



Benjamin Lovett
Milestone, 1980

To honor Mr. Lovett with this award is essentially to honor Henry Ford, developer of the motor car in the early 1900s. For it was Ford's love of square dancing he had developed as a farmboy in Greenfield Township, a few miles west of Detroit, that started it all. In his later years, when his thoughts turned nostalgically to the past, he remembered the good times at those country dances, and just as he bought early American houses and shops and moved them to Greenfield Village, Ford bought himself a dance teacher.

It is said that in the summers the Ford family would spend their vacations at an elegant lodge in Massachusetts, where it happened that Benjamin Lovett called traditional American dances in the evenings. So taken by Lovett's ability, Ford offered him a rather princely salary and a new car each year, if he would come back to Detroit with him and introduce this form of dancing to the employees of the Ford Company. Lovett turned him down, saying, he was under contract to the hotel and it would not be morally right to break the contract. So Ford bought the hotel and the contract.

Lovett settled in to his new routine in Dearborn, opened a dance class, and Ford officials reportedly tumbled over themselves in an eagerness to attend.

Lovett's success and fame grew. Ford built an elegant structure for dancing which he named "Lovett Hall." At Ford's encouragement, Lovett compiled many of the old calls into a book, "Good Morning", which served to preserve many of the old favorites for future generations.

At one point, when "Ben" was sharing these dances with the school children in the greater Detroit area, he reported to Mr. Ford that the program was being held up due to the need for qualified musicians. Together they decided that the solution lay in producing phonograph records of Lovett's band so, calling in the help of Ford's friend, Thomas Edison, the first useable square dance records were produced.

Benjamin Lovett passed away September 4, 1952, leaving many legends behind for future generations to enjoy.