

The History of the Triangle Squares

One sunny spring weekend in March 1987, a wildly enthusiastic group of square dancers from Times Squares, N.Y., N.Y., created an atmosphere of jamboree in the sleepy city of post-winter Toronto, Ontario. Invited by Out-and-Out event organizer, Len Burke, the Times Square dancers, led by Caller Ron Masker, shared with over ten squares of Torontonians the fun of gay square dancing.

In the mist of all the excitement, two particularly impressionable young bucks wished out loud that it would be awfully nice if Toronto has such a club that meets regularly for square dancing. Tinkerbelle must have been listening because their wish was granted when over 30 people signed a list for future contacts. Another 10 people signed up after advertising in the Out and Out newsletter.

By the summer of 1987, the auditorium that held the memorable spring weekend event was booked for the first class to begin in September. In the process of booking the auditorium, Len de Graaf, one of the two young bucks, was inspired with the spontaneous and appropriate name of Triangle Squares. The club was born.

After many weeks of telephoning, meeting, and more telephoning, the first class was confirmed to begin with many eager cowpokes wanting to learn the steps. Alas, no callers could be found in the Greater Metropolitan Area of Toronto. By the beginning of August, it seemed that the new class was destined to start by learning from tape recordings, an acceptable but not the preferred method.

Requesting more help, the other young buck, Andrew Chow, telephoned all the people who signed the original list. Lo and behold, another young buckeroo, Chris Homer, was more than happy to help. The cavalry was only a phone call away. With his usual masterful skill in organization and the help of Ken Pollack from Times Squares, Chris contacted the renowned Anne Uebelacker. At first, Anne was unsure if her heavily booked schedule would allow her to travel from Peterborough to Toronto (over two hours on the freeway), every Thursday night (the only night the auditorium is available). Have no fear, like all fairy tales, this one ends happily ever after, too.

With the usual dedication to her calling, Anne re-arranged her whole schedule to call for us every Thursday night, at the 519 Community Center on Church Street, braving Canadian snow storms and great lake thunder storms. In spite of the weather, we had great fun that winter, with Mary Xmas dropping in on our potluck Christmas celebration dance. A badge design contest was held and Ray Mullen submitted the winning entry that has become well known for its striking design.

Under Anne's gentle guidance, and her husband Joe's yodeling inspiration, the first class of Basic dancers graduated in March of 1988, just in time to welcome the Times Squares, along with other members of IAGSDC, for another fly-in to witness the beginning and the birth of another gay square dance club.

After the fly-in, two members of Triangle Squares, Chris Homer and Barry Caven, attended the 1988 IAGSDC Convention in Phoenix, Arizona, where Triangle Squares was unanimously voted into the IAGSDC. The two cowboys returned with news of fun, fun, fun, and a video tape of the convention. After showing the tape during our Mainstream Graduation, with pot-luck munchies, there was no turning back. Everyone wanted to be in on the action.

The summer of 1988 was a busy summer with the graduation of our first Mainstream class, the start of a second Basic class, and record summer temperature and HUMIDITY! Needless to say, we survived and overcame. In addition to the dancing, Chris Homer and Don St. Jean attended caller school at the country abode of Anne and Joe, held over one July weekend. They embarked on the road to be among that special group of talented people: square dance callers.

In September 1988, we held our first anniversary open invitation dance. Many joined us for a night of carousing and a new class of Basic began the following week. The year saw continual growth in all levels. In spite of teething pains, a Steering Committee was elected to run club affairs.

In the autumn of that year, seven members of the Triangle Squares participated in the Peel the Pumpkin fly-in to N.Y., N.Y. It marked the first return visit to the club that helped us through the growing pains. More excitement was relayed back home and more people were enthused to attend the 1989 IAGSDC Convention in New York.

In March of 1989, Triangle Squares hosted a free-registration Appreciation Dance, featuring the generously donated service of Anne and Joe Uebelacker, Harlen Kerr, and Mike Desisto. The event was a big hit for over 50 visitors from all over the continent. They all enjoyed our northern hospitality and the unseasonably cold weather. This was also the first opportunity for many Triangle Square members to experience the high energy level of full participation in gay square dancing. May be as a result, thirteen members, including Anne and Joe, attended Peel the Apple the following summer. It seems that Triangle Squares is well on its way to becoming a mature member of the IAGSDC family.

Andrew Chow, July 11, 1989