

Savoy Ballroom

by Carrie Stern

Known to the public by its nickname, "the Home of Happy Feet," to the Harlemites who danced there all week the elongated Savoy dance floor was simply "the Track." Swing, tap, and jazz dancers all called the Savoy home. Many who danced there went on to careers in film and on stage. But by far the biggest stars were the "jitterbugs" who shaped the complex of dances that came to be known as [swing](#).

"The Savoy began and remained a highly contested social space where popular creativity confronted 'social control,'" write swing scholars Karen Hubbard and Terry Monaghan. "The ballroom opened and closed in the midst of citywide controversies arising from changing trends in popular dance that were perceived as threats to dominant racial, class, and gender values."¹

The Harlem Renaissance

1926—Harlem is jumping. Long the national heart of African American collective life, Harlem experienced a social and artistic explosion in the years between 1920 and 1935.

Harlem became an African American neighborhood around 1910, when African American realtors and a church group purchased a large block of buildings along 135th Street and Fifth Avenue, establishing a small black community at the northern end of Manhattan. Following World War I black servicemen, who despite segregated army units had been treated with previously unheard-of near-equality, returned to a nation that didn't respect their service and wasn't ready to welcome them as full citizens. Many made Harlem their home, along with scholars, artists, and activists. An emerging social consciousness created a climate in which radical thinkers and organizers such as W.E.B. DuBois, Marcus Garvey, and Charles W. Johnson flourished, in a vibrant community that was home to writers Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and Countee Cullen, and artists Aaron Douglas and Richmond Barthé.

Political, visual, and literary arts in Harlem joined a long-standing, evolving African American musical tradition that was enhanced and altered as patterns of migration changed. World War I, for example, halted European laborers' immigration. The war industry, however, created a large demand for unskilled labor leading thousands of blacks to migrate north, replacing the Europeans and bringing music with them. Southern style brass bands, blues guitar, and ragtime blended together creating a new form of music—jazz. Clubs sprang up with drinks and dancing. Primarily homespun, these new jazz venues welcomed the white people who occasionally ventured uptown.

By the mid-1920s, the reputation of Harlem's jazz and entertainment clubs had spread. In the fall of 1923, mobster Owney Madden opened the Cotton Club as the East Coast outlet for his bootleg beer. Taxis and limos disgorged wealthy, white downtown patrons—"urban tourists"—at entertainment environments like the large, elegant, unintimidatingly "whites only" Cotton Club. "The Negro is in the ascendancy," wrote Carl Van Vechten in 1926. A white critic and writer, a devotee of black culture, Van Vechten continued, "Harlem cabarets are more popular than ever. Everybody is trying to dance the [Charleston](#) or to sing spirituals..." Outside Harlem's boundaries Broadway musicals, including the Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* in 1927, theatricalized African American dance and music.

Nightlife started late, after 11 PM. When clubs closed, after-hours clubs served up late night meals and more music. Those who craved a broader experience of Harlem's vibrant arts world found their way to venues off the main circuit. Fats Waller, Cab Calloway, Bessie Smith, Ethel Waters, and Fletcher Henderson's band, with Coleman Hawkins on sax and Louis Armstrong on cornet, all could be heard in tiny basement clubs, speakeasies, and dance halls, as well as in the big establishments. Here, in far lesser numbers than in the big clubs, whites interested in the music and those committed to the objectives of integration mingled with Harlemites. In a 1982

interview, photographer Aaron Siskind, asked if he had concerns visiting 1930s Harlem, explained that people were less afraid then (than in 1982.) "There wasn't as much hostility.... On the streets I never had trouble except once."² On side streets local life went on. At rent parties and in homes, African American social customs and traditional entertainment styles continued to dominate.

The Savoy Ballroom

Into this mix came the Savoy ballroom. Like the cabarets (supper and entertainment clubs popular in the nineteen-teens and twenties), dance places were all-in-one social entertainment venues, but super-sized. Located in the middle of Harlem, owned by white entrepreneurs Jay Faggen and reputed Jewish mobster Moe Gale, with African American real estate business man Charles Buchanan, who acted as manager, the Savoy Ballroom, the largest in Harlem, opened March 12, 1926. Modeled on Faggen's downtown dance emporium, Roseland Ballroom, the Savoy remained an important center of social dance into the 1940s. As the foremost provider of a significant form of African American leisure, the Savoy developed a broad relationship with black communities throughout the greater New York area, including new immigrants from the Caribbean, and became a destination for blacks from communities in New Jersey and Connecticut. According to Hubbard and Monaghan, this wide catchment enhanced a broad sense of community while embracing new arrivals.³

A 1951 anniversary program described the Savoy as "a luxury ballroom... accommodat[ing] many thousands who wished to dance in an atmosphere of tasteful refinement, rather than in the small and stuffy halls and foul-smelling, smoke-laden cellar night clubs which were the illegal, but prosperous upholstered sewers of the prohibition era." Occupying the second floor of a building spanning 596 Lenox Avenue from 140th to 141st Streets, the Savoy billed itself as the "world's most beautiful ballroom." *Ebony* magazine reported in 1946 that at its peak the Savoy had cost about half a million dollars a year to operate and earned around a million dollars a year,

though some scholars find these figures exaggerated.

At ground level a marquee extended over the sidewalk. According to news and publicity sources following its opening in 1926, the Savoy contained a spacious lobby framing a huge, cut-glass chandelier and marble staircase. Roomy basement checkrooms and carpeted and mirrored lounges served thousands of patrons per night. An orange-and-blue dance hall with a soda fountain, tables and heavy carpeting covering half its area abutted a polished, sprung wood floor commonly described as 250 feet by 50 feet, as long as a football field and about half as wide, though these measurements were probably exaggerated. Due to excessive wear by the approximately twenty-five million pairs of dancing feet that crossed the floor between 1926 and 1958, the floor needed replacing on at least four occasions. A disappearing stage at one end, two bandstands holding the "best big bands in the nation" meant there was never a pause in the music, one band picking up the beat as the other left off.⁴

Over time, the Savoy attracted capacity audiences to dance contests on Saturdays, and to special events such as Battle of the Bands, often held on Sundays, in which top swing orchestras such as Benny Goodman's and Chick Webb's fought for supremacy. Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, and Count Basie were all regulars.

Integration

Unlike many ballrooms, the Savoy had a no-discrimination policy from the beginning. Pre-World War II publicity called the Savoy a place where "social, racial, and economic problems fade away to nothingness." Fostering an environment that would attract both black and white customers required control. The management insisted on what, in their terms, was a decorous, safe atmosphere. According to historian Jervis Anderson this was one key to the Savoy's success. The high level of safety "guaranteed the best behavior," meaning "girls were not afraid to come. Outside of the music, if you can't get girls to come you have nothing."⁵

In creating one of the first racially integrated public spaces in the country Faggen, Gale, and Buchanan also proved to be wise businessmen. On any given night the lobby was filled with black and white dancers milling around; at one period about half the people at the Savoy were white and half black. Thousands packed the hardwood dance floor—men in tails and cutaways, women in gleaming dresses and fur coats, others in simple clothing. The cops, fearing the reaction to the mixed dancing, hated it.

"We were the first people in the world who were integrated. We didn't have segregation at the Savoy," Lindy Hopper Norma Miller said at 86.⁶ "The Savoy opened the doors for all people being together." Patrons were judged by their talent on the dance floor, not the color of their skin, reported swing teacher Frankie Manning, recalling the following story. "One night somebody came over and said, 'Hey man, Clark Gable just walked in the house.' Somebody else said, 'Oh, yeah, can he dance?' All they wanted to know when you came into the Savoy was, do you dance?"⁷

The Big Draw: The Savoy Dancers

While there was no dancing without the music, without doubt the Savoy's main attraction was the dancers. The owners were not philanthropists; they saw money to be made in "provid[ing] an outlet for the mass social dance aspirations of the predominantly black local community."⁸ In return, in response to ever-changing music trends—Dixieland, ragtime, jazz, blues, swing, stomp, boogie-woogie, bop—dancers constantly reworked and invented dances. A succession of dance fads launched from the Savoy swept the nation and the world, including: the Flying Charleston, The Stomp, The Big Apple, Peckin', Snakehips, Rhumboogie, and intricate variations of the Peabody, the Shimmy, Mambo, etc. The Lindy Hop, the original swing dance, became the ballroom's flagship dance. At first the Savoy management tried to keep dancing low-key, but as the fame of swing, Charleston and other dances grew, the role of dance in the Savoy's economic life was clear.

The ballroom's stars were known as "Savoy Lindy Hoppers." George "Shorty" Snowden created the Lindy Hop (for a fuller discussion, see [swing](#)) in 1928 with his partner Mattie Purnell at the Manhattan Ballroom. His professional Lindy Hop troupe, the first, performed with the Paul Whitman Orchestra at the Paradise Club throughout the thirties. A skilled comedian, "Shorty" enhanced his Lindy routines with humorous steps. Other troupe members included Leroy "Stretch" Jones, known for his grace and flash, and "Twistmouth George" Ganaway. Ganaway stopped dancing at the Savoy in the 1930s to become a professional solo dancer. He's credited with inventing the twist step sometimes performed in place of the swing back step.

From 1935 to 1943 a second Savoy-based dance group, Whitey's Lindy Hoppers, created opportunities for stage and film work for a group of young dancers. Like Snowden's group they performed, but in addition—shocked at the toll they perceived performing had taken on Jones—they continued to social dance at the Savoy. In turn, the management, though not compensating them, played up their presence on the dance floor, particularly in front of visiting celebrities and tourists. The investment in social dancing led some dancers to a brief fame, while for others it led to careers.

Herbert White, a.k.a. Whitey, was an ex-boxer and a bouncer at the Savoy. Good at spotting talent, he cultivated a group of young Lindy Hoppers, organizing them, acting as teacher and agent. The dancers worked in films including 1941's *Hellzapoppin'* and *Hot Chocolates*, and on stage in *Hot Mikado* with [Bill "Bojangles" Robinson](#). Many young dancers passed through Whitey's troupe, but an iconic few were instrumental in the development and perpetuation of swing dance.

Among them was Frankie "Musclehead" Manning, a member of the Hall of Fame at the National Museum of Dance in Saratoga Springs, N.Y. Manning died in 2009 following a long second career as a beloved swing ambassador and teacher after having spent much of his adult life as a postal worker rarely speaking of his

performing years. A highly competitive dancer, Manning developed a unique style that separated him from first generation swing dancers like Snowden. Positioning his body at an acute angle to the ground, Manning danced like a track runner instead of upright in ballroom-dance stance. The angle, a more spring-loaded position, was perfect for launching into the aerial steps for which he was known. The 1980s swing revival brought Manning back to dancing when a pair of young dancers found his name in a phone book and he agreed to teach them a few steps.

Al Minns, the youngest in the group, was notable for his high energy and spectacular “crazy-leg” style. Like Manning, he danced at a low angle. In 1938, with Sandra Pollard-Gibson, he won the Harvest Moon Ball (an annual amateur dance championship contest in New York City.) The win led to jobs in the Cotton Club, at Radio City Music Hall, and in shows and films like *Cabin in the Sky* (1940). With Leon James he developed a comedy-variety act in the 1940s. The act, which included dancing, helped spread swing. The Johnny Carson show invited Minns and James to be part of their daily pre-show entertainment. Unfortunately, James had a heart attack, scrapping the plan. Minns eventually was invited as a solo guest. In the 1960s, Minns and James toured exhibitions of Charleston, Shim Sham, Lindy Hop and other dances, trying to help keep these forms alive. It was through these shows that Marshall and Jean Stearns, authors of the classic work *Jazz Dance: The Story of American Vernacular Dance*, discovered Minns, who was extensively interviewed for the book. In the 1980s, Minns was invited to teach in Sweden by dancers who, until then, had learned to dance from videotapes. Minns died at 65 in 1985 in Queens, New York.

Norma Miller’s individual style was a unique mix—inventive, with a sense of humor matched only by her sense of rhythm. At 14, Miller was too young to enter the Savoy. But the music could be clearly heard outside on the sidewalk, so she practiced there. The first time she set foot on the Savoy floor, dancing with “Twistmouth” George, Whitey watched the unknown newcomer win a contest. She beat his dancers *again* at an Apollo Theater

contest. “I’d rather you danced *with* me than *against* me,” he said when he invited her to join the Lindy Hoppers.⁹

Miller spun her dancing into a show business career. In addition to the Lindy Hopper movies, she can be seen in the Marx Brothers’ *A Day at the Races* (1937) and, with Manning, her life-long friend, in Debbie Allen’s *Stomping at the Savoy* (1993), which she choreographed with Manning assisting. She and Manning also appear in Spike Lee’s *Malcolm X* (1992), where Manning also performs with cabaret star turned Lindy Hopper Dawn Hampton, sister of trombonist Slide Hampton. Hampton still dances at New York Swing events as of 2012. In the 1960s, Miller began working with Redd Foxx at his comedy club. She joined him in the cast and as choreographer of his 1970s television series, *Sanford and Son*. She has also choreographed for [Alvin Ailey](#) American Dance Theater. In Ken Burns’s documentary, *Jazz* (2001), Miller provides a first-hand account of the Harlem music and dance scene of the 1930s and '40s. The latest documentary about Miller, *Queen of Swing* (produced by Judy Pritchett and Savoy Style, not released as of December, 2012) takes an inside look at Miller's influence on the globalization of America's jazz culture, and at the role she and her fellow artists—Bill Cosby and Frankie Manning among them—played in racial integration. The author of three books, most recently Miller became the subject of a biography for children, *Stompin’ at the Savoy*.¹⁰ In November of 2012, at the age of 92, Miller performed at the 80th birthday celebration of Frankie Manning’s son Chazz, a tap dancer who danced in Miller’s company. She was honored with a 2003 National Heritage Foundation Fellowship from the [National Endowments of the Arts](#) for her role in creating and continuing to preserve “the acrobatic style swing dance, known as the Lindy Hop.”

Whitey’s keen eye for talent was indifferent to race, and he always had a few white dancers in the group. Ruthie Rheingold and Harry Rosenberg were known as “Whitey’s White Lindy Hoppers.” Rosenberg, a Bronx “tough guy,” came from a family so poor that he had spent two years in an

orphanage when they were unable to raise him at home. Rosenberg was not easily intimidated. It was 1936 the first time he walked into the Savoy Ballroom and looked around the dance floor at the great dancers. "I'm gonna' be the best dancer in the Savoy Ballroom," was his first thought, he told Savoy Style researcher and archivist Judy Pritchett. Then, he told Pritchett, his eyes fell on Frankie Manning. Manning had not even swung out, he and his partner were just jockeying in place. But Rosenberg saw something and quickly revised his prediction: "I'm gonna be the best white dancer in the Savoy Ballroom."¹¹

Ruthie Rheingold (Ettin) first entered the Savoy Ballroom in 1934 when she was 16. It was a happy accident—her brother and his friend took her and a girlfriend along because they had been stood up by their dates. A lively young woman Rheingold adored swing music. "Although I was a little shy," she told Pritchett, "the music took the shyness away."¹² Rheingold became a regular.

Whitey matched Rosenberg and Rheingold as partners, though they had never danced together before. Rosenberg could be difficult and temperamental, but the two of them danced sensationally together. They were never romantically involved; it was the dancing was important to them.

The crowd at the Savoy may have been comfortable seeing dancers of different races mingle, but the rest of the country was not, and Rosenberg and Rheingold were often excluded from film performances and publicity photographs of Whitey's Lindy Hoppers. Rheingold remembers that when the press came to take photographs or news-films, she and Rosenberg were always shooed out of the picture. "Why was that?" she asks today. Frankie Manning says that the censorship was imposed by the press and did not come from Whitey or the management of the Savoy Ballroom.¹³

In 1958 Sonny Allen was the last Savoy representative to win the Harvest Moon Ball, but Whitey's Hoppers and their heirs dominated the annual Ball in Madison Square Garden until the

1980s. Louise "Mama Lu" Parks was a hostess at the Savoy when it closed. She promised Charles Buchanan that she would make sure the Lindy Hop portion of the Harvest Moon Ball dance competition continued. To do so she had to figure out how to preserve and continue the dance. She started classes teaching the performance and competition aspects of classic Savoy swing and dances like mambo to a new generation of dancers, and she created a company, the Mama Lu Parks Jazz Dancers. They performed in clubs and on stage. Many of Ms. Parks's dancers came to her as children including, at an early stage of their career, tap dancers Maurice and [Gregory Hines](#). Following an international swing dance competition at the World Rock 'N' Roll Federation in Germany, the London Weekend Television, in 1981, restaged a swing contest with Parks's dancers in Small's Paradise Club on 7th Ave, an old Harlem music venue. Airing in 1982, the show sparked so much interest in swing that Mama Lu Parks and her Traditional Jazz Dance Company toured the UK for two years.¹⁴ As a result of Park's tour, swing class sprang up in England and in the mid-1980s, after swing scholar Terry Monaghan met Warren Heyes at a workshop, they founded the London-based British dance company, The Lindy Hop Jivers, who were instrumental in sparking the 1980s Lindy Hop fad in the UK.¹⁵

Dancing at the Savoy

Every evening the Savoy's huge floor filled with dancers. As at venues like the Cotton Club, wealthy downtown whites flocked to watch the dancing. But here, encouraged by the Savoy's controlled integrated environment, they sometimes joined in, establishing a dance floor on which the rich mixed with the working poor. The low-priced admission made it possible for domestics, dockworkers, and shoe shiners to enter. Anderson makes the poetic, but controversial and unlikely claim that these working-class dancers arrived with patches on their pants and holes in their shoes. Malcolm X's 1940s description of dancers at a Boston ballroom is more likely—"the black girls in way out silk and satin dresses and shoes, their hair done in all kinds of styles, the men sharp in their zoot suits and crazy conks."¹⁶ Once you got on the dance

floor no one cared; it didn't matter how you dressed so long as you could dance.¹⁷

A former Baltimore ballet dancer and teacher, in a 1980s interview, described dancing at a similar Baltimore hall during her teens in the 1940s. "Everyone went dancing on Saturdays—that was your weekend date—the highlight of the week!... 'Temple dances'... were over by ten. [Then] my partner and I often went to the big black dance hall. We could only dance there on Saturdays. I'd say the ratio was about ninety percent black to ten percent white, but we never felt awkward... [We] really let go—I did the aerials—most of them anyway. [The black dancers] did dances most people considered 'far-out'... there was lots of use of the upper body—very loose—just beautiful! When my partner and I entered... dance contests in the 'white' halls, we always won—we'd seen the best and we really danced!"¹⁸

The constant negotiation between innovation and acceptability shaped dancing at the Savoy. "Shorty" Snowden "recalled tight control being exercised"—only "permitted styles of dancing" were allowed during the ballroom's early years, though the Savoy, recognizing the economic value of the jitterbugs, did not bar the dancers for fear of injuries as other ballrooms of the period did. Snowden's "fellow dancers had to calm down their exertions to an acceptable form of Shag or other medium-speed dance" when the bouncers were looking, precluding "exuberant dance innovation." Using fast traveling steps, however, they moved around the dance floor away from prying eyes to where they could practice lifts and acrobatic techniques.¹⁹

Early on, blues was the music of the Savoy. Dancing a fox-trot or one-step to blues results in a slow-drag, that dance everyone does in high school, arms wrapped tightly around neck and waist, bodies close together. Perpetually concerned with decorum, The Savoy employed tuxedo-clad, burly bouncers (ex-prize-fighters and basketball players, according to one former dancer) whose job consisted of overseeing behavior—everything from throwing out trouble-

makers to insisting that couples "keep it moving" around the floor. Bouncers tried to curb any hold deemed too close, including those used in the Charleston and the Shag, hot dances in 1926.²⁰ Like swing that followed it, the Charleston featured a breakaway. Hubbard and Monaghan describe it as "a pivotal move away and back by two dancers on one side who thus alternated between an open and closed hold."

The pressure was not all from inside the Savoy's management. A vindictive six-month police closure of the Savoy in 1943 made apparent the range of attitudes toward the ballroom that its management had long dealt with and which had shaped many decisions. In 1936, for example, "management attempted to replace the Thursday 'kitchen mechanics' evening, usually the raunchiest night of the week, with 'old-style' entertainment" write Hubbard and Monaghan.²¹ "Instead of the usual packed ballroom of live-in maids and their male partners 'letting off steam' before the former had to work all weekend as domestics," Hubbard and Monaghan continue, the Savoy proposed communally sung minstrel songs and 19th century dances such as the Cakewalk, quadrille, and waltz as a replacement. "The 'kitchen mechanics' apparently thought otherwise, and 'their' Thursday soon reverted to its usual format." While the management lost most of their battles over proper dancing, a waltz to "Home, Sweet Home" remained the last dance of the evening throughout the Savoy's thirty-two years.

Popular Saturday night competitions pushed good dancers to invent new steps and refine their styling. In 1935, dancing to "Down South Camp Meeting," 21-year old Frankie Manning created the first air-step, "flipp[ing] Frieda Washington over his back in a heels-over-the-head maneuver on the dance floor. He was more than a little nervous. "They had rehearsed beforehand with his bedroom mattress close by, just in case." The couple was the last to compete. "I had to follow all them other teams that went out there and tore the floor," he told reporter Manny Fernandez in 2006. "Shorty Snowden, who was the greatest dancer in the world as far as I was concerned, had

just danced in front of me and I was saying, 'Man, I ain't going out there.'" But as the Chick Webb band played, Manning and Washington linked arms, "his back to hers. Manning bent over and catapulted Washington over him, a split-second feat....That move...did more than earn his team a victory that night. It helped make him a dancing legend."²²

While official contests happened primarily on Saturday nights, unofficial contests happened all the time. A ten-foot-square piece of dance floor to the right of the bandstand "had an invisible rope around it....The King [whoever was currently considered the best dancer] would dance in that spot, and then it would be left empty. People said, 'He left the floor too hot to follow.'"²³ This was the Cats' Corner, frequented by the likes of Snowden, Manning, and Minns.²⁴ The King earned his title by winning informal elimination contests between the best dancers in the hall. Commonly known as "Showtime," the contest occurred approximately a third of the way through the evening, unofficially signaled by the main vocalizing and instrumental stylings of the band. Non-participating dancers formed a big "U" on the dance floor with the bandstand on the fourth side, creating an informal theater in the round. Spotlights added to the effect, picking out "Showtime" couples, turning their wild dancing pink, yellow, green, and blue. The crowd determined each night's winning couple. Longevity on the dance floor was the primary criteria, but style and innovation were also important. Clapping and shouting the whole time, the audience spurred on their favorites. Side bets in the audience led to cash prizes for the dancers. Those who frequently won contests were invited to join the elite 400 Club, whose members could come to the Savoy Ballroom during daytime hours to practice alongside the bands that were booked for the Savoy's evening. They also got in at reduced prices, and occasionally, received pay for dancing when celebrities were in the house²⁵

Monaghan and Hubbard point out that "grasping the management's role in facilitating its customers," even during times of adversity, is key to understanding dancing at the Savoy during its

thirty-two year history. "Responding to pressures to 'control' and at times to 'reshape' dance-floor creativity, management both devised positive marketing spin to deflect criticism and selectively promoted dance-floor-inspired practices that boosted the financial well-being of the ballroom."²⁶ They suggest that the history of the Savoy can be read in two ways, one a range of "'dismissive' viewpoints" the other self-serving "'supportive'" ones. Both, they write, have played a role in shaping modern perceptions of dancing.

Decline and Revival

The Savoy lasted longer than most ballrooms. A combination of factors—technology, economy, social style—led to a decline in lavish nightclubs in the post-World War II era. Big halls were increasingly expensive to support, and patrons were unable, or unwilling, to pay large admission fees, particularly when dance floors reappeared in local bars. Private, Depression-born cellar clubs, low-cost venues for dancing in the 1930s, existed in both black and white neighborhoods all over the country, but were especially prominent in New York. Technological changes—the spread of radios and record players—made dancing in homes, gyms, and smaller, low-cost venues practical, a desirable option during the Depression. Changes in sound production—microphones and various forms of recorded sound—made dancing in smaller and more intimate settings possible. Last, and perhaps most important, these new settings for dance fit a new, casual style of socializing that was increasingly popular.

Dance halls and ballrooms survived for a time by keeping admission prices below a dollar--the Savoy charged 30 cents for dancers who arrived before 6 PM. They struck alliances with local radio stations. Promotional appearances by DJ's, and contests or parties, drew patrons to ballrooms. Despite this respite, the big ballrooms began to close one by one due to urban renewal, under-utilization, and the difficulty of maintaining such large halls. Eventually, in New York, there was only Roseland. Apart from the single NYPD-enforced six-month closure in 1943, the dancing at the Savoy never stopped until July 10, 1958.

Then the legendary ballroom closed forever, despite promises to reopen. In 1959 the Savoy was torn down to make room for Delano Village, a housing development, today renamed Savoy Park. In 2002 a commemorative plaque was erected on Lenox Ave between 140th and 141st Streets. It was Frankie Manning's 88th birthday and both he and Norma Miller attended along with local and international swing dancers from all eras. After the speeches, dancing erupted in the street.

NOTES:

1. Hubbard and Monaghan, 127.
2. Jerry Tallmer.
- 3 Hubbard and Monaghan, 128.
4. This description of the Savoy is a composite drawn from the listed websites and sources.
5. Anderson, 313.
6. Fernandez.
7. Fernandez.
8. Hubbard and Monaghan, 128.
9. Judy Pritchett and Frankie Manning, Savoy Style archive—
http://www.savoystyle.com/norma_miller.html.
10. "Stompin' at the Savoy" is considered the anthem of the swing era. With lyrics by Andy Razaf, the song was composed by Edgar Sampson, though, according to practices of the times, credit is also given to recording band leaders Benny Goodman and Chick Webb.
11. http://www.savoystyle.com/ruthie_harry.html
12. http://www.savoystyle.com/ruthie_harry.html
13. http://www.savoystyle.com/ruthie_harry.html
14. Manning and Millman, p. 12.
15. Dodson.
16. Malcom X, 49.
17. Fernandez.
18. Identity of speaker withheld by request from Berg.
- 19 Hubbard and Monaghan, 132
20. There were similar attempts to ban the waltz when it was first introduced to ballrooms, because it featured close physical contact between partners.
21. Hubbard and Monaghan, 127.
22. Fernandez, no page.
23. Anderson, 309, 313
24. For more on Savoy and other swing contests see Stearns, 321-327.

25. Stearns, 322-23.

26. Hubbard and Monaghan, 127.

For full citations to works referenced in this essay, see [Selected Resources for Further Research](#).

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