

The Rustic Reel

Reconstructed by Richard Powers

The Rustic Reel was danced at a Grand Ball in Baltimore in 1823 or 1824, to music composed by C. Meineke. So far, the earliest description of the Rustic Reel dance is from 1841, in *The Ball-Room Instructor* (sic).



The Rustic Reel is a longways set dance for trios of a gentleman with two ladies, one at either side, facing another trio of a gentleman with two ladies.

- The gent takes the lady to his forward right diagonal in his arms, or by two hands, and chassés 3 slides to his right, then close.
They chassé 3 slides to his left, leaving the lady at her place, then the gents slide over to the other lady with a 4th chassé to their left. The two gents pass each other back-to-back.
- Repeat the same pattern to the other side with the other lady, with the gents starting to fall back to places on the 4th slide.
- All forward, with the ladies coming forward to take hands with their gent, and all back with small walking steps.
- All pass through to the next couple then gents approach their right-diagonal vis-a-vis lady.

A Regional Variation of the Rustic Reel

An 1839 letter by the American artist William Sidney Mount to his brother Robert described the Rustic Reel as being done by couples instead of trios.

Couples in longways formation, active couples facing down the hall, inactive couples facing up.

- Take your vis-a-vis in waltz position and chassé away from center with 3 slides and a closed touch.
- Chassé back toward partner with 4 slides, men slightly backing so women could pass back-to-back.
On the 4th slide, man unfolds his R arm toward his right, with his vis-a-vis in it, as she turns to her right.
- Chassé with original partner away from center with 3 slides and a touch closed.
- Chassé back to place and unfold from waltz position into original places, side-by-side.
- All forward and back with small walking steps.
- All pass through to the next couple.