

## LAKESIDE DANCE PAVILION

On Lake Hortonia in Sudbury, Vermont

On Walker Grove Road off Route 30

By Irene and Bob Walker – 2005

### Background

According to the “The Encyclopedia Americana” a PAVILION is, in architecture, a turret or small building, usually isolated, with a tent-like roof. The name is also applied to a projecting portion of any building having a tent roof. The term pavilion was originally applied to any light open structure with a roof or canopy so provided as to give it protection. It was so called on account of its butterfly appearance. This description is accurate for the Lake Hortonia Dance Pavilion, or Lakeside Dance Pavilion.

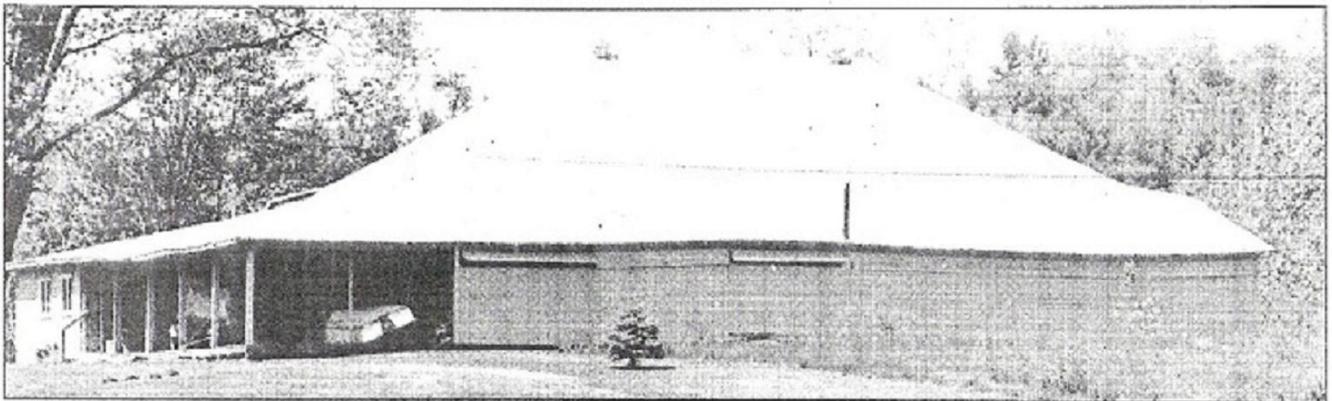
These facts are portions of a taped interview of Joe Lewis Fortier (a retired native and resident of Sudbury, Vermont) by Irene and Bob Walker. Mr. Fortier was 85 at the time of the interview in February 1998.

Monday/Food  
Tuesday/Hobbies or Youth  
Wednesday/Pop Scene

# Living

HOME

Rutland Daily Herald ♦ Saturday Morning, May 22, 1993 ♦ Page 8



### Barns, Etc.

By Albert J. Marro

In the early 20th century virtually every large lake had a dance hall where townspeople would gather on weekends. The pavilion in Sudbury, almost tent-like, features a hip roof.

### From Potatoes to Pavilion

In the early 1920's, Joe's father (Julius Fortier) was living with his wife and two sons on the northeast corner of the junction of the Burr Pond Road and the St John Road. (This was the home in which Bill Steele Jr. subsequently lived in until Bill died.) Julius needed land to plant potatoes, so he made an agreement with Henry C Mallory to use a few acres of Mallory's land on the shore of Lake Hortonia for that purpose. Julius would load the potatoes onto a wagon after harvest and peddle them in Brandon.

Things were prospering after World War I and people were buying cars and moving around more freely. There were other dance pavilions on Lake Dunmore and on Lake Bomoseen. Julius had the idea that this might work on Lake Hortonia as well.

Julius approached Henry with the idea and the two drew up a contract that Joe Lewis Fortier still has. The “Pavilion” was born on October 23, 1923. Construction was started in 1924 when the weather permitted. Henry Mallory was in a wheel chair and was unable to help with the actual construction. Julius helped the hired contractors of Ernest Johnson (from the Horseshoe Road), Moss Sullivan (from Sudbury Hill), and Charley Graves and his son (from the Smith House which was also known as the “Grave’s House”, just north of former Sudbury Town Clerk Patti Smith’s house on Breakneck Hill on Route 30) . Joe wasn’t sure if they had dances that summer or not.

Dances were held on Wednesdays and Fridays for a few years and then only on Fridays.

### **Bottles and Cars**

Joe and his brother Kenneth were in charge of repairing and patching the roof as well as cleaning up after the dances. They would get up early in the morning after the dances to clean the grounds of bottles and trash.

Prohibition was in force so people would hide their bottles of liquor along the fence line. Sometimes during the dances, Joe and his brother would steal these bottles, just to make people mad. The brothers thought this was great fun. If someone was arrested for drinking, they might leave their car on the grounds overnight. The two boys would try to start the car and if they were successful, they would drive it around the grounds.

### **The Polishing Dog**

Another part of cleaning up after the dances was polishing the hardwood floor. The boys dad built a box about three feet by one foot, with a handle and flannel on the bottom of the box. Their dad said they could put rocks inside the box to weigh it down. However the boys felt using the stones sounded too laborious, so they convinced their dog to sit in the box while they pulled him around. This had to have been quite a job for these boys because the dance floor was three thousand square feet.

### **Electricity Plant**

One of jobs for the two boys was to keep the electricity plant working during the actual dance. There was a little building out back with a generator and about twelve batteries. This was a Delco plant with a gasoline engine that ran continuously on dance night.

### **Hot Dogs and Ice Cream**

The kitchen was originally located on the southwest corner inside the building. It was later extended onto the porch. At that time the porch extended the full length of the south side of the building.

They served hot dogs, candy, soft drinks, and ice cream. The ice cream and soft drinks were kept cold with large blocks of ice from the ice house on the premises. Ice picks were used to chip away at the blocks and the chips were spread around the items to be kept cold.

### **Band: High and Hotter than Hell**

The band stand was a raised platform in the middle of the floor high above the heads of the dancers. There were steps for the band members and a pulley system to bring up their instruments. Initially there were no vents in the roof, which were installed later. You can imagine how hot it must have been in the summer with the heat rising to the bandstand from hundreds of the dancers below. This arrangement lasted one year. A two step band stand was added to the north end of the building. On a beam on the upper level were the words: “Hotter than Hell – 1925”.

### **Big Stone – Big Hole**

They decided to remove a huge rock. When they started digging they realized it was too large to take out, so they dug a large hole beside it. This undermined the rock so it toppled into the hole. So much for the big rock!

### **Deaths**

Soon after the Pavilion was in full swing, Henry Mallory died leaving his interest in the Pavilion to his daughter Vella Mallory. She was single and took care of her father in their home on the northwest corner of Route 30 and Walker Grove Road.

In January 1927 Julius Fortier died, leaving a wife in her 30's and two 16 and 14 year old sons. They continued to help with the Pavilion during the summer of 1927. Mrs. Julius Fortier then married Guy St. John. The interest in the Fortier property was exchanged for property on the St. John Road, resulting in Vella Mallory having sole ownership of the Pavilion.

### **Low Cost Mowing**

The grounds were never mowed in the early days because all the traffic from the cars kept it down. A dirt road made a complete circle around the building. Cars parked all around the grounds with someone there to direct them. That was Guy St. John's job at one time.

The men's outhouse was near the lake behind the still existing oak trees. The women's restroom was inside at the northeast end of the Pavilion. Subsequently an addition to the west side of the building housed two bathrooms: one for men and one for women.

Andrew and Mabel Webster and their son Bernard (who lived at the corner of Routes 73 and 30) worked at the Pavilion: Andrew was constable, Mabel worked inside, and Bernard sold tickets.

The Depression did not seem to make any difference on attendance at the dances as far as Joe could remember.

### **Tid Bits from Viola and Bob Walker**

Most of the attendees were local people. The dances alternated between square and round. The largest crowd was about 700 after World War II.

Vella Mallory married George Butterfield in 1928. He always wore a large straw hat that the kids would come from behind and knock off.

To keep the glass bottles of soda cold, they would get ice from the icehouse on the peninsula. The large chunks of ice would be rinsed at the well pump to remove the sawdust. An ice pick was then used to get chips to put around the soda in the ice chests.

### **Big Wind in 1949 or 1950**

In the fall of 1949 or 1950 a hurricane blew off the kitchen and porch roof. It hit the shore on the northeast corner of the lawn and floated to the west side of the lake. Albert Walker, who was working for the Butterfields, took a motor boat and towed it back.

Large stacks of hemlock lumber were stored behind the Pavilion from trees that were blown down on the entire peninsula during this storm.

### **New Owners in 1957**

Albert and Viola (Mallory) Walker bought the Pavilion and the cottage property from Allen Plue and Vella (Mallory, then Butterfield, then Plue) in 1957. Viola Mallory was related to Henry Mallory, the original owner. They continued to run the Pavilion until 1965 when it closed permanently.

By 1957 there was electricity on the property.

### **The Bands**

The orchestras were: Ianni's, Burns Martin Preseau's. Singers were: Mrs. Delbert Dorr and Mr. Ianni's sister. Callers included: John Blackburn, Eugene Preseau, Pinky Johnson and William Valway

Dances were on Friday nights from 9 pm to 12:30 am with one 20 minute intermission. The last car and workers were usually gone by 1 am.

### **Cops – No Robbers**

Sheriffs included: Dorsey Narramore, Lorrillard de Lancey, Al Fish, Guy st. John, Virgil Smith, Prentis Smith, and Ed Lowell.

### **Personnel**

Checkers were: Delbert Dorr, Andrew Webster, Ed Lowell, and Al Walker. People were checked at the door to see they had a stamp on their hand.

Ticket sellers, kitchen workers, and others : Vella and George Butterfield, Mabel Waite, Bernard Webster, Henry Kilbourne, Bertha (Al Walker's sister) McCullough, Marie (Stomper) and George Senecal, Viola Walker, Robert Walker, Ruth Mallory (Viola Walker's sister), Marion Mallory (Viola Walker's mother), Cecile Preseau, plus Ruth and Ray Cook.

### **Cleaning Up**

Saturday was spent cleaning up. Bottles, papers, and broken glass were picked up. The kitchen on the southwest corner was cleaned and bottles were sorted. They used 5 to 10 cases each Friday of soda: orange, grape, root beer, coke, pepsi and seven up. On cool nights they also sold coffee. Hot dogs, rolls, cigarettes, candy, potato chips, gum, and soda all had to be reordered. Gum sales were discontinued as it was a big problem when it got stuck on the dance floor.

During the week the dance floor was swept and dusted. On Friday afternoon it was redusted and sprinkled with wax. The sides of the building were opened for dances, so dust could be a problem - especially in the kitchen. On hot dusty nights water was put on the roads to keep the dust down.

### **Keeping The Pavilion in The Family in 1970**

Albert Walker died in 1967. Albert's son Robert and Robert's wife, Irene (Hayes) Walker, purchased the Pavilion on December 22, 1970 from Viola (Mallory, then Walker, then Waite) Waite. In January 1971 construction began on the kitchen portion of the Pavilion for a one station hair salon, that opened in June 1971.

### **Changes in 1971 and 1983**

During the summer of 1971 the northwest corner of the Pavilion was remodeled into a two bedroom summer apartment. This used the women's side of the Pavilion's bathrooms. The men's side was used for the salon. The remodeling was completed by mid summer of 1972 and the apartment rented for 5 weeks.

The beauty salon stayed in business seasonally until September 1983 when it was moved into a year round addition to the Walker's house on Route 30. Then the old beauty salon was renovated into a one bedroom apartment for use in 1984. The rest of the Pavilion was used for storage.

### **Pavilion was sold in 1997**

On December 10, 1997 the Pavilion with 265 feet of lake frontage and about 1.64 acres of land was sold to Chiera Jo Mainolfi to be used as a private residence.

### **Property was sold to Jack Elliot (about 2005)**

The building was torn down and a beautiful log cabin erected. It was for sale in 2009 and was still available for purchase in May 2010.



# The Area News

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WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1993



This 1942 picture was taken at the "Pavilion" while Gene Preseau and Ianni's Orchestra from Rutland entertain square dancers who would come to the barn every Friday night. The members of the band known are: Seated - Bill Davis, of Poultney; the next two are unknown students of Napoleon Ianni; Ianni's sister Emma Dorr, Rutland. Standing: Gene Preseau, Orwell/Poultney; N. Ianni, Rutland; Ianni's son; and William Tarbell, Rutland.

# A Tribute To Gene Preseau "Caller" Extraordinaire

**Poultney** - Long-time residents of Poultney remember him as a store owner and butcher, many know him as Ed and Ellen's Dad, local motorists may refer to him as the elder gent who is never in a hurry. But by whatever association, most people in town know 74 year old Gene Preseau. What many may not know is that this man, at one time, was well known in the entertainment business.

When Gene was a growing boy, in the mid-1930's in Orwell, VT, he was beginning to get a name for himself as a "Caller" with the family "orchestra". At 16 years of age he was making \$2 per night "calling" for Preseau's Orchestra, which was formed by his brother Wilford and comprised of brothers and cousins.

After the family band broke up in 1939 Gene started playing with different orchestras around the lakes region, performing for birthdays, anniversaries or community gatherings. He eventually tied up with Ianni's Orchestra out of Rutland (Mr. Ianni was Rutland City's Band Director for many years.)

Every Friday night for 19 years, Gene and various bands performed at the Lake Side Pavilion on Lake Hortonia, one of many night spots which dotted the lakes area during that time period. "I was making \$12 bucks a night," he boasted proudly. Square dancing was the entertainment of the country population of Vermont. Gene was well known around the State. "I'll bet a third of the population of Vermont knew me at one time!" he exclaimed. "We'd have 48 sets of people out on the floor square dancing at once," Gene said as he leaned forward, grinning, looking over his spectacles as if to watch your reaction better. "I know over 100 calls." He reveled, with emphasis on the present

tense.

Gene was making money performing around the area at different functions, sometimes hiring the orchestra himself and playing up to seven nights a week. He played many times with LaDuke's Orchestra from Orwell. He would "sit-in" with many bands, some of which were even "radio bands". (These bands were those which were heard on the St. Albans radio station.) He "sat in" some times with The Jimmy Miller Orchestra at The Merry-Go-Round (Jerry Ann's Chateau, Sardella's Fireside Restaurant, Country Pleasure, in recent years) in Low Hampton, NY. He played with 14 orchestras over the years including the Larry Coutermarsh Orchestra, Burns Martin and his orchestra out of West Rutland, and he took great pleasure in telling of his calling with Slim Cox, "One of the top 10 fiddlers in the country," he said. "Still is," he added after some thought. Gene played quite a circuit in his "hay-day" but, his fondest memories however, were at the "Pavilion".

Gene, humbly, never indicated he was good enough to be a "radio caller" but he certainly had his chance to make it to the big time. The Vice President of the Coca Cola Bottling Company heard Gene at the "Pavilion" one night and tried to hire him for a promotional tour of the U.S. "He offered me \$18,000 to fly to Florida, Maine and California for a three month trip, all expenses paid," he said matter-of-factly. "Turned him down though, I had a wife and farm to take care of," he said proudly. In today's high energy world the V.P. probably wouldn't give up so easily, but because those were different times when a man who stood by his

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responsibilities was respected, the V.P. simply said, "Oh, well, this wouldn't be the life for you then." To hear Gene speak of it, it was no big thing and no great loss. After all, Gene didn't know it then but his life was about to change big time.

He was soon to be a father. Gene had two children; Ellen Davis who works at the drive up window of Green Mountain Bank in Poultney, and Ed Preseau who owns Preseau's Place, Main Street, Poultney.

In 1958 Gene moved to Poultney where he ran a grocery store until 1967 when he took over Quinn's Slaughter House of East Poultney. He was a butcher for more than thirty years.

He lost his wife Wilma (Beebe) Preseau at an early age. He semi-retired in the 1970's and cut meat for Prunier's Market in Hydeville. He still lives in Poultney today where he can be near his children and grandchildren.

He is a great asset to the community and at times he still "calls" whenever he gets the chance. He last called at the Poultney Senior Center a few years ago accompanied by Les Parker's Band. So the next time you see Gene Preseau and you think you're just looking at a retired, elderly gentleman, look again. As is the case with most of our seniors, they have lived a full and exciting life, one that probably would amaze most of us.