

Paul Jones

(U.S.A.)

The Paul Jones mixer has been around for over a century and thus has evolved into many regional forms. Essentially it is comprised of figures done by couples taking hands in a circle, often concluding with a Grand Chain, then everyone dances with a new partner.

- Music: Almost anything will do. *Richard Powers 2011 CD, Track 10*
 2/4, 4/4, 3/4 -- Your choice.
 Fast, slow, medium or wild and crazy. Your choice.
- Formation: Couples in a single circle, although Betty Lee described up to three nested circles.
- Steps & Styling: There have been many choices over the years, including march, polka, two-step, waltz, one-step and foxtrot.

My favorite version, which I learned at a community dance in Tennessee 35 years ago, used the One-Step. As you will see, there is no set number of steps to do or number of measure to use.

Meas

Pattern

VERSION 1

- Any All One-Step anywhere in the hall. In closed waltz pos, simply walk one step per beat, M beg L, W beg R. W often backs up. The style of One-Step I first saw was rather wild and rambunctious.
- Any When the caller blows a whistle, everyone takes hands in one large circle, with W on the R of M with whom she was dancing, and all circle left (CW).
- Any When the caller blows his whistle, everyone circles right.
- Any When the caller blows his whistle, W turn back to ptr, all give R hand to commence a Grand Chain, passing hands R and L with succeeding dancers, until...
- Any ...the caller blows his whistle, at which point everyone dances the One-Step with the person they happen to be facing at that time (one written source elaborated "without making introductions"). Those who cannot find a partner may look for someone in the center of the circle.

VERSION 2 – VERNON AND IRENE CASTLE

The Paul Jones described in the 1915 booklet "Victor Records for Dancing" (endorsed by Vernon and Irene Castle) is similar, except a sliding chassé to the R replaced the circle L, then a sliding chassé to the L replaced the circle R.

VERSION 3 – NINE-PIN

Another version harkens back to the Nine-Pin Quadrille of the mid-19th century, where there is one extra man in the group who joins into the grand chain, forcing a different man to be the Nine-Pin the next time.

Paul Jones — continued

VERSION 4 – BETTY LEE

Betty Lee described the simplest version in 1926 (reprinted into the 1940s).

Any

All One-Step anywhere in the hall.

Any

When the leader “signals,” everyone faces partner and begins the Grand Chain, until the caller signals again, then dance the One-Step with the person you happen upon at that moment. Betty Lee did not describe the signal for the changes.

VERSION 5 – MAXWELL STEWART

Maxwell Stewart’s version, ca. 1930, was a similar two-part figure, simply Grand Chain then dance, but was directed by the musicians. The orchestra played march music for the Grand Chain. Then when the music changed to Foxtrot music, everyone foxtrotted with the partner in hand at that moment until the march music recommenced, initiating the Grand Chain again.

The second time through, the march music would change into One-Step music and everyone danced that.

The third time, the march music would change into Waltz music and everyone waltzed.

VERSION 6 – LLOYD SHAW

Lloyd Shaw’s versions, from the 1940s, were the most complex, involving spontaneous calls from the caller, varying each time. The figures would include the above figures plus Forward and Back, Allemande your Corner then Right and Left Grand, All Promenade, Ladies Continue Forward and the Gents Turn Back, Gents Stand Still and the Ladies Forward One and Dance, plus the Basket formed from a circle of men outside a circle of women, and many more figures.

Lloyd Shaw’s signal to dance (after the Grand Chain) would be the call “Paul Jones!” and the dance done with the new partner was the two-step.

Appalachian “Big Circle” dances include similar figures to Lloyd Shaw’s Paul Jones, which he also called “Circle Two-Step.”

Note: There are many other versions of the Paul Jones.

Presented by Richard Powers