Dance Description

From "Dances of Early California Days"
by Lucile K. Czarnowski (Pacific Books, 1949)

The York

The York is a variant of the Polka Mazurka. It is an early ballroom couple dance and was danced in California at the time when the lancers, polkas, schottische and quadrilles appeared on the dance programs.

Music

The York (One Heart, One Soul, by Johann Strauss)
Although music has been written and given the title "The York", polka mazurka music, written during this period is also used. It is written in 3/4 time and has its own distinctive accents.

Formation

Couples in closed dance position as described on page 39, informally spaced on the floor.

Steps

Glide close glide close hop glide step leap
L R L R R L R L

Music 3/4

Step Pattern

The step pattern will be described for the man. The woman dances the counterpart.

1
The man starting with the left foot, the woman with the right take the glide, close (count 1), glide (count 2), close, hop (count 3) directly sideward to man's left without turning.

2
With his left foot the man takes a gliding step diagonally forward left (count 1), close right to left while pivoting on the left foot making one half turn to the right (count 2), leap sideward left (count 3).

3
Repeat the action of measure one moving directly sideward to the man's right without turning.

4
Repeat the action of measure two making a half turn right.

It requires the four measures as described to dance the movement pattern. The distinctive quality of the step pattern is the hop-step. On the hop the free foot is lifted and brought close to the ankle of the foot taking the hop, as in the mazurka step. The leap is very light and quite unnoticeable. At a later period a step was substituted for the leap.

Great deference was also shown to parents at social functions. Before 1831, young men never danced in the presence of parents until permission was given. Balls were begun by the older people with no young person taking part unless married. When the older men retired, the younger men entered the dancing space. In later years, this too, was changed.

After 1846, the pastoral period drew to a close. This was brought about primarily by the great influx of Americans, the changing government and economic conditions. This was the beginning of a new cycle providing a different background from which emerged different dance forms. A few of these dances, such as the schottische, mazurkas, polkas and lancers which were a link between the old and the newer forms to follow.

But, as years passed, the love of Californianos for folk dancing remained alive. And today, as in the times of the rancheros, the federated clubs of the state call out to stranger and friend alike, "Forget your troubles! Come—join us and dance!"

The foregoing was extracted from the forthcoming book, "DANCES OF EARLY CALIFORNIA DAYS" by Lucile Czarnowski, former president of the Folk Dance Federation of California. It is being published by Pacific Books and will be available in November of this year.