

THE GOTHIC DANCE

A line of gentlemen holding hands down the line facing a line of ladies holding hands down the line. As many as 15 or so couples may be in each set.

2 beats	Ladies Forward four steps towards the gents' line.
2 beats	Gents Forward four steps while the ladies step backward four steps. On count four, the gentlemen lift their arms to form a line of arches down the hall.
2 beats	Ladies Pass Under the arches: each lady, after releasing hands, passes by the right shoulder (that is, under the right arm) of their own partner (the lady at the foot of the set passes around by the right shoulder), taking four steps forward.
2 beats	All Turn Around to the right, the gents releasing hands to do so. The ladies' line and the gents' line have now exchanged places. After turning, ladies and gents take hands along their respective lines.
8 beats	Repeat all of the above to regain original places. The ladies again pass by the right of their partners; this time the lady had the head has no arch to go under and so just passes her partner by the right side.
8 beats	Head Two Couples Circle clockwise three-quarters of the way around; that is, until man 1 is in the original man 2 position, man 2 is in the original woman 2 position, woman 1 in the original man 1 position, and woman 2 in the original woman 1 position. The two gentlemen face up the set and make an arch between them with their joined hands. The two ladies release hands and pass quickly under the arch, around their own partner and then under the arch again. Each lady stops circling and faces their own partner when they next reach the point to the right of their partner (that is, each lady ends in a position standing between their own partner and the line of ladies). Partners then take each other in ballroom position, the gentlemen's left hands and ladies' right hands pointing towards the head of the hall.
8 beats	Head two couples Chassez down to the foot of the set, gents moving to their right, ladies to their left. At the foot of the set, fall back from partners and into the lines, taking hands for the repeat of the dance with new head couples.

The dance continues at least until all couples have performed the figure and the original head couples are back at the head position.

The final 12 bars of the dance (the head two ladies going around their respective partners and the chassez down the set) should have something of the quality of a race, but safety must be observed at all times as it is easy to become off balanced during the chassez steps. Gentlemen must be careful not to rush their partners who are likely to be encumbered by rather voluminous gowns. If the ladies are unwilling to make haste during the circling of their partners, modify the figure to have them pass only once under the arch. It is imperative that the two couples reach the foot of the set and fall into line before the ladies start forward for the repeat of the dance.

Elise Howe's *American Dancing Master* (1862). To the best of my knowledge, this dance had not performed for over a century prior to my introduction of it at Civil War reenactment dances several years ago.