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### **Tea dances revived at the West Baden Springs Hotel**

WEST BADEN -- Tea dances, once a popular offering in fine hotels, are being revived at the West Baden Springs Hotel by Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana-at least until construction resumes to create guest rooms in the 1902 southern Indiana landmark later this year. Late afternoon tea dances will draw ballroom dancing experts, novices and spectators to the National Historic Landmark's elegant circular lobby on September 10 and November 19, 3:30 to 7:00 p.m.

Foxtrot, cha-cha, jitterbug and other dances popularized during the swing era dominate the play list. But you might see the occasional "monkey knees" and windmilling arms of the Charleston, danced to a 1920s ragtime rhythm, along with demonstrations of the Castle Walk, Black Bottom, and Lindy Hop. Tea is free, with a cash bar for cocktails. Cost of each tea dance is \$25 per person and a reservation is required.

Music on September 10 will be provided by Brass & Ivory, an Indianapolis trio popular for dance events because of their broad repertoire. Brass & Ivory will concentrate on dance music of the '20s and 30s. On November 19, Louisville's 17-member Moonlight Big Band and vocalist will delve into the '30s and '40s songbook to feature swing, waltz and Latin dance music.

Less than a decade after the West Baden Springs Hotel was built in 1902, a dance craze swept the western world. From Chicago to London to Paris, handymen and dukes alike began two-stepping and foxtrotting. In 1910, everyone had to learn the Argentine Tango. Hotels began staging late afternoon "tea dances" so young men and women concerned about reputation and social standing could indulge in the craze without resorting to unchaperoned dance halls.

Tea dances continued, eventually with the addition of cocktails, until World War II. They have become popular once again, especially in England. In the U.S., network television's "Dancing with the Stars" and the proliferation of ballroom dancing clubs and studios suggest the early 20th-century craze may be repeated in the 21st.

Historic Landmarks Foundation continues to offer sightseeing tours daily at the West Baden Springs National Historic Landmark throughout the restoration of the property to its status as an operating resort. (The site has not served as a hotel since the 1930s.) The 1902 French Lick Springs Resort, one mile away, remains open as it undergoes restoration in connection with the creation of the new French Lick Springs Casino, projected to open late in 2006. West Baden Springs will reopen as a hotel in July 2007. The hotel restorations and casino is a project of Blue Sky, LLC, a joint venture of Bloomington's Cook Group and Indianapolis developer Lauth Group.

Tours at West Baden Springs are offered on the hour: Monday - Saturday, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m., and Sunday, noon - 4 p.m. For more information, [HERE](#).