

CDSS Archives Receive New Collection, New Energy

by Susan Creighton and Katy German

The CDSS Archives is an impressive collection of dance books and recordings, photographs, organization financial records, program and camp records, and items of historical significance that were placed in our care. The physical CDSS Archives includes materials from 1915-1994 and are currently housed at the University of New Hampshire Library of Traditional Music and Dance (LTMD) in Durham, NH. The CDSS collection is one of 8 organizations that have materials in the LTMD, along with CDS Boston Centre, New England Folk Festival Association (NEFFA), Ralph Page Dance Legacy Weekend, Downeast Folk Festival Association (DEFFA), Pinewoods Camp, the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society, Boston Branch, and the Square Dance Foundation of New England (SDFNE).

In 2015 CDSS's Executive Director and President at the time, Rima Dael and David Millstone, began discussing with UNH the prospect of digitizing the CDSS archives. Digitizing the archives would increase the accessibility and findability of our materials, opening them up to researchers, academics, and historians across the country. Head of the UNH Special Collections and Archives Division, Bill Ross, was already digitizing the whole LTMD. But digitization of archival materials is an expensive endeavor, involving large amounts of staff time to organize materials, scan, develop searchable "metadata" (information) for each scanned item, and create and store appropriate electronic formats for archival storage and public use. And because university archivists have many other responsibilities, digitization happens slowly unless there are dedicated funds to support these efforts. The challenge to secure the funding was daunting, but both UNH and CDSS believed in the goal. CDSS designated and successfully raised \$50,000 in funding for archive digitization in the 2015 Centennial Capital Campaign. UNH continued reaching out to the other organizations for support of the project, as well as explore additional funding sources. In 2016 and 2017, progress was hindered by leadership changes at both UNH and CDSS, and the funds raised by CDSS sat in waiting.

2018 brought a wave of new energy to the project. CDSS developed a new strategic plan, with an emphasis on stewardship, and new CDSS Executive Director Katy German met with Bill Ross to rekindle the flame



(l to r) Katy German, Graham Christian, TG member, Ben Williams, Bob Keller, Margaret Keller Dimock, Bill Ross, Head Archivist, UNH Special Collections and Archives, Susan Creighton, TG Co-Chair

for digitization work. The CDSS board formed a new Archives Task Group to support Katy's need for archiving expertise and guidance. UNH applied for federal funding, but was unfortunately not selected. Although disheartening, the application included a detailed 2-year work plan for the project — a path forward! In December of 2018, CDSS was saddened to learn of the death of noted dance historian Kate (Kitty) Van Winkle Keller. Keller, who made enormous academic contributions to dance reconstruction, over her lifetime created a collection of copied and original English country dance source materials and notations that is unparalleled on this continent. It was immaculately organized and catalogued, and she was bequeathing it to CDSS.

In January of this year, Katy was joined by task group members Susan Creighton, Graham Christian, and CDSS staff member Ben Williams on a visit to Durham, NH, to talk with Bill Ross and Archivist Emeline Dehn-Reynolds. Kate Van Winkle Keller's husband and daughter Bob Keller and Margaret K. Dimock joined the morning discussions, which focused on next steps for the donation of the Keller collection and were sprinkled with fond memories of Kitty. The rest of day's meeting focused on updating the digitization project scope of work and developing a funding plan for the LTMD digitization efforts.

In the next 6 months, UNH and CDSS will be working together to raise additional funds, which will determine the volume of materials digitized during the project period. Digitization efforts on the CDSS materials are slated to begin this fall.

CDSS is proud to lead the way in the effort to digitize the LTMD! It is our hope that the generosity, vision, and

commitment of our members will serve as an inspiration to other organizations that stand to benefit from the digitization project.

Meet the CDSS Archives Task Group

The CDSS Archives Task group currently consists of seven members from across the U.S. and Canada: Dorcas Hand (TX, co-chair), Susan Janssen Creighton (MA, co-chair), Avia Moore (Ontario), Juliette King (TN), Sharon McKinley (MD), Barbara DeFelice (VT) and Graham Christian (MA). Almost all members of the task group have library or archive training and collectively represent a variety of specialties within the library field.

The mission of the Task Group is to:

- Provide guidance to the CDSS Board and staff about how archives in general — and the archives at UNH’s Library of Traditional Music and Dance in particular — work; understanding issues related to archival donations and holdings; delineating questions for the board to decide; and how to respond to community members who inquire about how to contribute materials
- Establish stronger collaboration and communication with UNH archivist, in order to participate in decisions about process and access
- Create and/or clarify a list of questions, issues, and action items in regard to accepting and managing existing materials and new donations
- Recommend collaborative endeavors with other groups who are part of the LTMD (e.g. Pinewoods, New England Folk Festival Association, etc.).

To date, the task group has been working on:

- Educating the task group members, Executive Director and Board about what an archivist does and how both traditional and digital archives work, with the goal of developing a clearer sense of the relationship with the UNH archives and a better understanding of their process
- Working with the archivists at UNH to develop plans and priorities for digitizing materials in the collection
- Developing recommendations around internal (office and Board) archiving practices and records management plans in a digital world.

Remembering Kate Van Winkle Keller

by Graham Christian

Kate Van Winkle Keller, known to many as Kitty, was best known as the co-author of *The Playford Ball* (1990), a publication that revolutionized the way modern English country dancers understood their own tradition. Yet that was only one of her achievements. Working outside the privileges and the restraints of the academy, she was as a profoundly collaborative and generous scholar, partnering with many dance leaders from the 1970s forward to make many dances from Colonial America available to modern dancers, including *A Choice Selection of American Country Dances* (1976), *Social Dances from 18th Century Virginia* (2003), and the innovative *George Washington: A Biography in Social Dance* (1998). Her solo ventures were immensely important too, including the exhaustive *Dance and Its Music in America, 1528-1789* (2007), and *If the Company Can Do It!: Technique in Eighteenth-Century American Social Dance* (1989; 2007), her personal favorite.



Kitty was a major force behind the treasured databases of Playford editions and American and English dance tunes, titles, and figures amassed under the title *Early American Secular Music and its European Resources*, now hosted by CDSS. She was the recipient of CDSS’ Lifetime Achievement Award in 1993. She shared her resources, insight, and wit without hesitation with scholars and friends from every corner of the country dance community. Her death in December of 2018 was a sad loss for the country dance community; she will be sorely missed.

Kitty’s collection of historical dance publications and reconstructions is an incredible gift to CDSS and to the dance community as a whole. Later this spring, UNH will organize transfer of the collection to the archive facility, at which time the contents of the collection will be listed on the New Hampshire Library of Traditional Music and Dance. Scholars, researchers, and visitors are welcome to visit the CDSS archives at UNH at any time, preferably by appointment. For more information, visit library.unh.edu/find/special/subject/new-hampshire-library-of-traditional-music-%26-dance.