

Indiana Hoedown IH009
Traditional Music from the Hoosier State

Barn Dance at Alles' Barn

Roanoke, Indiana Sept 29, 1979

This was the last dance of the season. They've held every ^{other} week starting in June through the end of September. Though there will be a benefit dance, a four band concert, and a halloween dance in October.

Driving down ~~the~~ county road 1000 N in Huntington County, ~~we~~ ^{we} could hear the whooping of the dancers before ~~we~~ ^{we} saw the lights of the barn. There was obviously a good time going on in the barn. As ~~we~~ ^{we} drove up the lane, we were stopped by a neighbor who made a friendly joke to welcome us and collect \$1.50 from each of us. The barn yard all around the barn was parked full. We finally found a spot to squeeze into close to the men's and women's ~~privies~~ privies that had probably been built just for these crowds. There were people all over outside the barn, and a dancing mob inside. The crowd seemed primarily young - high school and college age. But once we got inside we spotted a few squares of older people. There were at least 20 squares dancing; half in what looked like a new addition to the barn, and half in two lanes of free space in the old sections. The band was right between the old and new barns, set up on a little stage. In the back was the drummer, a guest that night, he normally played with the Geels Family Band. Below him were two rows of chairs. In the 2nd was Mrs. Alles on bass guitar, a young son on electric guitar, and a older son playing lead guitar. There was also a open spot where Dale stood to give the calls. In the front row ~~we~~ were two daughters who played accordians and another chair that was empty during the square dances, but used by another daughter who sang lead or played saxophone for the round dances. The youngest son played a couple of bluegrass pieces on banjo, while the dancers crowded around appreciatively. Sitting beside the stage was Mr. Alles' mother, beaming with pride.

The dance floor is concrete. In the old barn the dancers have to watch out for old wooden pillars. The area right before the band is bounded by wooden pillars. It's too small to dance in, but there are a few wooden benches. Though people seem either be dancing or outside talking and taking refreshments. Beside the band is a table with a lemonade in a big cooler. Somewhere else is apple cider. They're ~~included~~ ^{included} in the admission price. It's obvious a number of dancers keep beer out in their cars, but they are very discreet about it.

The rooms are noisy. The music is loud and distorted. It's just barely possible to hear the caller. One 12 inch speaker feeds the calls into each room. And the crowd is very noisy; whooping, clapping, hollering, and singing along. This barn dance reminded me more of the square dances I went to in high school than any other dance I've been to since.

The band would do two sets of three square dances in each set. Dale would not teach the dance unless it got messed up, then he would stop the music and go through it. The dances were ^{nearly} all singing calls: 'Solomon Levi,' 'Little Liza Jane,' 'Roll the Barrel,' and one or two patter calls - 'Wagon Wheel' & 'Texas Star.' The Round dances were mostly modern country and popular songs, with the girls of the Alles family singing in harmony.

Dale Alles: I don't do many of those old patter calls, like 'Take a Little Peek,' because I don't like them very much. I'm not a musician at all. The kids got the music from their mother. She's a Geels - a cousin of Francis, Joe Geels' daughter. I've got ten kids and they've all played something, sometime.

I started this dance on a dare a couple of years ago. Some friends said I couldn't get my barn cleaned up. It was a real mess. But we got her cleaned up, and had a dance. I said no one would

come. But they talked me into having one anyway. We had 3 squares that first dance. That was 3 years ago. Then the next year I had to build an addition. And now I still don't have enough room for all of them. I'm going to have to build another addition.

We started doing this because we wanted something like the old dances at places like the Hoagland Hayloft. You can't do that anymore. You've got to belong to club. Well, people have really liked it.

Last year we started getting a bunch of young people. I don't know how they heard about it, I don't advertise. I only send out an announcement at the start of the year to those who've put their names on the mailing list. But these kids starting coming from all over: from Fort Wayne, from Wabash, from Ohio. I know they do some drinking, but I'm not worried. They're not going to get in any trouble. I'll dance it out of them. We had a County Sheriff dancing here one night. He said 'If you'd told me this was going on in Huntington County, I'd have said you were lying. We never have gotten any calls on you.' It's a real good crowd here.