Castle, Vernon (1887-1918), and Irene (1893-1969) Encyclopedia Article

Castle, Vernon (1887-1918), and Irene (1893-1969)

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Widely admired for their graceful dance routines and smart fashion sensibilities, ballroom dancers Vernon and Irene Castle spurred the national craze for new, jazz-oriented dance styles in the years before World War I. In an age of widespread racism, the Castles helped popularize African-American and Latin-American dances, including the foxtrot and tango, previously considered too sensual for white audiences. With the opening of their own dance school and rooftop night club, the Castles became the darlings of New York City café society. National dancing tours, movie appearances, and a steady stream of magazine and newspaper articles swelled the couple's celebrity status to include increasing numbers of middle class men and women. Often depicted as the most modern of married couples, it was the Castles' successful use of shared leisure activities to strengthen their marriage, as much as their superior dance talents, that made them the most popular dancers of their time.

Further Reading:

Castle, Irene. *Castles in the Air.* Garden City, New York, Doubleday, 1958.

Erenberg, Lewis A. *Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930.* Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1981.