

HENDERSONVILLE, N.C. — What started as a welcome home celebration for soldiers returning from World War I has become a treasured Hendersonville tradition on Main Street each summer. This July marks the 100th anniversary of Street Dances in downtown Hendersonville. The dances take place on Monday nights from July 9 through Aug. 13.

“The Street Dances are part of Hendersonville’s identity,” says Beth Carden, executive director of the Henderson County Tourism Development Authority. “We are fortunate to have this long-standing tradition that helps us preserve our mountain heritage and share it with visitors.”

The dances started in 1918 to honor the war’s end. They were organized by the Chamber of Commerce for many years and are now hosted by the Henderson County TDA at the stage in the Visitor Center parking lot on Main Street.

The dances involve traditional square dancing, clogging and bluegrass music. A caller signals steps to the square dancers, while clogging teams perform choreographed routines. People can participate or bring lawn chairs and watch from their seats while tapping their feet.

Walt Puckett, a Hendersonville native, has served as caller for the dances for more than 50 years. Prior to each dance, he offers instruction for beginners to learn the basic steps.

“I enjoy watching people and seeing how much fun they’re having,” says Puckett, who attended his first Street Dance as a third-grader. “The dances are a good activity for families, older generations, people in their 30s and 40s, and kids. They can all enjoy it.”

Puckett, like many, became interested in clogging via the Street Dances. Hendersonville was one of the first places in the country where clogging teams performed choreographed routines. Puckett went on to join the Stoney Mountain Cloggers and dance at the Grand Ole Opry.

The dances jump-started the musical career of Hendersonville native Pat Corn, who attended his first dance at age 3 and now plays and teaches music in Sevierville, Tennessee.

“In the 1940s and ’50s there was more music going on in Hendersonville than you could shake a stick at,” Corn says. “The Street Dances were what you did on Monday nights.”

In those days, Hendersonville was a popular spot for big bands passing through from New York and Florida. They stopped in Hendersonville in the summer to play a show for the tourists who retreated to this mountain town to escape the heat and humidity of lower elevations.

Today the Street Dances attract locals and visitors as a part of the famed Blue Ridge Music Trails of North Carolina. They are also included in Hendersonville’s Summer Music Series, which involves multiple live music events throughout the summer.

“As we continue to enhance the visitor experience and offer more for folks to do while they’re in town, the Street Dances remain an important part of that effort,” Carden says.

A 100th anniversary commemoration will take place during the first Street Dance on Monday, July 9. Each week, beginner instruction starts at 6:30 p.m. and dances start at 7 p.m. Admission is free.

To learn more about the Street Dances and download a Summer Music Series brochure, go to www.VisitHendersonvilleNC.org/Street-Dances, or call (800) 828-4244 to request information.

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<https://media.visitnc.com/Hendersonville-Street-Dances-Celebrate-100-Years-This-Summer>