

Jigging: A Summary of Research in Western Manitoba, 1988

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In the fall of 1988, under the auspices of the Canadian Museum of Civilization (now the Canadian Museum of History), I undertook a research project on dancing with fiddle accompaniment, both solo and group, amongst Métis and First Nations people in Western Manitoba. Ultimately, this project yielded 17 videotapes of group and solo dancing, 9 audio cassette interviews, and a 35-page report, plus detailed indices of the video and audio tapes, all housed in the Museum's Centre for Folk Culture Studies. Some videotapes were from an earlier project I undertook in 1985/86 on fiddling in Western Manitoba, including the fiddling, jigging, and square dance competitions at "Back to Batoche", a 10-day festival held in Batoche, Saskatchewan in 1986 in honour of the 100th anniversary of the Saskatchewan Riel Rebellion. There are also videos from the Festival du Voyageur in Winnipeg and the Trapper's Festival in The Pas, both held in February of 1988, and one of three Ebb and Flow musicians with jiggers Freddy Flett (from Ebb and Flow, Manitoba) and Tim Coté (from the Coté Reserve, Saskatchewan) at the Mariposa Folk Festival in Barrie, Ontario, in 1988.

The report, titled "Métis Dancing in Southwestern Manitoba", is divided into two sections: Part I – Group Dancing and Part II –Jigging. It includes interviews and information from the communities of Ebb and Flow, Kinostota, Sandy Bay, Crane River, Rolling River, and Winnipeg (where many dancers had moved), as well as observations on dancing in McCreary (a non-Aboriginal community in the area), all in Manitoba. In addition, dancers from the Coté Reserve in Saskatchewan appeared at an event in Dauphin and at the Mariposa Festival. This article will summarize Part II, the "Jigging" portion of that report, which focused on the "southern" practice of the Red River Jig (see below). I describe the basic step, followed by sections on Style and Dress and more detailed notes on individual communities, all as seen in 1988. I was asked by the Museum to pay particular attention to costuming for public performance for an upcoming exhibit on folk dancing throughout Canada that they were planning. I have written a new Introduction and Conclusion as of this writing (2016).

Introduction

"Jigging" is the term used for a certain kind of step-dancing common to prairie Aboriginal communities. The word "jigging" seems to be taken from the French word for step-dancing, "giguer". (I will be

using the term "Aboriginal" to include both Métis and First Nations, whose communities and culture are inseparably interwoven in southern Manitoba.) Jigging includes both solo performance (though sometimes with several people on the floor at once), as in the Red River Jig, and stepping during group dances, which typically happens on the second change and breakdown portions of the three-part Quadrille set (square dances) common to the Canadian Prairies.¹ In my observations, jigging in these group dances is, most commonly, some version of the Basic Step described below, though steps and styles vary from community to community, from family to family, and from individual to individual.

In 1988, there seemed to be two major stylistic areas of jigging overall in western Manitoba, which roughly corresponded to "northern" and "southern", with the boundary between them somewhere between Swan River and The Pas.

1. THE NORTHERN AREA – characterized by the wearing of moccasins, mukluks, sneakers, or just done in stocking feet, not hard shoes. Dancers tended to be in a more bent-over posture, similar to that used by traditional First Nations Powwow dancers. Here, jigging was a more free-form activity done to any fast reel. Knowing a lot of steps did not seem particularly important, and many jiggers did only one or two. The speed and energy of the dancing seemed to be of most value.

2. THE SOUTHERN AREA – marked by the frequent use of hard-soled shoes (although too much sound from the shoes is often frowned upon), erect posture, and little motion of the upper body, including the arms. Solo jigging in this area was almost invariably done to one tune, the "Red River Jig", which has a particular form of two parts with a corresponding change in steps. A "basic" step is done to the high section (A part) of the tune and a number of "fancy" steps done to the low section (B part). Both the basic step and the fancy steps varied from person to person. Unlike the "northern" areas, in social situations in the "southern" style, such as community dances and house parties, knowing a lot of "fancy" steps was highly valued, as was having the stamina to do many steps in a row, according to my informants. Freddy Flett says, "I used to be able to do 40-45 steps without stopping." However, most competitions seem to have been set for some time prior to 1988 at three rounds (three times through the tune, three fancy steps on the B parts).

The rest of this report concentrates on jigging in the southern area, especially Ebb and Flow, and to a

lesser extent Crane River and Sandy Bay.² Although we have no real proof, jigging appears to have come to the West with fur traders in the 18th and 19th centuries largely from Quebec, where, like Aboriginal communities in the West, it was also done during group dances and as a solo performance. One of the tunes used for solo performance in Quebec, usually called “La Grande Gigue Simple”, is also clearly the ancestor of the western tune, the “Red River Jig”.³ No direct ancestor of “La Grande Gigue Simple” (and, by extension, the “Red River Jig”) has been found in the British Isles to date, but tunes in the same time signature (6/4, similar to a reel, but with 3-beat phrases), often called “triple hornpipes, were especially associated with step-dancing throughout the British Isles in an earlier period.”⁴ My sense is that since the associations between that tune and solo step-dancing have also always been strong in both Quebec and the Northwest, such an ancestor for “La Grande Gigue Simple” probably does exist, as a tune that was similarly used for step-dancing somewhere in the British Isles. It seems quite possible to me that it might not have even been a widely known tune in “the old country”. Instead, it was possibly a regional tune that happened to arrive with one dynamic performer and spread quickly.⁵

By 1988, the North American picture on the Canadian prairies was further complicated by the following:

- Direct influence from Scotland, the Shetland and Orkney Islands, where step dance traditions to fiddling are well documented (Flett 1996), through the many men working in the fur trade from these areas, many of whom came into Manitoba via Hudson’s Bay;
- Traditional First Nations dancing, which also involves stepping patterns to a fast beat; and
- US traditions of clogging, which similarly evolved out of different combinations of British Isles influences, and were then imported into Canada. By 1988, southern “clogging” groups had been established for some time in Winnipeg, and young dancers were often learning both styles.

Basic Step (also called Free Step, Pre-step, or Travelling Step)

Done to the A (high) part of the “Red River Jig” tune, in Manitoba, dancers do not move around the floor during this step (as is the practice in Saskatchewan, for example – hence the term “travelling step”). Considered a difficult step to do, in its most common form it is as follows:

- kick to the front with one foot (sometimes called a shake) followed by step, step, step (alternating weight), then reverse (i.e., do it on the other side). The kick usually happens on the downbeat of the music, and it is common for both feet to hit the floor more or less together on one or more of the steps. There also may be toe or heel taps between the three steps (similar to a *doublé* in Quebec). However, in practice, the kick may happen on any sixteenth note increment of the tune (with the basic beat at approximately 108-120 bpm, thought of as a quarter note). Thus, the step usually takes two beats on each side, but some dancers do it in one-and-a-half (combining the kick with one of the steps). Since the tune is asymmetric (some phrases are three beats long, some two), no matter which version of the step is done, it constantly shifts in relation to the phrasing of the tune. (For video examples of the basic step and some of the more common fancy steps, see the list of Further Resources at the end of the article.)

Style

The older dancers interviewed for this project, Freddy Flett of Ebb and Flow and Joe Breland of Crane River, and their protégées, Brenda Lapointe and, in turn, Kim Chartrand, all emphasized the importance of body posture and movement. This includes keeping the arms straight and motionless, shoulders back, not looking at the feet, not making too much sound and not lifting the feet too high. “A jigger don’t move his arms,” says Breland. Brenda specifically mentions “staying in one spot”, reinforced by Joe’s comment that a jigger “should not take up too much space” and should “keep their feet close to the floor”. The youngest interviewee, Kim Chartrand (age 11), mentioned the importance of good timing and following the fiddler.

The question of sound is an interesting one. Joe said that the footwear is irrelevant: solid shoes, mocasin rubbers, stockings, “it don’t make no difference”. Brenda felt that hard-soled shoes were okay, but not taps. There seems to be an emphasis on moving softly, trying not to make loud, hard percussive sounds; many jiggers make virtually no sound at all. This attitude in Ebb and Flow and Crane River is further underlined by Freddy, Brenda, and Kim’s references to the “step-dancing” in nearby Sandy Bay, where they “hit the floor hard” (Brenda Lapointe). Freddy acknowledged that they “make a really good sound”, but he felt that they didn’t “shuffle” as well as in Ebb and Flow. Joe commented that the Sandy Bay style was “more like step-dancing” – different from true jigging – and there was a distinct

sense that they all somewhat disapproved of it. My sense is that they associate “step-dancing” with non-Aboriginal culture, whereas jigging is a distinct art form unique to Métis and First Nations communities and should be preserved as such.

All of these statements, taken together, strongly suggest that in many communities in this area, jigging is a subtle visual and internal art form, that it is the timing and perfection of small, light, and rapid movements, the look and the feel of the movements, that are important. The message seems to be: don’t make too much noise, don’t take up too much space, keep your movements small and close to the floor, and keep your limbs close to your body. Although the dancers don’t put this into words, my sense is that it is an expression of pride, dignity, and elegance.

Dress

Freddy Flett spoke of the importance of being dressed well for jigging, and adopted an outfit of white shirt, black tie, and pants, white socks and black shoes because “it all matches”. He especially tried to convince younger jiggers of the importance of white socks with black shoes to show off the footwork. Brenda felt that even women should wear pants for jigging, focusing attention on the feet, not the legs.

The question of footwear is inherently tied to ideas of sound, of course, but also of presentation. Overall, the most popular footwear for group performance in my 1988 study was black, low-heeled shoes, but some dancers (Kim Chartrand and the Lakefront Ensemble from Crane River, for example) wore elaborately beaded mukluks or moccasins in performance and competition. At least one group, the Ebb and Flow Jiggers (a group of four Grade 1 girls), wore a combination of both black shoes and moccasins. At the Festival du Voyageur jigging competition, which is a celebration of both Franco-Manitoban and Métis heritage, to which dancers may come from throughout the prairies, footwear included hard-soled shoes, sneakers, moccasins, and mukluks, giving support to Joe Breland’s statement “it don’t make no difference”.

The latter ties in to another important theme in dress, both for group and solo performance – that of First Nations heritage as expressed in jewelry, fringed vests, beadwork, footwear, etc. Some wear First Nations colours for the four directions, for example, the Levasseur family of Ebb and Flow, who had either white shirts (with sparkles) or yellow shirts, paired with red, black, or blue pants. Moose and deer hide in the form of fringed vests, jackets, pants, and skirts was common for those who identified as either First Nations or Métis, while the latter

would often add *ceintures*. Ceintures are woven sashes, considered by many in the West to be a symbol of Métis heritage and identity. However, they are also associated with Francophone heritage in other parts of the country, where they are often less a badge of identity than a symbol of goodwill towards Francophone culture worn by Francophones and non-Francophones alike.

Notes on Individual Communities

Winnipeg

In 1988, jigging took place regularly at two annual events, Le Festival du Voyageur (held in mid-February as a celebration of Franco-Manitoban and Métis culture), and both the French-Canadian and Métis pavilions of Folklorama (a multicultural festival held in August). At both festivals, jiggers were hired to give stage performances, while Le Festival du Voyageur also featured a large competition. In the fall of 1988, there was also a weekly competition on Wednesdays for adults at the Patricia Hotel on Main Street, hosted by Len Fairchuk of *The Western Hour*, a local television program largely devoted to First Nations and Métis performers.

The competition at Le Festival du Voyageur was revealing in that, although those with French surnames were in the majority (as they are in Francophone, Métis, and First Nations communities throughout Manitoba), there were also jiggers with Ukrainian and English names. I was not able to follow up with these dancers about their family history, but my guess is that in a public urban environment such as the festival, many of the young jiggers may be fairly far removed from traditional practice, and have learned only by watching others in similar competitions. This method of transmission, in my observation, reinforced a smaller repertoire of fairly simple, common steps. I also noted that the Winnipeg dancers, in general, did not brush the floor as much as dancers from Reserve communities. They often seemed to be more inspired by Quebec step-dancing than by jigging traditions as seen in Ebb and Flow and Crane River, which may reflect their more Francophone and urban culture than Aboriginal heritage in many cases.

Ebb and Flow

Ebb and Flow dancers favour “shuffling”, i.e., brushing the feet on the floor or very close to it. Freddy Flett feels that jigging should involve as little movement above the ankles as possible and that the feet should “stay on the ground”. Mr. Flett was particularly associated with what he calls the “double shuf-

fle”, involving two or three rapid forward kicks, either touching the floor or no more than a few inches up. He says there were 10 or 15 good jiggers when he was growing up, including Fred Levasseur’s father, Rod, from whom he learned several steps. (Rod Levasseur passed away some years before 1988.) Mr. Flett spoke of having learned by watching older jiggers at house parties in many communities – Dog Creek, Skownan, Crane River, Camperville, and Swan River. According to Mr. Flett, the house parties virtually stopped at Ebb and Flow after the roads came in, since people could now go out to bars, which Mr. Flett felt was eroding the practice of jigg-ing.

Mr. Flett is one of several Ebb and Flow jiggers who had moved to Winnipeg, including Freddy and Norbert Flett, Freddy’s sons Eric and Harold, Del Garneau, and “Teddy Boy” Houle. This has led to much more exchange between Winnipeg and Ebb and Flow in some respects. However, others like the Levasseur family have remained quite private. In fact, they rarely danced in public until just before the time of this report. They are one of the oldest families in Ebb and Flow and have maintained a strong family tradition involving double shuffles to both back and front. They have their own names for some steps, such as the “Leg-breaker”, the “Rock and Roll Step” (what others call the Scissors), “Half-back”, “Full-back”, “Full Shake” (a double kick on both sides), “Single Shake”, and “Double Shake”, all referring to various combinations of back and front shuffles.

Sandy Bay

Sandy Bay is about 60 km south of Ebb and Flow along the shores of Lake Manitoba, and there are many family connections between the two communities. Sandy Bay had become known in the few years preceding the 1988 research project for producing a number of good young jiggers whose style was considered strong and flashy by dancers in Winnipeg, Ebb and Flow, and other communities. Some are being taught by older members of the community, such as Mike Fish (who also taught two square dance groups), while others are learning by watching and figuring things out on their own. Melinda McIvor, age 16, was considered the premier step dancer at the time. In conversation with me she spoke of learning by watching Ottawa Valley dancers on TV. Unfortunately, I was not able to videotape any dancing in Sandy Bay, but observed four young dancers one evening largely doing common steps, often in combinations I had not previously seen. Unlike other communities, Sandy Bay dancers emphasize the sound of their feet with hard-soled shoes and larger, faster movements, hitting the floor harder. While admired

for their strength, speed, and timing, dancers from other communities sometimes made a distinction between the “step-dancing” style of Sandy Bay and true jigg-ing.

Crane River

The Lakefront Dance Ensemble in Crane River was a group of seven girls, aged 8 to 13, taught by Flora and Rosie Morrissette. They had a jigg-ing routine that consisted of seven steps that they have sometimes given their own names to, as follows: “Travel Step” (the Basic, but they move forwards on to the stage area, then off when the routine is finished, Saskatchewan style), “Forward Slide”, “Left and Right”, “Backwards” (also known as a Back Shuffle), “Touch Your Heels” (also done by the Grade I Ebb and Flow Class, though I have not seen it in competition), “Criss-cross” (Scissors) and “Heel and Toe” (Front Heel Step) (see Further Resources at the end for video links). The girls wear costumes of white deerskin with long beaded fringes and trim, as well as white beaded moccasins, white chokers, and nylon stockings. The costumes were designed by leader Flora Morrissette, cut by Joanne Mackenzie, the Home Economics teacher, and then laced together by the girls’ mothers.

Saskatchewan

There are some differences between the Manitoba and Saskatchewan styles of jigg-ing as seen at Batoche in 1985 and from the Côté dancers. As noted in the description of the Basic Step, above, Saskatchewan dancers tend to circle on the A part of the tune whereas Manitoba jiggers tend to stay in one spot (even drawing squares on the floor for competition, as at Le Festival du Voyageur). There also seems to be more contrast between male and female jiggers in Saskatchewan, with men doing larger movements, lifting their feet higher off the floor, which some deemed inappropriate for women, according to casual conversations I had with dancers. While they do the same common steps as seen in Manitoba, there are a number of others on the tapes from Batoche and Côté as well.

Conclusion

Like group dancing in First Nations and Métis tradition, by the time of this project, Red River Jigg-ing seems to have become more institutionalized, with contests and stage performances tending to replace house parties and social dances.⁶ The style was also changing, as younger dancers, particularly in urban areas, were learning other styles, especially step-

dancing from Ontario and American clogging. Even learning in local schools from younger teachers tended to weaken some of the traits that older members of the community believed to be important, such as keeping your feet close to the floor, brushing the floor, and focusing more on subtle movements, less on sound. The older traditions seemed to be strongest in communities that remained isolated for some time into the 20th century, like Ebb and Flow and Crane River, but since the number of dancers in each community is often small, a single individual can have a major effect on what is then considered the style of the whole community, as in Sandy Bay.

While dancing without sound is not unique to the Aboriginal jigging tradition (both Scottish and Irish dancing have soft-shoe versions), the value placed on quietness and brushing the floor, even in modern-day competition and performance, may point to some Aboriginal influence, although further comparative work would have to be done to establish that definitively. I believe that a comparison with Cape Breton tradition (where older Scottish styles that may be similar to the style coming directly into Manitoba in the 19th century have been preserved) could also prove very fruitful, as would a comparison of jigging with Québécois practice and with US clogging styles. I think that, like the fiddling and many other aspects of the culture of these communities, all four influences are there: French-Canadian, Scottish, American, and Aboriginal, and that tracing these connections in further detail would give us more insight into the cultural evolution of Canada as a whole, and prairie Aboriginal culture in particular.

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Further Resources

Video Links/Web Resources

Searching the term “Red River Jig” will usually bring up whatever’s current.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RBjS4IODjQo>

<http://www.ashamstompers.com>

Both of the Asham Stompers, a Manitoba performance group whose basic step might be considered a bit flashy by some, but whose fancy steps are very much the old style described in Ebb and Flow.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxNZwULZ85s>

A wedding event where the jigging is informal and spontaneous, possibly from Skownan, which is also in the area of this report, a bit further up the lake from Crane River.

<http://www.metismuseum.ca/resource.php/00724>

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APPENDIX: VIDEO AND AUDIO RECORDINGS

VIDEO

1a. Brenda Lapointe, at her home, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 18 October 1988.

Brenda demonstrates many steps and attempts to teach me.

b. Levasseur Family, Ebb and Flow School, Ebb and Flow, Manitoba, 23 October 1988.

Fred Levasseur plays fiddle while two of his daughters and his wife dance. Fred talks about his grandfather, William Racette, a fiddler who died in 1940 at the age of 100 or so, and his father, Rod, from whom he learned many steps (also mentioned by Freddy Flett as an influence). Although some of their steps are widely known, the Levasseurs also seem to have several steps which are unique to their family. Daughter Susan attempts to teach me a few simple ones.

2a. Lakefront Dance Ensemble, Lakefront School, Crane River, Manitoba, 27 October 1988.

Seven girls, aged 8 to 13, under the leadership of Flora and Rosie Morrisseau, also of Crane River. The girls use a recording of Reg Bouvette playing “Red River Jig” to do several common steps.

NOTE: Joe and Mabel Breland of Crane River feel that the girls in the group generally lift their legs too high and use their arms too much for traditional jigg-ing.

b. Dance, Kinosota Hall, Kinosota Manitoba, 27 October 1988.

This dance came about as a result of my interview with Jimmy and Pat Anderson a few days earlier, who offered to gather enough couples for a square and demonstrate several old dances for me. Eldon Campbell played. The Red River Jig was not done, but everyone jigged on the second and third parts of the Quadrille set.

3-5. Rolling River Reserve Hallowe’en Dance, Erickson Legion Hall, Erickson, Manitoba, 29 October 1988.

A Hallowe’en dance complete with costume judging, a lunch box competition, silent auction and candy tosses. “Teddy Boy” Houle played fiddle, backed up by local musicians, and two performance groups of young dancers came from the Côté Reserve, near Kamsack, Saskatchewan. They did demonstrations of Quadrille sets and four young dancers did a jigg-ing display.

5b. Copy of “Western Hour”, a local weekly television show produced by Len Fairchuk of Winnipeg,

shown at 2:00 p.m. Saturdays on public television for several years prior to 1988. The show was often filmed in Aboriginal communities throughout the province, featuring local musicians and dancers. This episode was recorded by James and Christianne Thurgood, teachers at Ebb and Flow, from whom I obtained a copy. Since the original tapes were all reused, all subsequent attempts to get copies of other shows proved fruitless. This one features the Peguis Square Dance Jamboree of 1988, showing two performance ensembles, the Split Lake Dancers (from Split Lake Reserve in northern Manitoba on the Nelson River), and the Peguis Blue Lightning (from Peguis Reserve in south-central Manitoba), both doing square dances including basic jigg-ing steps.

5c. Les danseurs de la Rivière Rouge, Winnipeg, Manitoba (no date), performing The Broom Dance. This recording was copied from a home tape made by Philip Zastre’s daughter in Ste. Rose du Lac. It is an excerpt from a television special on the Winnipeg performance group under the direction of Jean-Paul Cloutier and Alice Bérubé. The Broom Dance was originally learned from residents of Ste. Rose du Lac, according to co-director Alice Bérubé, but has been choreographed for the stage and should not be taken as a completely accurate representation of how it might have been done in the community.

5d. Dauphin Square Dance Jamboree, Dauphin, Manitoba, June 1987, recorded by the local technical school with no identifying information on the four groups performing square dances. (I was able to identify the Côté Dancers of Saskatchewan from their costumes.) The groups are doing basic jigg-ing for squares.

6. McCreary Old Time Dancers, McCreary, Manitoba, 2 November 1988.

Square dances, including “stepping” on second change and breakdown. (They do not use the term “jigg-ing” in McCreary.) McCreary is a largely non-Aboriginal community. Instrumentation was accordion, guitar, and fiddle, and tunes include Ukrainian polkas as well as Old Time jigs, two-steps, and reels. Unlike Aboriginal communities, the caller was outside the set.

7. Ebb and Flow Jiggers, Grade I class, Ebb and Flow School, Ebb and Flow, Manitoba, 4 November 1988.

Taught by their teacher, Carolyn Davis, the girls perform Red River Jig solo and as a group to the Reg Bouvette recording of the tune.

8. Fiddle/Jigging Contests – Back to Batoche Festival, Batoche, Saskatchewan, 27 July 1985.

These recordings were made as part of an earlier research project I undertook for the Canadian Museum of Civilization on Fiddling in Western Manitoba. Fiddlers and dancers came from throughout the country to participate in the Festival, held on the 100th anniversary of the Saskatchewan Riel Rebellion, so it was a unique and rare opportunity to see and hear Aboriginal dancers and musicians from many parts of Canada. Unfortunately, I was unable to verify personal information on all of the contestants while I was videotaping, and their home communities were not recorded on entry forms. Jigging was divided into “Senior Men’s”, “Senior Women’s”, “Girls”, and “Boys” classes. Competition followed the standard “southern” practice of three turns through the tune. Prizes were cash, with Senior Men’s being the highest (\$250 for second, \$150 for third, first prize not recorded).

9-10. Square Dance Competition, Back to Batoche Festival, Batoche, Saskatchewan 27 July 1985.

11-12. Dauphin Friendship Centre Dance, Native Cultural Days, Dauphin, Manitoba, 19 September 1986.

Two Quadrille sets, performed by the Coté Junior Cloggers and the Tinyville Dancers, both from the Coté, Reserve, Saskatchewan, to the playing of Teddy Boy Houle (fiddle), Jim Flett (guitar), both from Ebb and Flow, and an unknown bass player.

Red River Jigging, performed by Freddy Flett and Brenda Lapointe and Freddy’s son, Eric Flett.

13. Jigging Contest, Festival du Voyageur, St. Boniface (Winnipeg), Manitoba, 13 February 1988.

Three Classes of jigging: Junior A (13-18), Junior B (12 and under), and Open. Fiddler Marcel Meilleur. Xeroxes of the entry forms accompany the original report, giving names and addresses of competitors.

14-15. Trapper’s Festival, M.B.C.I. Auditorium, The Pas, Manitoba, 19 February 1988.

Jigging, Goose-Calling, and Moose-Calling competitions. “Big John MacNeill” and “Red River Jig” are the favourite tunes, but, in contrast to the south, any fast reel will do. Dancers change steps at will, and dance in a more bent-over posture, often looking at their feet. These observations apply to all four jigging events at the Trapper’s Festival.

14b. Jigging Competition, Friendship Centre, The Pas, Manitoba, 20 February 1988.

This was a crowded event where I could not keep the camera on the dancers’ feet all the time. All the participants were children whose names are given on the tape at the end (not always audibly). A tape of “Red River Jig” was used for music.

14c. Jigging Competition, Uptown Mall, The Pas, Manitoba, 20 February 1988.

A tape of “Old Joe Clark” was used for music. It was not possible to get info on the participants as the event was fairly spontaneous.

16-17. “Teddy Boy” Houle, Laurence and Danny Flett (from Ebb and Flow), **Tim Coté** (from the Coté Reserve, Saskatchewan) at the Mariposa Folk Festival, Barrie, Ontario, 24-26 June 1988.

Concert, Jigging Demonstrations, and Jigging Workshops.

AUDIO

1. Kim Chartrand (age 11), jigger, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

2. Edith Houle (age 76) from Sandy Bay, Manitoba, but living in Winnipeg.

3. Brenda Lapointe (age 20), Winnipeg, Manitoba.

4. Jimmy Anderson (age 63) fiddler/dance caller, with his wife Pat, Kinosota, Manitoba.

5. Philip Zastre (age 72), fiddler from Ste. Rose du Lac, Manitoba.

6. Edith and Jim Murray (Jim age 87), dancers from Magnet, Manitoba (non-Aboriginal community).

7. Joe and Mable Breland (Joe age 59), Crane River, Manitoba.

8. Eldon Campbell (age 43), fiddler, Kinosota, Manitoba.

9. Freddy Flett (age 64), from Ebb and Flow but living in Winnipeg. Interviewed by Will Henry of the Dauphin Herald.

Notes

¹ More information on specific figures can be found on the website of the Canadian Old Time Square Dance Callers Association (<http://sca.uwaterloo.ca/cotsdca>). The three-part set of square dances or “changes” is common to many parts of Canada, with each “change” having a typical set of moves. However, to my knowledge, no extensive comparative research has been done in rural Canada to establish the extent of certain sequences of moves or of the three-change set in general, nor is it easy to establish a history of when this became standard in any given area. The first change is often done to 6/8 tunes, and does not lend itself so easily to jigging (although it does happen). The second change and

breakdown are the two parts of the set typically done to two-steps and reels on the fiddle, fitting the timing of basic jigging steps.

² All three communities, Ebb and Flow (population ~ 3000), Crane River (population ~ 200), and Sandy Bay (population ~ 6000) are Ojibwe Reserves along the western shores of Lake Manitoba.

³ See Roy W. Gibbons (1980). Also see *Drops of Brandy*, Track 1, Gabriel Dumont Institute (2002), on which a CBC announcer tells us that his guest, Frederick Genthon (who then plays the “Red River Jig”), “learned this tune from his father, who, in turn, learned it about the year 1842 from a man named Latourelle, newly arrived in Red River from Quebec. Mr. Genthon’s father said that this was the first time, to his knowledge, that the jig was heard in Red River and he had been informed by Mr. Latourelle that it was known in Quebec as ‘La gigue du Bas-Canada’ ”. Note that it is not a “jig” in the common English usage of the word, usually referring to a tune in 6/8 compound metre. Like the term “jigging”, the English name “Red River Jig” is taken directly from “La gigue de la Rivière Rouge”, as it became known in French in Manitoba, which would, more literally, translate as the “Red River Step Dance”. However, since

jigging is somewhat stylistically different than step-dancing in any other part of the country, it is fortunate that we have a different term for it.

⁴ See Peter Stewart: “What makes this hornpipe distinctive is the reference to solo stepping, a feature which the dance has retained into the present, having at some point abandoned all the other figures” (2007:5).

⁵ Even in the mid-20th century, this phenomenon was clearly in evidence with certain fiddle tunes. “Whisky Before Breakfast” is a good example. While there is no single influential recording or written source that spread the tune, within a few short years it went from complete obscurity to being one of the best-known fiddle tunes on the continent, seemingly spread largely through oral tradition.

⁶ Note Freddy Flett’s comment in this regard in the section on Ebb and Flow. Also, country bands have somewhat replaced the lone fiddler as social entertainment in many communities. In fact, the most common place to see traditional dances and jigging was at AA-sponsored events, which tended to attract the older members of the community.



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