

SWINGIN' SINGLES

Square Dance Club History

Revised: by Gloria Cain, Club Historian
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The SWINGIN' SINGLES Square Dance Club will celebrate their 45th Anniversary in May 2011.

In the early 1960's, there were no square dance clubs for single adults in the Kansas City area. Single square dance clubs like Guys and Dolls and the Wagon Wheels that were popular in the 1950's had dissolved. In 1963 Renee Potter returned to the Kansas City area. She had been square dancing with the Denver Fiddlesteppers in Colorado and was missing the opportunity to continue square dancing. In the fall of 1963, Renee and a friend Sandy Leach made their first attempt to form a new square dance club. Sandy arranged for a hall (Fellowship Hall at Community Christian Church) at 46th & Main in Kansas City, Missouri. Fred Payton agreed to be the square dance caller for the new group. Renee contacted several church groups for single adults, the YMCA, the YWCA, the Y-Singles, friends, co-workers, and anyone else who might be interested in learning to square dance. Their first two attempts at starting a club in 1963 and 1964 failed. In 1965 Renee and Sandy learned that Parents Without Partners was also sponsoring square dance lessons. That group was contacted and the two groups agreed to dance together at Antioch Park in Overland Park, Kansas during the summer of 1965. That group became the ONE-BY-ONES square dance club; Jerry Penson was the caller. The ONE-BY-ONES became one of the largest square dance clubs in the Kansas City area and continued to dance until the club dissolved in 1995.

Renee and Sandy were joined by Charles Hulse for a third attempt to form a new singles club in the fall of 1965. The group was still meeting at the Community Christian Church where Charles taught a Sunday School class for college-age members; it was their participation that enabled the small group to continue. The official square dance class graduated on May 13, 1966. The Heart of America Federation of Square and Round Dance Clubs officially recognized the new club which was named the SWINGIN' SINGLES Square Dance Club. Fred Payton continued to be the caller.

The SWINGIN' SINGLES continued to outgrow their dance halls. When they outgrew their hall at Community Christian Church they moved to the YMCA building at 64th and Wornall in Kansas City, Missouri. From that hall they moved to the American Legion Hall at 43rd and Pearl in Kansas City, Kansas. In July 1975, the SWINGIN' SINGLES moved to the Soroptomist Club at 6219 Martway in Mission, Kansas. This hall became their home for 28 years. In May 2003 the Soroptomist building changed owners and the SWINGIN' SINGLES were forced to leave Mission, Kansas. The club moved to Tomahawk Ridge Community Center in south Overland Park, Kansas. This facility proved to be far less popular than our previous location. In July 2005, we were able to secure the Town Hall in Old Shawnee Town in Shawnee, Kansas. The new hall (with wooden floors, high ceilings, and big windows) perfectly fits our needs, and we hope to make it our permanent home.

In the fall of 1968, our square dance caller Fred Payton resigned from the club due to illness. He was succeeded by Roxe Zimmerman. At Roxe's suggestion, Della Wiseman joined the SWINGIN' SINGLES as a co-caller. When Roxe decided to retire, Della continued as our caller until her untimely death in 1984. Jay Krebs was hired as our club caller in February 1985. Jay remains our caller today; he celebrated his 25th anniversary with our club in 2010. Sandy Leach married and dropped out of square dancing, as did Charles Hulse. Roxe Zimmerman, although no longer our caller, remained a loyal member serving on the board in various capacities until his marriage to a fellow member, Alice Kietzman on June 26, 1982. Renee Potter Worthington passed away on December 24th 2000.

In 1982, the SWINGIN' SINGLES added round dancing to the club's agenda. Ken and Toni Sulzen became our round dance cuers in February 1982 and remained until June 1988. Don and Geniel Whiteman were hired and stayed until their retirement in May of 1993. Larry Wacker served as our cuer from November 1993 until he resigned in June 1999. On June 8, 1999,

Charlie Simmons and his wife Nadine joined us as our cuer. Charlie remained our cuer until he was forced to resign due to ill health in 2002. Charlie Simmons passed away in September 2002. He was replaced by Lalla Steenbock and her husband, Curly, from Topeka, Kansas. Lalla cued for us until 2005. For four years we did not have a cuer. In October 2009, Pam Young and her husband, Tom, from Topeka, Kansas joined us as our round dance cuer.

In the 2010-2011 dance year, the SWINGIN' SINGLES SQUARE DANCE CLUB remains one of the largest, friendliest and most active clubs in the greater Kansas City area. The club continues to attract over 100 dancers at our dances on the 1st, 3rd, and 5th Tuesdays of the month at the Town Hall in Old Shawnee Town. Over time our membership has changed from an all adult singles square dance club to a club made up of single adults, married couples and youth. We have changed our by-laws to allow us to grow with the changing times. We welcome all square and round dancers, and at this time we have over 147 members.

In the 2009-2010 dance year we received the Gold Award and the Open Door Certificate from the Heart of America Federation for our Vigorous Visitor Visits that we made to other clubs. The SWINGIN' SINGLES had the highest number of visits among all of the HOA clubs, with 42 vigorous visitor visits and 14 open door visits, for a total of 56 visits. Our Federation Delegate, Dale Stark, or Alternate Delegate, T. J. Rowe, attends the monthly Heart of America Federation meetings in Grandview, Missouri. Our club supports and attends the annual Spring HOA Federation Dance in March at the Hall-McCarter School in Blue Springs, Missouri.

SWINGIN' SINGLES are members of the Northeast District of the Kansas State Association of Square and Round Dancers (KSDA). Our NEKSDA Delegate is James Bernhard. Lois Edmiston is the NEKSDA Club Coordinator. The NEKSDA meetings are held at Croco Hall in Topeka, Kansas. We visit clubs in the Northeast Kansas District. We attend the Kansas State Dance, which is held annually the first weekend in June in Salina, Kansas and the NE District dances.

SWINGIN' SINGLES are members of the Northwest District of the Missouri State Federation of Square and Round Dancers. In the 2009-2010 dance year we received the Let's Toot Our Horn Award for the first time in the history of our club. Our NW District Delegate, Lois Edmiston, attends the district meetings, which are held in North Kansas City, Missouri quarterly. Missouri has seven square dance districts that take turns hosting the annual Missouri State Dance. Our club in October 2009 helped the NW Missouri District host the 50th Missouri State Dance in Peculiar, Missouri, and we hosted the Missouri Federation State Board meeting following the dance. The 2011 Missouri State Dance will be held in Poplar Bluff, Missouri.

SWINGIN' SINGLES club members belong to Singles Square Dancers USA (SSDUSA) a national organization of square dance clubs for solo dancers and couples. SSDUSA hosts a National Singles Dance Convention called Dance-A-Rama annually on Labor Day weekend at various locations throughout the United States. The 2011 dance will be in Indianapolis, Indiana.

SWINGIN' SINGLES club members belong to the Heart of America Single Square Dance Association (HASSDA), which includes the states of Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Arkansas. These states take turns hosting an annual spring HASSDA Festival weekend dance in April. In April 2000, the SWINGIN' SINGLES successfully hosted the 20th annual HASSDA Festival in North Kansas City, Missouri. In April 2009 our club hosted the 29th annual HASSDA Festival in Excelsior Springs, Missouri. The 2011 spring festival will be in Lebanon, Missouri. Several of our club members are active in HASSDA; Christine Batz is the HASSDA Vice President/2011 Festival Advisor, Lee Williams is the HASSDA Historian, and Louise Coleman is the HASSDA Area Coordinator for the state of Missouri.

SWINGIN' SINGLES has members who attend the NATIONAL SQUARE DANCE CONVENTION held annually in different locations of the United States. The 2009 National Convention, held in Los Angeles, California, had 7,722 dancers in attendance. The 2010 National Convention, attended by 6,295 dancers, was held in Louisville, Kentucky. The 60th National Square Dance Convention will be held in Detroit, Michigan in 2011. Other upcoming

conventions are as follows: 2012 - Spokane, Washington; 2013 - Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; and 2014 – Little Rock, Arkansas.

SWINGIN' SINGLES attends area Callers Festivals in the Greater Kansas City area, benefit dances, and various special dances with national callers. The SWINGIN' SINGLES SQUARE DANCE CLUB was featured in the Summer issue of the 2010 Shawnee Magazine. The article, which was a great promotion for square dancing, included many pictures from our club and comments from club members. We give annual lessons and conduct demonstrations at schools, retirement centers, community festivals, and county fairs to promote square dancing. Our active involvement at the local, state, and national level helps to keep our club healthy and we continue to grow.