 836, Columbia 35, Mo.

American Rationalist, \$4:50 a year, liberal religious viewpoint. Box 742, St. Louis, Mo.



Melbourne Villagers in One End of Cooperative Pool

agreed on restrictions and gave them the right to participate in committees, annual meetings, etc., for determining policy, to use the roads, parks (in Florida, called hammocks), the swimming pool and community house, and participate in clubs and activities common to the whole membership. As the years went on, membership grew, more land was bought, participation flourished, problems developed and were solved, and a miniature, intimate kind of community life developed.

### Comparison

I hadn't been in Melbourne Village since 1956. How had it changed in 10 years? To my delight, hardly at all. The wide approach, still simple and lovely, the attractive small bulletin board announcing village activities, were the same as ever. Nice, citrus-shaded homes, no crowding, no billboards or signs, no commercialism. Yes, there were more homes, some 300 (on new land), as against about 100 ten years ago. Yes, a beautiful new residence-like community hall was there, all paid for and much used by the members.

Here were the original homesteaders—Virginia Wood, in whose comfortable house we

all, in my opinion, achievements to enjoy.

### Younger Evaluation

During our two-day School of Living conference, we heard the history, problems and goals of Melbourne Village. Some of the younger conference attendants said, "From what we can see, it's too much like the 'outside.' Isn't it really a part of The Establishment? What we'd prefer is a community where its residents are much more concerned with vital and deep interaction, and arranging their lives freer of the status quo."

These young people were not yet 30 years old. The founders of Melbourne Village are 75 and 80. This community is an accomplishment of a type; a challenge lies with the younger people to show what they can produce and achieve that is better, worthier, more human, by the time they are 75 and 80. Wish we could be around to see it.

Ken Kern, author of The Owner-Built Home has finished writing it (we will print the final portion in October). He is now working on The Owner-Built Homestead, which we plan to print from month to month.