

PARK CITY

MAGAZINE



**BOSTON? PHILADELPHIA?
MOVE OVER.
GOOD MANNERS BELONG
EVERYWHERE - INCLUDING
PARK CITY!**

Winter for Park City children traditionally brings activities one would expect in a mountain resort setting: snowboarding, skiing, and school sports. For nearly 200 Park City students, however, it also brings Cotillion.

What is Cotillion? The dictionary defines it as “A complex formalized dance for a large number of people.” In Park City, it means children aged 9 to 14 meet once a month from October to February at Saint Mary’s Church Recreation Center to learn social skills in dance and etiquette with the Jon D. Williams Cotillion. Students are divided into two age-appropriate groups, taught by Mr. Williams or one of several other instructors who travel from Denver to conduct classes. Established in 1949 at the Broadmoor Hotel in Colorado Springs, Colorado, by Jon’s parents, this nationally acclaimed cotillion has served Salt Lake City for over 33 years, and now Park City for the past seven years.



A typical evening at cotillion begins as students turn to face their prospective dance partners, looking them straight in the eye and then bowing or curtsying and shaking hands. A firm handshake is essential, because, as students learn, during any social contact, another person will make a mental evaluation of you within the first seven to ten seconds! Also essential for fourth and fifth grade girls: white gloves. (The reason? Younger children are often squeamish about skin to skin contact with the opposite sex.)

Formalities completed, couples proceed to a reception line. At this point, cotillion instructors address students as ladies and gentlemen, reminding the males and delighting the females with the lesson that ladies always go first.

Like all 57 J. D. Williams Cotillions throughout the country, Park City has its own culture. Although there is a very strict dress code (ties, jackets, long pants and dress shoes for boys; dresses, white gloves and dress shoes for girls), occasionally a student shows up in flip-flops, hiking boots, denim, or other minor infractions that reflect our casual mountain lifestyle. Violators are politely reminded to review their printed invitations for guidance. But dress faux'pas are minimal. The overall results are actually startling!



As you might expect, Park City children, conquerors of mountain slopes and sports fields, scrub up very nicely, thank you, rivaling more established cotillions like those in Philadelphia or Boston.

Throughout the cotillion season, between traditional dance lessons in the Foxtrot, Swing, Salsa or Tango, students are further schooled on manners and table etiquette ... much the same curriculum established by the cotillion almost 60 years ago. Yet cotillion's corporate mission statement reflects a modern view, "helping children learn the art of social skills and dance that often seem lost in our hectic and competitive world, "Some skeptics suspect cotillion is an agonizing experience for students, as attendance is

usually parent-motivated. Others think formal dance and etiquette at odds with a mountain community like Park City that boasts an outdoor, casual lifestyle. Observing a cotillion session, however, you can't help but notice that most students are enjoying themselves. Many love it. Even more surprising, of all the J. D. Williams Cotillion locations nationwide, Park City historically enrolls more boys than girls.

Boston? Philadelphia? Move over. Good manners belong everywhere. Including Park City!

— Laurel Ross