

Blueroom Dance Hall in Strasburg ND

Written by Merv Weiss, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

From Michael M Miller (Michael.Miller@ndsu.edu)

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On Sunday afternoon at I was driving to meet a German-Russian family in Fargo, I was listening to KFNW FM Christian Radio....Tim Dockter, the radio newscaster presented a special report that the famous dance hall in Strasburg, ND, had been lost to a Saturday evening fire. There were no further details given. Reports will appear in ND's Monday morning newspapers. The loss of the bar and dance hall was estimated to be about \$150,000.

Known to many in south-central North Dakota as "The Blueroom". For many wedding couples in the Strasburg/Linton/Hague area of Emmons County, ND, the festive German-Russian weddings took place at "The Blueroom" with many delicious German-Russian dinners and suppers.

From Jolenta Fischer Masterson

Wow, why should it come as hurting news..I think that building was there before I was born, although earlier it had been known as the MattRay ballroom, named for its owners, Matt Fischer and Ray Bueckler. Our home was on the other side of the block from the ballroom, and as a child I would go to sleep listening to the polkas and waltzes on dance night. The building also doubled as a movie theatre for many years...and on dance nights they would simply shove all the theatre seats to the side and it became a dance hall. I think we all hurt a little when a place of many memories goes up in smoke.

From Michael M Miller (Michael.Miller@ndsu.edu)

I well remember where your home in Strasburg and visiting your grandparents home.

Your memories about the dance hall are very touching. I hope that other subscribers will share memories they might have about the MattRay later Mattern's Blueroom. There were many family reunions, many weddings, and many fond memories shared in this historic site.

There likely was a tear or two shed by many as the dance hall went up in flames in one of our German-Russian villages here on the Dakota prairies. Strasburg will not be the same without "The Blueroom". It had recently been air-conditioned and redecorated by new owners.

"The Blueroom" hosted many famous dances including the Lawrence Welk Band and other traveling bands. While Mr. Welk began his musical career performing at wedding dances in his youth and then when he would return to play in Strasburg, "The Blueroom" had large and overflowing crowds.

I learned to dance the German polka and waltz at "The Blueroom". It is a sad day for the community of Strasburg and for the German-Russian community in North Dakota with the loss of such an important structure. The music culture of the Germans from Russia has lost an important landmark.

From Michael M Miller (Michael.Miller@ndsu.edu)

This article was in *The Forum* (Fargo, ND) Monday, December 9, 1996:

"First destroys Strasburg's historic Pin Palace"

Strasburg, ND (AP)

First destroyed the historic Pin Palace bowling alley and cafe.

The building - where musician Lawrence Welk worked as a boy suffered more than \$150,000 in damage Saturday.

Brian and Holly Salo had purchased the bowling alley three days earlier after leasing it for two years.

No one was injured in the fire , which started when the charbroiler ignited in the kitchen. The building's sprinklers extinguished the fire almost immediately. Brian Salo left to go home about 1 pm, but returned to find the building's roof in flames.

"What we're figuring is that the fan from the hood (above the charbroiler) sucked the fire up through to the roof," Salo said.

The Blueroom dance hall in Strasburg is still standing....it was the Pin Palace that has suffered a big loss for this small German-Russian community. Brian Salo is of German-Russian ancestry from Aberdeen, SD. He makes wonderful German-Russian dishes and pastries. We hope the Salos will rebuild and stay in the community of Strasburg.