



Calendars and Observations from 1962- 1972

The following observations are drawn from the wall size full year calendars.

By 1962-63 both Mankato and Willmar clubs had developed multiple levels and needed separate nights for each. Mankato had separate nights for regular dancing, beginners and round dance instruction taking the normal space of three clubs. Over the course of five years Willmar had developed into four groups: regular dancing, beginners, ballroom and round dancing.

The beginner programs had started earlier, at least as far back as 1958. The photo below is from December 17, 1958 and shows the thirty-three couples that graduated that night. The class was held at the Lincoln school in Willmar. The caption from the West Central Daily in Willmar read:

Square Dancers Hold Graduation Night In Willmar

“Graduation Night” was observed by the beginners’ class of square dancers, sponsored for the past ten weeks by the city recreation department. Pictured are the “graduates” at the lunch hour after graduation ceremonies held at the Lincoln school gym.

Diplomas were given to the 33 couples from Willmar and surrounding area. In charge of the ceremonies was Jack Roach (standing at left), physical education instructor from Glencoe.

During the social hour, the square dancers also participated in a community sing. The class now will meet on Wednesday evenings, beginning January 7, for a period of ten weeks. Anyone with previous square dance experience is invited to join in the fun at the Lincoln school gym.”



Hutchinson also had a beginners program in place in 1962 in addition to their regular dance night.

Dancing started in Glencoe in 1949 but had been absent since 1953. In 1966 a weekly square dance workshop was initiated in Glencoe and by 1967 there began a full blown program of regular dancing, beginners, round dancing with beginning round dancing and intermediate square dancing. The Hutchinson group no longer met in 1966 and the combined group that resulted was called the Glen Goers.

With the Glencoe program in place in 1967, Jack discontinued his calling for the Mankato and Willmar clubs at the end of the dancing season in 1968 much reducing his long distance travel. He did, however, take over a round dance group in New Ulm that met until their active trailer life began in 1972.

In 1968 the Knuckleheads, many of whom were dancers from the Mankato and Willmar clubs, began meeting regularly for dances. Normally they only met for a summer camp and occasional reunions.

By the time Jack retired from school teaching in 1971 he was only involved with the Glencoe groups, the Knuckleheads and weekend festivals. He dropped the clubs in 1972 when their active trailer life began. Mabel and Jack settled on the Miami, Florida area to spend their winters so their dance activities switched to the local clubs around the Homestead, Florida area and teaching round dancing in their trailer park.

He continued to be active during the summer while back in Minnesota, running the Knucklehead camps through 1974. They were also members of the Wally Byam Caravan Club International and took their Airstream trailer on national caravan trips where Mabel and Jack were often on the schedule to teach or cue round dancing. At the conclusion of a Knucklehead gathering at Pineorama in Park Rapids, Minnesota in 1974, Jack announced that he had called his last square dance and that he was retiring as a square dance caller. Because of his winter situation in the trailer park he felt he could not keep up with the latest things in square dancing, being unable to practice his craft. He would concentrate on round dancing.

Clubs Served as regular Caller from 1962- 1972

Years across the top are dance years, 1962-63, 63-64, etc.

	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71
Mankato	x	x	x	x	x	x				
Mankato Beginners	x	x	x	x	x	x				
Mankato Round Dance		x		x						
Willmar	x	x	x	x	x	x				
Willmar Beginners	x	x	x	x	x					
Willmar Ball Room		x	x	x						
Willmar Round Dance					x					
<i>Knuckleheads regular meeting</i>								x	x	x
Hutchinson	x	x	x	x						
Hutch Beginners	x	x								
Glencoe Workshop					x					
Glencoe Beginners						x	x	x	x	x
Glen Goers						x	x	x	x	x
Glencoe Round Dance						x		x	x	x
Glencoe Beginning Round Dance									x	
Glencoe Intermediate									x	
New Ulm Round Dance					x	x	x	x		x
Belle Plaine Round Dance					x					
LeCenter	x									
Plato	x	x								
LeSueur	x									
Bird Island			x				x	x		
Bird Island Beginners						x				
Jordan						x				

These are only the regular weekly or biweekly meetings of these clubs. The chart does not include extra single dances and festivals on weekends.

Weekend Festivals and Extra Dances Outside of the Regular Club Schedule

With so few calendar cards remaining from the early years it is difficult to say much about Jack's weekend schedule of festivals except they were there. The one card representing the months of January and February 1958 shows festivals in Willmar, Medellia and Montevideo, Minnesota. The full year calendars from 1962-72 show everything and some deductions can be made.

The years 1962-72 show a total of 201 weekend festivals and extra dances, a few during the week. The following shows the year, the number of events and additional notes

(Represents dance year 1962-63, etc.)

1962	32	
1963	38	Jack's Mankato club, Circle 8, hosted the state convention and Jack was President of the State Square Dance Federation.
1964	30	Jack's Willmar club, the Jack and Jill's, hosted the state convention.
1965	19	
1966	16	
1967	14	
1968	10	
1969	11	
1970	15	with 5 regular gatherings of the Knuckleheads
1971	<u>16</u>	<u>with 8 regular gatherings of the Knuckleheads</u>
	201	

The 1963-64 dance year, from September to August, was the busiest. Jack's Mankato club was hosting the state convention and Jack was also President that year of the Minnesota State Square Dance Federation, which required regular federation meetings. The calendar shows 38 additional commitments in addition to his regular club schedule. These do not include the days spent at the state convention or additional trips for promotion and planning with the club. Here's the list of events for that year that shows his range of travel.

Anoka, federation meeting at Marbel, Owatanna street festival, Knucklehead Reunion in Duluth, Alexandria Festival, Gaylord, federation meeting in Minneapolis, Glencoe Public Schools, federation meeting in St. Cloud, Holdingford Festival, Pipestone, Waterville Festival, Henderson Christmas Party, Knucklehead Reunion, federation meeting in Cold Spring, New Ulm Festival, Columbia Heights, Willmar Festival, Faribault Festival, Green Isle, Two Harbors, Wabasso Festival, Waseca, Thief River Falls, South St. Paul, Hutchinson Crazy Days, Knucklehead Camp(one week in July at Fort William, Ontario, Canada) Brainerd, federation meeting, Albertville, Willmar Coffee Fest, St. Cloud Beaus and Belles, Pipestone, Jordan Valley Squares at New Prague, Bemidji, Buffalo, Two Harbors, Canada.

What is a Square Dance Festival?

A square dance festival is a dance that is sponsored by a club or community and dancers from any neighboring clubs or from as far away as they chose to come, come to dance to a variety of top callers. Generally several callers are invited, each doing a couple of tips throughout the afternoon. The club sponsoring the event would provide the sound equipment and each caller or round dance cuer would bring his own records. These dances were large enough that they were usually held on gym floors in community buildings or in high school gyms and occasionally ballrooms. Festivals were quite common in the 50s and 60s when square dancing was especially popular and there were a lot of square dance clubs close to each other. They were great fun for the dancers because they often got to dance to the top regional callers and meet their fellow dancers from the area. Square dancers have always been known for their friendly sociability. It was good for the callers too because they got a chance to observe and learn from each other. It gave them a chance to dance too, and with their wives!

It could be great fun for the kids of the dancers too, depending on who showed up. If the venue was a school there were always long polished hallways to run up and down and slide stocking footed. The food was always good too as square dancers know how to eat. In the 50s and 60s though, the main drawback for the kids was the cigarette smoke. In those years so many people smoked that the buildings would fill with a blue haze that could easily give a kid a headache if it weren't for escaping to the outside for play. Festivals always took place some distance away so for a kid the long trips to and from the dance were hard if you had to go along every Sunday.

One of Jack's most active clubs was Circle 8 in Mankato, Minnesota. Circle 8 formally began in 1950 with twelve couples under the leadership of Chase Kranick of Owatanna, Minnesota. Under his leadership the club grew to sixty couples. When Kranick moved to Minneapolis in 1953 Jack Roach took over the club. According to the official history of the club, "Much of the success of Circle 8 can be attributed to John as he was considered one of the finest square and round dance callers in the state." Jack worked with Circle 8 through 1968. Many of the original Knuckleheads were also associated with Circle 8. Circle 8 was a very active and energetic club, dancing every first and third Saturday night from September through May. They were also very active, sponsoring many festivals outside of the regular dancing schedule. The year 1958 is a good example of their activity.



Walt Homer as Father Time and Russ Arthur as the infant new year of 1958 at the Circle 8 New Years Eve Dance December 31, 1957.

Square Dancers Draw 350 Here



The Mankato Free Press ran the following article on March 1, 1958. **“Many Squares at Annual Spring Festival Sunday-** Another successful and lively Southwestern Regional Spring Festival sponsored by Circle Eight Square Dance club of Mankato and North Mankato came to a close Sunday afternoon at the Mankato armory. About 350 dancers and 250 spectators attended the gala event.

Visitors from 30 surrounding towns and neighboring states were listed as present. The armory stage was decorated in a western theme with rail fencing, and bales of hay, making a background for the brightly dressed dancers. John Roach of Glencoe, the regular caller for Circle Eight, was emcee, assisted by eight guest callers, Floyd Tews, Sanford Berge, Heber Boyette, Whittey Aamott, Al Carrigan, Ken Bird and Al Johnson. Also present were Herman Vikens, president of the Federated Folk Dancing of Minneapolis, and his wife.” The article goes on to name all of the committee members that worked on the event.

Another newspaper article pictured caller Roach with the welcome sign. “The annual Southwestern Regional Spring Square Dance Festival sponsored by the Circle Eight club will be held at the Mankato armory on Sunday April 13, from 2 –5pm.

The callers taking part are as follows: Vern Mortinson, Lambertson; Floyd Tews, Sleepy Eye; Heber Boyette, Owatanna; George Winge, Marshall; Al Carrigan, Lakefield; Whitey Aamott, Waseca; Sandy Berge, Mankato; Lorraine Schuknecht, Wilder; Les Halverson, New Richland; and John Roach of Glencoe, host caller and master of ceremonies. The balcony will be open to spectators free of charge.



A special demonstration put on by youngsters from Sleepy Eye will be featured during the intermission.”

The Mankato Free Press reported on April 14th that 400 dancers attended with visitors registered from South Dakota, Iowa and one couple all the way from New Jersey. The young dancers age 10 to 13 were a hit, demonstrating that square dancing isn't just for middle-aged people.

Circle Eight, like many clubs, had theme nights for their regular dances. Below are Mabel and Jack at the costume party dance in 1958 and the St. Patrick's Day dance in 1963.



The picture to the right looks like it must have been taken at a hayseed or hillbilly themed dance in 1964.



While 1958 was a busy year with Circle Eight, The one calendar card that exists for that year shows the months of January and February. Jack had already called for festivals in Willmar (also one of Jack's clubs), Medellia, and Montevideo. Throughout the years there were also major events that Jack was asked to call for.

In 1954 Jack was among 18 callers who called for the Fourth Annual St. Paul Winter Carnival Northwest Square Dance. George Podany's Orchestra provided the music playing polkas, schottishes and waltzes in between the square dances. More than 2,000 dancers were expected to participate in the program of square and folk dancing at the St. Paul Auditorium.



In 1963 Jack called for a square dance in association with the Minneapolis Aquatennial



From a 1954 Winter Carnival article in the St. Paul Dispatch.

In 1963, John Roach became president of the Minnesota State Square Dance Federation for 1963-64. His Mankato Circle Eight club offered to host the 1964 State Square Dance Convention. In addition to carrying out his duties to the state federation he had to work with his Mankato group to help plan the convention. Fortunately he had very capable club members and leaders throughout the state who were able to make the arrangements.

One of those extra square dance related trips as Federation president is pictured below. This picture appeared on the front page of the St. Paul Pioneer Press on April 11, 1964. Jack is standing with Minnesota Governor Karl Rolvaag, holding the proclamation proclaiming June 14 – 20, 1964 as Square Dance Week in the State of Minnesota. Standing with Jack on the left is Walter Homer of Mankato and to the right of the governor is Cletus Roufs of LeSueur, co-chairmen of the state convention.



L to R: Walter Homer, John Roach, Minnesota Governor Karl Rolvaag and Cletus Roufs. 1964

This picture brings to mind a humorous incident. Jack had to take part of a day off from school and ate his lunch in the car on the way to the Capitol in St. Paul, an hour and a half trip in those days. He carried his coffee in a thermos that had been presented to him as a gift by the Mankato club. This thermos had a tendency to drip a lot when pouring and of course, it did, all over the front of Jack's shirt. When he arrived for the presentation and picture he was embarrassed. But, one of the other men had a spare vest in his car and saved the day.



Polka dots, stripes and petticoats invade the Governor's Office for signing of Proclamation declaring Square Dance Week in Minnesota.

Standing left to right behind Governor Rolvaag are Beverlee Homer, Walt Homer, Jack Roach, Cletus Roufs, and Doloris Roufs.



Governor Rolvaag



PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, The art of square dancing is unique to our country's history and an integral and increasingly important part of the recreation of our citizens; and

WHEREAS, In encouraging our citizens' participation in square dancing we stimulate their interest in their pioneer heritage that is basic to this form of modern recreation; and

WHEREAS, The members of the Square Dance Federation of Minnesota will assemble during the month of June in the City of Mankato for their thirteenth State Square Dance Convention;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Karl F. Rolvaag, Governor of the State of Minnesota, do hereby proclaim the week of June 14 through June 20, 1964, as

"SQUARE DANCE WEEK"

in Minnesota and urge all citizens to recognize and pay tribute to the fine work of this group in providing wholesome entertainment and encouraging a sense of appreciation of the customs and traditions of our country.



IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Minnesota to be affixed at the State Capitol this tenth day of April in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and sixty-four, and of the State the one hundred sixth.

Karl F. Rolvaag
GOVERNOR

Joseph L. Anderson
SECRETARY OF STATE

The 13th Annual Minnesota State Square Dance Convention was held at Mankato, Minnesota June 19, 20 and 21, 1964. The convention was hosted by Jack's Mankato club, Circle Eight, and was headquartered at the Mankato Senior High School with events taking place at locations all around Mankato. The tree day event featured national caller Dave Taylor from Detroit, Michigan and round dance specialists Dot and Date Foster of Decatur, Illinois. There was also dancing to state callers, sessions on contra dancing with Lynn Woodward and Lee Newton, and folk dancing with Joe and Mae Rose Perrault, leaders of the Twin City Folk Dance Workshop. Daily sessions began at 8:30 and 9 in the morning with the evening dances ending at 11:30pm. Sessions were offered continuously throughout the day with up to three activities taking place at the same time so dancers could chose which activity to attend. In addition to the regular sessions other activities were planned at different locations around Mankato to include a style show at a local motel, the federation banquet at a local church, a caller's brunch at the local college, state callers meeting at the local armory, teen dancing at the YMCA, a hootenanny (popular in the 60s), teen swimming party at the Y, exhibition dancing at the high school along with several state federation board meetings, not to mention the after parties that ran from midnight to 2am.

With this many activities and around 15,000 dancers in the state at that time and around 2,000 expected in Mankato, the availability of facilities and coordination are key planning issues. Areas would be needed for dancing and instruction, accommodations for out-of-towners (hotels, motels and camping facilities around the area) and food service. The following committees coordinated the 1964 convention: Registration, Housing, Budget and Finance, Syllabus, Advertising, Banquet, Callers Brunch, Style Show, Luncheon, Programs, Music and Sound, Facilities, Decorations, Publicity, Concessions, Panels and Workshops, Exhibition Dancing, After Party Squares, After Party Rounds, Exhibits, Campsites, Host and Hostesses, Information, and Red Cross.

At the conclusion of the event, Jack received the following letter from Rex Hill, Mayor of Mankato.

"Mankato was indeed proud to Host the many fine delegates of the Square Dance Federation held in Mankato on June 19, 20, 21.

Never has a finer group of people visited our town. Never have we had so many people here without one single complaint from someone. You must really have a fine set of "rules to live by" and then live by them.

Please let me thank you, both personally, and on behalf of all the people of Mankato, for being our guests. It is our sincere hope that in the not too distant future you will return for another visit. The red carpet will always be out for the members of Square Dance Federation of Minnesota- and their children."

The Superintendent of Schools, William Nigg also communicated:

"While such use of our building was not within our usual rental policy and special permission had to be obtained from the Board of Education, we wish to report that we did not regret in any way acting as hosts to the group. Our custodians reported that this was the best behaved group that we have ever had in such a large gathering. We

had no problems what so ever and it was most inspiring to see this wholesome activity in our building.”

When it was time to bid on the 1965 convention, Jack’s group from Willmar, the Jacks and Jill’s, reportedly paraded into the Federation Board meeting room with noisemakers to make their presentation. They were unanimously awarded the convention. This is how many people it takes to make it happen, the 1965 State Convention Committee.



Convention organizing committee for the 1965 State Convention being hosted by the Jacks and Jill’s.

Notwithstanding a full teaching and coaching schedule, a regular dance schedule through the year and all the excitement of a national convention in Minneapolis in 1963, the state convention of 1964 in Mankato and preparations for the 1965 convention in Willmar, as well as being president of the federation, Jack found time for other dance related activities. On October 23rd of 1964 he, along with his caller friends Whitey Aamott of Waseca, Wayne Slocum of White Bear Lake, and John Bell of Windom, presented a session during the Minnesota Education Association’s yearly convention in Minneapolis on how to teach the fox trot, waltz and swing step to children. In January of 1965 he called a square dance for foreign students at the International Institute at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota at the behest of his school Superintendent, whose son was a student there. His Mankato group also made appearances on KEYC-TV in Mankato on their Country-Western Jubilee program