



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" on the appropriate line or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name SURF BALLROOM

other names/site number SURF BALLROOM & MUSEUM

2. Location

street & number 460 NORTH SHORE DRIVE N/A not for publication

city or town CLEAR LAKE N/A vicinity

state IOWA code IA county CERRO GORDO code 033 zip code 50428

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility) meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet) the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally). (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Barbara O. Mitchell / DSHPO July 18 2011
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property (meets does not meet) the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is :

- entered in the National Register.
_ See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the
National Register
- See continuation sheet
- determined not eligible for the
National Register
- removed from the National
Register.
- Other, (Explain)

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

by Barbara Wyatt 9-6-11

Surf Ballroom
Name of Property

Cerro Gordo County, Iowa
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many lines as apply)
Category of Property (Check only one line)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION&CULTURE/MUSIC FACILITY

RECREATION&CULTURE/MUSIC FACILITY
RECREATION&CULTURE/MUSEUM

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT/MODERNE

foundation CONCRETE
walls BRICK
roof RUBBER
other _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa

7. Narrative Description

Site Description

The Surf Ballroom, located at 460 North Shore Drive, is sited on a triangular lot bounded by North Shore Drive (historically, 2nd Street) on the south, 7th Avenue North (historically, Lake View Drive) on the north and west, and Buddy Holly Place (historically, Street Railway Drive) on the east. A public sidewalk runs the length of the east side of the block (along Buddy Holly Place) and flush to the ballroom on the south. A large paved parking lot abuts the property on the east, west, and north.

The Surf Ballroom is sited on the north side of the lake to which the town of Clear Lake is associated, approximately one mile west of the community's historic commercial core. Prior to the construction of the Surf Ballroom, the triangular block upon which the Surf Ballroom is now located was part of the Clear Lake Camp Meeting grounds, with the block itself accommodating houses and the garage for the nearby Oaks Hotel; the Surf Ballroom was built on the site of the hotel garage. Residential property types dominated the area in the years following the construction of the Surf Ballroom. Many of the houses in the blocks surrounding the Ballroom site were likely vestiges of the historic Camp Meeting grounds; three remained on the block with the Surf Ballroom through at least 1950. It remains undetermined whether the buildings now standing on the block (440, 444, 464, and 468 on North Shore Drive; 519 and 619 on Buddy Holly Place) date to the era of the Clear Lake Camp Meeting grounds.

Building Description

The present Surf Ballroom was constructed in 1948 following the destruction of the original Surf Ballroom, which was located across North Shore Drive; the original burned in April of 1947. The appearance of the present building, inside and out, represents both its function and its mid-twentieth century construction period in its form and stylistic devices. The Surf has maintained its historic function and stands today very much as it did when opened to the public on July 1, 1948.

The Surf Ballroom is a one-story, concrete, tile, and brick building with a footprint that is nearly square. The interior functions are called out on the exterior, with the location of the dance floor indicated by a barrel roof and the vestibule, promenade, seating areas, and restaurant marked by a flat roof (see figure 7).

The Surf's exterior presents a clearly Modernistic influence. This is particularly evident in the primarily flat roofline, the buff colored brick-facing with hairline mortar joints of a matching color, the font style and circle motif of the historic signage, the stainless steel utilized in the box office, awning and entrance, and in the curving form of the façade wall. Each of these elements draws on the modernistic tendency toward smooth, clean lines, horizontal orientation, and geometric forms. This stylistic influence is sometimes referred to as Art Moderne or Streamline Moderne.¹ The use of the Moderne in a ballroom of the 1930s and 1940s is in keeping with

¹ Cyril M. Harris uses the term Streamline Moderne, which indicates a phase of the Art Deco, with common defining elements being rounded corners, light-colored stucco walls, horizontal stainless-steel railings, and round windows (321). Lee and Virginia McAlester

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nationwide tendencies. The stainless steel, glass and curving lines of the Moderne reflected the prevailing music culture of "the swing" and was a stylistic reaction against the more intimate cabarets and nightclubs of the 1920s.²

As indicated, the façade of the building (and wrapping around to a portion of the east and west elevations) is faced in a buff colored brick. The brick is elongated and laid in a common bond with a narrow, matching mortar line, creating the illusion of a smooth finish. The brick façade curves outward near its center to embrace the building's primary entrance where a simple, stainless steel awning featuring the clean lines of the Moderne provides cover. A non-historic (post-1963) marquee surmounts the awning. The entrance to the ballroom sets recessed within the embrace of the curved façade, with a stainless steel header to define the opening and flanking billboards mounted to advertise coming attractions. A semi-circular, stainless steel and glass ticket booth sets within the recess of the entrance and between the paired, stainless steel and glass doors leading to the vestibule. The booth retains its historic materials and form as well as the metal ticket box used during the Surf Ballroom's 1948 grand opening. A granite monument honoring Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and J.P. Richardson (aka The Big Bopper), whose lives were lost in a plane crash on February 2, 1959, was placed east of the ballroom's entrance and dedicated in June of 1988.

The wall surface on either side of the main entrance features the name of the venue in simple block letters that project from the wall plane. The sign on the right (east) of the entrance includes four circular discs - a simple, modern motif. Also on the east half of the façade is a small patio providing outdoor seating for the Surfside 6 Café. The patio and its concrete block privacy wall were added in 1964 and required cutting two openings into the adjacent wall to accommodate sliding doors. The approximately 32-foot privacy wall continues some 32 feet north along the ballroom's east elevation - stopping at the entrance on that side. An elevated sign advertising the Surfside 6 Café is located next to the east section of the privacy wall, near the public sidewalk.

The secondary elevations of the property are of red brick, also laid in a common bond. These elevations are nearly windowless. An entrance directly into the Surfside 6 Café is located on the east elevation. A metal awning, now painted, marks this entrance. The red brick adjacent to the entrance has been painted a neutral color, similar to that of the buff-colored façade brick. This minor alteration may have been made to make the entrance appear more a part of the function of the façade. It should be noted that historic plans indicate the opening is original to the building. In keeping with the Moderne appearance of the façade, the doors at this entrance are stainless steel and glass. The remainder of the east elevation appears much like that of the north and west elevations, which feature red brick structural piers with concrete caps, a concrete foundation, and metal coping along the roofline. An emergency exit with doublewide, steel doors is located near the north end of the east elevation.

Two emergency exits are located on the north elevation of the Surf Ballroom. In addition, a small bump-out near the northeast corner functions as a loading dock. The west elevation features a stepped roofline at the point of

use the term Modernistic or Art Moderne for buildings exhibiting a similar set of elements. The McAlesters indicate that such buildings were most commonly constructed from 1920 to 1940 (465).

² David W. Stowe, *Swing Changes, Big Band Jazz in New Deal America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 94.

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its adjacency with the barrel roof over the dance floor. Two pedestrian doorways are located on the west; both provide access to the stage area.

The flat portion of the Surf's roof is built-up with a rubber roof utilized over the barrel portion. The roof edges are finished in metal coping. An exhaust stack is located on the west elevation near the west end of the barrel roof. A tall, red brick chimney is also located near the edge of the west elevation; it provides ventilation for the heating and cooling system. Portions of the concrete foundation are visible on all elevations except the façade.

Interior Description

The Surf Ballroom, with a maximum capacity of 2,200 persons, has 30,000 square feet of entertaining space including the 6,300 square foot dance floor.³ The interior of the Surf Ballroom carries on the Modernistic influence established on the exterior with a particular effort to create the atmosphere of a "beach club." The historic rehabilitation completed in 1994 restored previously lost elements of the interior motif and, despite some relatively minor alterations to the historic floor plan, the interior reflects the appearance of the ballroom at the time of its opening in July of 1948.⁴

After passing through the exterior stainless steel and glass doors, one enters a large vestibule, which features a tile floor, natural stone walls and a beamed ceiling – all original elements (see figure 12). A pair of wood doors provides access from the vestibule into the lobby area. The doors each feature three glass panel insets and handles of stainless steel and Bakelite. A deep wood header spans the doublewide doorway and the curved profile of the jamb frames the opening.

The lobby of the Surf Ballroom currently includes the coat check area, one office space original to the building, one office space, gift shop, and hallway to the Surfside 6 Cafe added in 1994, women's and men's restrooms, the telephone booth from which Holly and Valens made their final phone calls home, and the promenade leading to the ballroom.

The lobby's remaining coat check is located to the left (west side) upon entering the space. The check area retains its long, canted counter and the three pass-through openings to the coat storage area behind. A second coat check was originally located on the opposite side of the lobby. During the 1994 rehabilitation, the space historically utilized for the second coat check was converted to a small museum store, and a hallway leading to the Surfside 6 Cafe. The walls of the hallway are used to display framed images of various artists who have performed on the stage at the Surf Ballroom and has become known as "The Wall of Fame."

The women's restroom is located on the west side of the lobby, past the coat check. The restroom is comprised of an outer lounge area and a large inner room with stalls and sinks. The restroom lounge features green ceramic tile on the lower half of the walls with period wallpaper above, basket-weave tile flooring, long panels of wall

³ Surf Ballroom & Museum promotional booklet.

⁴ Much of the description of the ballroom's interior was drawn from an April 2009 interview with Dean Snyder, property owner and supervisor of the 1994 historic rehabilitation.

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mirrors, and a large, full-length mirrored pier. The inner room also retains its historic finish materials as well as stalls, plumbing fixtures, and entrance doors.

The men's restroom is located opposite the women's, but the entrance hallway from the lobby to the exterior lounge area was closed off during the 1994 rehabilitation to create an additional office space. That space retains the historic double-doors, but the historic finish materials have been removed. The men's restroom is now entered off the ballroom promenade area, also original to the building. Like the women's restroom, the remaining portion of the men's retains its historic tiled walls and floors, as well as its plumbing fixtures and its original entrance doors.

The wood telephone booth is located in a small space on the west wall of the lobby promenade, just past the entrance to the women's restroom. The booth has a single, hinged door with a glass panel. The original payphone remains mounted inside.

The lobby's promenade is the transitional area between the lobby and the ballroom itself. A narrowing of the passageway marks the promenade, with curved walls that carry on the Modernistic style established on the exterior. The historic stenciled pineapples of the promenade were uncovered and restored during the 1994 rehabilitation; the pineapple motif reiterates the beach club motif. Further, the pineapple symbolizes a universal welcome to all – a subtle irony when considered in light of the racial segregation prevalent in the mid-twentieth century, an issue that played out in many venues, including at the Surf Ballroom.⁵ A path of carpeting over the lobby's tile floor further defines the walkway through the lobby and along the promenade toward the ballroom; historic images were referenced when the carpet was replaced in 1994. A cove ceiling adds to the sense of drama that prepares the guest for the experience of the expansive ballroom space.

Like the Surf as a whole, the ballroom area remains today very much as it did when the venue opened in 1948. The space includes the 6,300 square foot dance floor, booth seating for 948 persons, two bars, the promenade encircling the dance floor, and a raised stage. The original design plans for the ballroom area called for a space "fashioned after a Florida beach club" and each element of the space utilizes decorative devices to create that atmosphere.

Not surprisingly, the Surf's dance floor dominates the ballroom. The 6,300 square foot, maple floor is laid in a log cabin pattern to ensure that the dancers move with the grain of the wood as they circle the floor; the log cabin pattern was commonly used on dance floors for that reason. As a result of heavy use, the dance floor has been sanded, patched and repaired, but retains its original size and pattern. The arched ceiling over the dance floor is painted a midnight blue as a backdrop for the projection of cloud patterns; two "cloud machines" are mounted on either side of the ballroom to project the moving clouds onto the ceiling, creating the feeling of dancing outdoors on a patio. The cloud machines, manufactured in Chicago, are original to the ballroom. To further enhance the sense of dancing outdoors, ceiling fans simulate a breeze and the activation of slow-starting vapor lights at the end of the evening simulate the sunrise, signaling closing time to the dancers.

⁵ A cursory Internet search reveals that the issue of racial segregation was confronted at the Surf Ballroom, with suits brought against the Surf by African-Americans who were denied entrance. Further research into those cases would further illuminate the impact of the ballroom and its policies on the broad population and the segregation issues of the day.

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The ballroom stage is located at the west end of the building, adjacent to the dance floor. The raised stage, originally semi-circular, has been added onto twice and now projects over the dance floor. Enlargement of the stage was made to accommodate requests of recent performers whose equipment requires more space than bands of the ballroom's construction era. In 1991 the velvet swag and stage curtains were restored to their original appearance; palm trees were returned to the stage wings during the 1994 rehabilitation project.⁶ Preparation and storage rooms flank the stage. The walls and ceiling of the room on the south (known in the industry as a "green room") are covered with the autographs of musicians who have performed on the stage at the Surf Ballroom.

The promenade circles the recessed dance floor, providing access to the booth seating areas on the east and the north. The beach club motif is particularly strong in this area where a green and white striped awning painted on the ceiling and wall murals create the sense of being seated under a cabana tent with views to the outdoors. The original murals were covered over in the 1960s, but revealed during the 1994 historic rehabilitation; the shutters framing the murals are a non-historic addition. Two refreshment bars are set amid the booths; the one in the northeast corner is original to the building. A stone drinking fountain, mounted to the south wall along the promenade, was uncovered during the rehabilitation.

The booth seating around the dance floor was designed to seat 4-6 people per booth, accommodating up to 948 people. The booths are comprised of a cantilevered tabletop, with a wooden bench seat on either side. By today's standards, the booths are undersized. Small gray metal boxes mounted on the back wall of the booth were designed to hold napkins and are numbered to indicate reserved seating. Mounted on the booth wall beneath the table are wood boxes intended for the storage of ladies purses, but commonly reported to be better used to hide "bootleg" liquor that was covertly added to the soft-drinks purchased at the ballroom bar.

As described by the property owner, "the Surf Ballroom is cooled by two large swamp coolers located on opposite sides of the building. A pump brings well water from the ground, which is a constant fifty-five degrees. The water circulates through two large radiators. Behind the radiators are large turbo fans that propel the cool air through the building."⁷ This system has been in place and functioning since the building opened.

A cased opening located in the southeast corner of the ballroom, along the promenade, provides interior access to the Surfside 6 Cafe. The bar and restaurant retain their original floor plan with the primary alterations being the cased opening created in 1994 to provide access to the Surfside from the lobby and the two stainless steel and glass doors added in 1964 to access the exterior patio (both alterations described previously). The Surfside 6 is comprised of an open seating area with tables and chairs and a bar stretching along the east wall. The room's floor is covered in synthetic tile and its walls feature plaster and paneling. The bar itself is curved on the south end with an undulating curved fascia above to carry on the beach club motif. Vintage light fixtures are suspended from the ceiling. As noted previously, photographs of artists who have performed at the Surf Ballroom are mounted on the walls of the hallway leading from the lobby to the Surfside 6. That display continues on into the Surfside 6 Cafe, where a grand piano bearing the autograph of Bo Diddley further documents the history of the venue.

⁶ Surf Ballroom & Museum records, "The Surf Ballroom - Guided Tour Presentation", 1.

⁷ Dean Snyder interview.

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STATEMENT OF INTEGRITY

The Surf Ballroom retains a very high level of all seven aspects of historic integrity: location, setting, association, design, workmanship, materials, and feeling.

Because the Surf Ballroom remains on its original site, the level of integrity as it relates to location is very high. The Ballroom's site gains additional significance due to its longstanding connection to the Camp Meeting grounds and the associated recreation and tourist industry in Clear Lake.

The integrity of the Surf Ballroom's setting is excellent. Located in close proximity to the waterfront, the Surf's historic connection to the lake remains intact and is of particular significance given the resource's long-time association with the history of the recreation and tourist industry, which is central to the character of this specific community. The alteration of the adjacent parking area's paving materials (historically gravel, now asphalt) is the primary change to the historic site.

Like the integrity of setting, integrity of association relates in great part to the resource's physical connection to the lakeside. As a result, the retention of the historic relationship to the lake itself results in the retention of a high level of integrity as it relates to association. Further, the resource's historic association with the history of Rock and Roll, specifically as the final performance venue of Buddy Holly, and of Ritchie Valens, and The Big Bopper, remains an active part of its function through the annual Winter Dance Party, which celebrates the contributions made to American music by Holly. More recently, the Surf Ballroom's historic association has been enhanced with the development of a museum component dedicated to maintaining and recounting the story of Buddy Holly at the Surf and of the ballroom's role in the history of Rock and Roll.

As related to aspects of design, workmanship, and materials, the building retains a very high level of integrity. The design of the Surf Ballroom accommodated a recreational function within a mid-twentieth century Modernistic building with a "beach club" inspired interior; all components of that design are important to the whole and all remain nearly fully intact today. The sole alterations to the building's exterior are the 1964 addition of the exterior patio, which required cutting two openings in the east side of the façade and the addition of a marquee atop the historic, stainless steel awning, both completed outside the period of significance.

Alterations impacting integrity of design, workmanship, and materials found on the resource's interior include the reconfiguring of the east coat check and the men's restroom to create additional office space, a hallway to the Surfside 6, and a museum store. These alterations, made in 1994, did little to disrupt the overall floor plan or detract from the historic integrity. In addition, the original design was well documented and the changes were made in a manner sensitive to historic spaces and finish materials. The historic rehabilitation of the lobby, (including the pineapple stencils and carpet), the booth seating with the surrounding wall murals, and the stage with its palm trees and velvet curtains, were critical to maintaining the historic feeling of the Surf Ballroom.

Due to the very high level of integrity of location, setting, association, design, workmanship, and materials, the historic integrity as it relates to feeling is excellent. Visitors from the Surf Ballroom's period of significance would readily recognize the building and its surroundings today and would experience it in much the same manner as they did historically. Notably, because the ballroom continues on in its historic function with its historic character intact, thousands of visitors do, in fact, experience the resource in the same manner as they would have on the day the doors first opened more than 61 years ago.

Surf Ballroom
Name of Property

Cerro Gordo County, Iowa
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" on one or more lines for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" on all the lines that apply)

Property is:

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

ARCHITECTURE

PERFORMING ARTS

Period of Significance

1948-1961

Significant Dates

1948

1959

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

HOLLY, CHARLES HARDIN (BUDDY)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

HANSEN & WAGGONER

HENKEL CONSTRUCTION

Narrative Statement of Significance - (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

9. Major Bibliography References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

previous determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Record

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by American Buildings Survey # _____

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

State Historical Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository _____

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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Surf Ballroom is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion B at the national level. The resource is considered significant in its association with Buddy Holly, whose musical legacy is a vital part of the birth of Rock and Roll in a genre known as Rockabilly, which fused black Southern Blues with Bluegrass to create an entirely original musical sound. In the 18-months of his career, Holly's music made such an impact on the world of music as to influence some of the greatest musicians in Rock and Roll history, including John Lennon, Paul McCartney, Bob Dylan, and Bruce Springsteen. The legacy of Buddy Holly has become intimately connected to the Surf Ballroom as his final performance venue and his contributions in the history of Rock and Roll are honored each February at the Winter Dance Party held at the Surf, when fans from around the world gather to celebrate the musical legacy of Buddy Holly. The few existing built resources to which Holly has a significant connection underscore the importance of the Surf's tie to the life and performance legacy of Buddy Holly. Although the Norman Petty Studio, where he recorded "That'll Be the Day" and other songs is extant, his childhood home is not.¹ While Holly's impact on Rock and Roll through his innovative recording techniques is tied to the Petty Studio, it was at the Surf Ballroom that Holly's influence as a performer is best understood and it is the Surf Ballroom that has become universally recognized by fans across this country as the performance venue most intimately connected to Buddy Holly.

In his role as a performer, greats like Lennon, Dylan, and Mick Jagger recognized a Rock and Roll musician they could relate to and emulate. With his conventional looks and black-framed glasses, Holly freed them from the notion that the Rock and Roll musician had to look and move like Elvis Presley, thus contributing to their confidence of self-expression that is an integral part of their own extraordinary success. As a multi-faceted musician, Holly's live performances exposed a young John Lennon to the idea that a musician could also be a songwriter and a guitarist. As Lennon himself stated, "What he [Holly] did with '3' chords made a songwriter out of me." The songwriting collaborations of John Lennon and Paul McCartney are legendary. As quoted of Paul McCartney, "At least the first forty songs we wrote were Buddy Holly-influenced."² And, through Holly's on-stage use of the Fender Stratocaster, the guitar became the choice for countless guitarists in the U.S. and England.

Although Holly performed at other ballrooms, including the Mid-West venues included on the Winter Dance Party circuit of 1959, it is the Surf Ballroom in Clear Lake that was the final venue for Buddy Holly and it remains today the location most clearly and poignantly associated with his performance legacy. Because Holly died when his career was soaring and with so much unrequited promise, his music is intimately connected to his loss, making it impossible to hear without recalling his death.

The Surf Ballroom is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A at the local level. The resource is considered significant in its association with the history of Rock and Roll, specifically in its role as the last venue played by Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and J.P. Richardson (aka The Big Bopper), who died in a plane crash near Mason City, Iowa following their performance at the Surf Ballroom on February 2, 1959.

¹ Buddy Holly Center website. <http://www.buddyhollycenter.org>. "That'll Be the Day" was recorded in the Norman Petty Studio in Clovis, New Mexico. The studio is open to the public by appointment only. <http://www.superoldies.com/pettystudios>. Accessed 03/13/2010.

² John Goldrosen and John Beecher, *Remembering Buddy: The Definitive Biography of Buddy Holly*, rev. ed. [New York, Penguin Books, 1986], 159.

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While other resources exist with significant associations to each of the three individual musicians, the Surf Ballroom is not only associated with all three, but also was the final performance for all three, underscoring the significance of that performance. In 1998 the Surf Ballroom was inducted into the Iowa Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and, on January 28, 2009, the American Rock and Roll Hall of Fame designated the Surf Ballroom as an official rock and roll landmark as the final venue of the three performers.

The Surf Ballroom is also eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A at the local level, significant in its association with the history of recreation and tourism, which has long been central to both the economic and social vibrancy of Clear Lake, Iowa. The area's potential as a recreation and tourism site was identified early and led to the platting of the original town. Within a few short years, the establishment of the Camp Meeting on the lake's north side created a venue that drew thousands to the community. That undertaking, combined with the arrival of the railroad in 1870, cemented Clear Lake as a recreation and tourism destination. Although other tourist attractions followed in the wake of the Camp Meeting, none rivaled the impact of the Surf Ballroom, which drew patrons throughout north-central Iowa to enjoy the seemingly endless parade of acts representing the musical influences spanning from its opening in 1948 through today.

The Surf Ballroom is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C at the local level. The resource is considered significant as an exceptional example of Moderne architecture. The style drew on the influences of a period motivated by the notion of the building as a machine for living. As such, building design drew on the streamlined forms of period technology, particularly the airplane and the automobile, resulting in architecture with clean lines, curvilinear forms, a minimum of applied ornament, a monochromatic palette, and the use of industrial metals such as chrome. The Surf Ballroom exhibits all of these stylistic devices on its exterior, with others carried to the interior. Clear Lake has no other significant commercial examples of the Moderne.

The original Surf Ballroom was located lakeside, immediately south across North Shore Drive from the present Surf Ballroom. A devastating fire destroyed the original Surf on April 20, 1947. The present property, sited across the street from the original, was constructed as a ballroom and placed in service in 1948 and it has functioned in that capacity from that time. Today, the property is designated as a non-profit entity and is open to the public as a museum. No major alterations have been made to the property.

The Period of Significance for the Surf Ballroom is 1948 to 1961, marking the date the building was placed in service to the year of the first major remodeling of the building's interior, when the original beach theme was covered. The Significant Dates are 1948, the year the building was placed in service, and 1959, the year in which Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and The Big Bopper performed at the Surf Ballroom in the hours just before their deaths (February 2, 1959), marking the day in which the phrase "the day the music died" had cause to be written.

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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa.

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The original Surf Ballroom was built on the shores of Clear Lake in 1933 and burned on April 20, 1947. Plans for its replacement were quickly underway, and the new Surf Ballroom rose on an oversized lot across North Shore Drive from the original. The grand opening of the new facility was celebrated on July 1, 1948. The building remained in use as a ballroom until 1994, when it closed for a brief period before being purchased and historically rehabilitated by longtime local residents Dale and Kathy Snyder, to be reopened in time for the February 1995 Winter Dance Party. Through the efforts of the Snyder family, with significant support by local citizens, the Surf Ballroom appears today very much as it did 61 years ago.

Early Clear Lake Recreation and Tourism

Clear Lake first appeared on a land survey map in 1832. The lake, sited at an elevation nearly 100 feet higher than the surrounding area, was created by a glacial retreat some 14,000 years earlier. Various Native American tribes, including the Ioway, Winnebago and Sioux, camped on the banks of the 3,600-acre lake (seven miles long by two and one-half miles wide) long before the first Euro-American stumbled upon its shores. The first white settlers to call Clear Lake home were the families of Joseph Hewitt and James Dickirson, who quickly recognized the area's potential for hunting and fishing. Just as quickly, Hewitt and Dickirson saw the promise in a community sited on the lake's shore and began to purchase large parcels of land with the intention of platting a community and selling their property for profit.³

In 1855, Joseph Hewitt platted what he called Clear Lake City. The following year, James Dickirson and Marcus Tuttle platted Clear Lake Village. The two plats, both in the vicinity of the business district today, shared a common border. The plats were incorporated into the town of Clear Lake, with a total population of 800, in 1871. The arrival of the Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad (connecting Clear Lake to McGregor, Iowa on the Mississippi River) and the north-south Central Railroad in 1870 signaled the end of the settlement period and the beginning of significant growth; within a decade after the arrival of the railroad, the town population had grown to 1,000.⁴

Like Hewitt and Dickirson, many people were attracted to the area to fish and hunt. The development of steam-powered transportation across the lake spurred development and drew investors who recognized the potential profit in the seasonal population booms – such booms were on the increase as the middle-class and their expendable income grew leading to a burgeoning tourist trade. As testimony for that shift, Juhl quotes the July 3, 1878 *Clear Lake Observer* that reported, "Visitors are beginning to arrive every day and indications are that a big crowd will be here this season. Come on."⁵

³ Paul Juhl, *Clear Lake: The Earliest Images, 1870s and 1880s* (Iowa City, IA: Brushy Creek Publishing, 2006), 10.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa.

Along with the establishment of rail service to Clear Lake, the development of the religious resort known as the Camp Meeting was pivotal to the growth of the community and the rise of tourism in the 1870s. The Camp Meeting was brought to the area by Rev. John Hogarth Lozier who chose a site on the north side of the lake – water being tied to the sacred ritual of baptism. The site of the Surf Ballroom is located at the fringe of the Camp Meeting grounds.

In 1873 Rev. Lozier was a member of a committee out of the Sioux City District of the Methodist Church charged with the task of selecting a site for conference camp meetings. Camp meetings had been held at Clear Lake for many years; one such meeting in 1873 lasted a week and attracted a crowd of 4,000. Successes like that, combined with the abundant natural attractions of Clear Lake and the availability of rail transportation, made Clear Lake the logical selection over Okoboji and Storm Lake, which were also considered. The process of purchasing land began in 1875. Eventually the site Camp Meeting grounds accommodated permanent housing, seasonal housing, tents, an octagonal Pavilion with a 1,500 person seating capacity, the Prospect House Hotel (later The Oaks Hotel) with accommodations for feeding hundreds, the Headquarters building, the Observatory overlooking the lake and including a bathhouse on the first floor, and a row of commercial businesses.⁶

The presence of two rail depots in Clear Lake made access to the campgrounds very convenient. The main depot was located near the business district, with busses available for transport throughout the community. A second depot, known as the Park station, was located at the Camp Meeting grounds and within 200 feet of the Headquarters building. Considerable coordination between the town of Clear Lake and the Camp Meeting Association on one hand and the railroads on the other resulted in excursion rates that encouraged visitors to come to Clear Lake by train.⁷

By 1877-78 the Camp Meeting was well established at Clear Lake. Juhl offers an excerpt from an area newspaper that provides important insight into its success and impact on the community as a tourist area.

The Hancock Signal (Garner) on July 19, 1877. Sunday was a big day at Clear Lake. People gathered from all directions on that day to attend the Camp Meeting. All parts of Cerro Gordo and surrounding counties were represented by large delegations. Excursion trains were in from the east, west, north and south. People came on foot, horseback, in carriages, wagons, and by rail – old, young and middle aged. There were probably 6,000 people on the campgrounds, and some estimate a thousand or so more than that. The Pavilion was crowded to its utmost capacity all day long, and hundreds stood up around the outside of the building. All through the grounds were groups and crowds of people, in the village the streets were lined and on the lake sailboats were loaded down. The ice-cream saloons, (off the campgrounds) the eating houses and the sailboats did a rushing business, and must have made money. It was the “big day” of the Camp Meeting and the number present must have satisfied the highest expectations of the managers.⁸

⁶ Ibid., 99-103.

⁷ Ibid., 51.

⁸ Ibid., 111.

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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa.

The Clear Lake Camp Meeting Association continued in operation, with some alterations in ownership, through 1914. Following in the footsteps of the Camp Meeting, numerous other tourist attractions grew up around the lake. Dodge's Point was well known for its fishing and picnic areas. Located on the south shore, Dodge's Point was established by Grenville Dodge of Council Bluffs, famous for his service in the Civil War and his work on the Union Pacific Railroad. The Island, also on the south shore, which featured the Island Home Hotel, celebrated its grand opening in 1870 by holding a ball as a signal of "the heightened level of sophistication now present in this prairie town."⁹ A nearby building offered guests bowling, ice cream, and billiards; croquet was played on the expansive lawn. A wood steamer transported guests across the lake between the island and town. The area known as Stevens' Point also boasted a hotel along with a park full of lovely picnic spots. One of the best known of Clear Lake's tourist attractions was the Bayside Amusement Park, which was established on the south side in 1909. Over a period of many years, the park's facilities included the Lake Shore Pavilion Skating Rink, Bayside Park, and the Ritz Hotel. The amusement park and its facilities met with competition from Whitaker Pier (1903), White Pier (1910), Young's Idleo (1910), and the Shady Beach (1935).¹⁰

The Camp Meeting, with the enormous numbers drawn to its programs, played a critical role in the development of tourism in Clear Lake. The promotion of its activities was supported by the availability of train transportation, which brought people to Clear Lake from across the state, exposing them to the natural wonder of the area. Later tourist attractions, both natural and manmade, rose around the lake as steam-powered boats became available to ease access into those areas. The built attractions included amusement parks, skating rinks, and dancehalls and their individual successes varied wildly. These early recreation and tourism venues blazed the trail for others such as the Surf Ballroom.

Carl J. Fox and The Original Surf Ballroom

The name of Carl J. Fox was long associated with the Surf Ballroom, as it was he that conceived of and built the original Surf and he who was called upon to oversee the construction of the new Surf Ballroom. As developer and manager, Fox had a longstanding and critical role in the history of the Surf.

Carl J. Fox was born in 1885. He was married to Emma Gertrude Emrick¹¹ and had one daughter, Maxine Evelyn (1919-2009). According to his daughter's obituary, it was Carl and his brother Otto who owned roller rinks in LaCrosse, Wisconsin, Peoria, Illinois and Newton and Cedar Rapids, Iowa – that is in addition to those he managed in Iowa (Waterloo, Davenport, and Bayside at Clear Lake), Illinois (Waukegan, Joliet, Rock Island and Chicago), Minnesota (Austin, Owatonna, Albert Lea, and Minneapolis), and Wisconsin (Madison). Immediately prior to settling in Clear Lake, Carl Fox managed the Oakdale amusement park and dance pavilion in LeRoy, Minnesota and the

⁹ Ibid., 170.

¹⁰ H. Milton Dusenberg interview at the Clear Lake Public Library, July 9, 2009 and *Mason City Globe-Gazette*, Ad, June 29, 1935, 28.

¹¹ <http://www.greenvilleonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20090401/TRIBUNEIMES01/904010352&template=printart>

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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa.

Breezy Point Pavilion at Charles City, Iowa.¹² Local news accounts indicate that Fox was a “newcomer to most of Clear Lake’s folks,” though he did operate a skating rink at Bayside Park in Clear Lake during the summers of 1920 and 1921.¹³

The original Surf Ballroom was sited on the north shore of Clear Lake, across the street from the present Surf Ballroom. The site previously accommodated Petersen’s Bathhouse (the bathhouse appears on the 1931 Sanborn fire insurance map), which was later converted to the TomTom by owner George Petersen, who was a local contractor. The business was named after Tom Gates, a local orchestra leader, who leased the building from Petersen. The TomTom burnt to the ground less than one year after it opened. Soon after, George Petersen partnered with Carl Fox and Lakeshore Amusement, a corporation for which Carl Fox served as manager, to build the Surf Ballroom on that site.¹⁴ It has been suggested, though unconfirmed, that Fox borrowed against his life insurance policy to finance the development of the Surf Ballroom.¹⁵ Petersen, who is described as “secretary, treasurer, and builder,” left that partnership at an unknown time.¹⁶

Carl Fox commissioned the Mason City architectural firm of (Harry) Hansen & (Karl) Waggoner to design the Surf Ballroom. The *Mason City Globe-Gazette* wrote the following about the new facility.

This elaborate ballroom which is one of the most modern and largest in the middlewest has been built with enough space so that the best dance orchestras from Chicago may be booked during the season. The attractiveness of the ballroom has been accomplished by the modernistic lighting effects and unique roof architecture, the only one of its kind in the state. The contrast of the walnut finish of woodwork to the silver background is also pleasing. The dance floor of maple, 80 by 80 feet, is laid in log cabin style so that dancers are always dancing with the grain of the wood. It is a cushion type of floor, none of the joices [sic] being nailed to the foundation but rest on a double thickness of spongy fiber. One of the other modern features of the building is the Lamalle arched roof, a German patent. A network of braces, form the support for the roof. The supports have a walnut finish and the ceiling is in silver. Steel rods hold these braces together.¹⁷

The *Globe-Gazette* article goes on to indicate that the new venue featured a roof garden at the west end for dancing outdoors, a hallway with five windows lakeside, and a boardwalk leading to a nearby dock that jutted into the lake; the dock and adjacent sandy beaches apparently supplemented the ballroom’s principal activities (Figure 22).

In addition to the Surf Ballroom in Clear Lake, Carl J. Fox was involved in the development and construction of two additional ballrooms, the Terp¹⁸ Ballroom in Austin, Minnesota, May 25, 1938 (now occupied by a church) and the

¹² Obituary of Maxine Evelyn Cook (daughter).

¹³ *Mason City Globe-Gazette*. “Clear Lake’s \$25,000 Ballroom to be Opened Monday.” April 14, 1933, 10.

¹⁴ Interview with H. Milton Dusenberg at the Clear Lake Public Library, July 16, 2009.

¹⁵ Surf Ballroom & Museum records, *The Today Magazine*, January 2005, “The Surf Ballroom” by Tom Atwood, 17-23.

¹⁶ *Mason City Globe-Gazette*. “Clear Lake’s \$25,000 Ballroom to be Opened Monday.” April 14, 1933, 10.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa.

Prom in St. Paul, Minnesota 1940 (non-extant). In December of 1946 Carl Fox sold the Surf Ballroom, The Prom, and the Terp Ballroom to Prom, Inc. of Chicago for a reported total of \$1,300,000.¹⁹ Prom, Inc. also owned the Trianon Ballroom and the Aragon Ballroom in Chicago. The Trianon was a \$1,000,000 investment that opened in 1922. Constructed on the city's south side, the ballroom drew from the surrounding middle-class neighborhoods to fill its 6,000 person capacity (3,000 on the dance floor and 3,000 in the alcoves and upper level). The even more extravagant Aragon Ballroom opened in Chicago's Uptown district in 1926. The Aragon was designed in a Moorish theme and could accommodate nearly 8,000 persons.

In the early morning hours of April 20, 1947 the original Surf Ballroom caught fire and within hours had burnt to the ground. Carl Fox himself, who, with his family, lived in the second story of the Surf, heard an explosion at 2:30 a.m. and upon investigation determined the building was on fire. The fire department was called, but they were unable to save the ballroom.²⁰

The New Surf Ballroom

Within days of the fire that destroyed the original Surf Ballroom, area newspapers reported the widespread cry of support for its reconstruction. Many letters of regret for the loss of the ballroom were forwarded to the Prom, Inc. officials from people across northern Iowa. The Clear Lake Lions Club went as far as to forward an official resolution requesting the venue's reconstruction to Prom, Inc. offices in Chicago. By the end of April, Kenneth Moore, the president of Prom, Inc., had met with the ballroom manager and plans were underway for the construction of a new building.²¹

Although early news accounts indicated that the property owners intended to rebuild on the same site, it soon became clear that the new Surf Ballroom would be constructed on the site north across 2nd Street (now North Shore Drive), which had most recently functioned as a parking lot for the original Surf Ballroom.²² It remains uncertain why the original site was not used, but it has been suggested that the freeze and thaw of the lake made a lakeside location problematic.²³ In 1916 the block upon which the new site stood was owned by the Mason City and Clear Lake Electric Railway and in close association with the Camp Meeting, which was served by the railway. The Oaks Hotel's garage occupied the site in that year – the hotel itself being located one block to the northwest.²⁴

¹⁸ The name Terp was taken from Greek mythology; Terpsichore was the Muse of choral songs and dance.

¹⁹ *Mason City Globe-Gazette*. "Prom, Inc., Buys Café." December 20, 1946 and *Mason City Globe-Gazette*. "Fire Destroys Surf." April 21, 1947, 1.

²⁰ *Mason City Globe-Gazette*. "Fire Destroys Surf." April 21, 1947, 1.

²¹ *Mason City Globe-Gazette*. "Plan New \$300,000 Surf Ballroom." April 30, 1947, 19. *Mason City Globe-Gazette*. "Lions Club Asks Prom, Inc. to Rebuild Surf." April 24, 1947, 27. *Mason City Globe-Gazette*. "Surf Ballroom to Be Rebuilt on Same Site at Clear Lake." April 25, 1947, 1.

²² *Mason City Globe-Gazette*. "Surf Bids to Be Taken September 11." August 27, 1947, 1.

²³ Dusenberg interview.

²⁴ Sanborn Map Company, 1916.

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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa.

On April 30, 1947, ten days after the original Surf burned, the *Mason City Globe-Gazette* printed an architect's rendering of a new Surf Ballroom. The speed with which the process to rebuild began may have been the work of Carl J. Fox who was asked by the management of Prom, Inc. to take an active role in directing the process of rebuilding.²⁵ As with the original Surf, the architectural firm of Hansen & Waggoner of Mason City was called upon to design the new ballroom. The firm was established in Mason City, Iowa in 1924 and continues to operate under the name Waggoner-Winegar, with offices on Federal Avenue in downtown Mason City. The firm does a wide variety of design work and is known locally for their dedicated interest in preserving the community's historic resources.

Harry P. Hansen was born in Cushing, Wisconsin on April 24, 1889. Trained through apprenticeship, Hansen practiced with Clinton P. Shockley in Waterloo, Iowa before taking time away to take architecture courses at Chicago Technical College (1916-1918) and to serve his country in World War I. He then returned to the Waterloo practice where he spent some three years before moving on. He spent some time working for well-known Davenport architect, Seth Temple and for various architects in Chicago. Hansen entered into practice with Karl Waggoner in Mason City, Iowa in 1924. Harry Hansen died in 1955.²⁶

Karl Marshall Waggoner was born in Decatur, Illinois on January 19, 1894. He received his architecture degree from the University of Illinois in 1917. Following his service in World War I, Waggoner studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Toulouse, France before entering into practice with Harry P. Hansen. Waggoner was joined in the firm by his son Thomas in 1956 (Harry Hansen having died the previous year), at which time the firm became known as Waggoner & Waggoner. Karl Waggoner died in 1966.²⁷

Hansen & Waggoner are responsible for many of the school buildings in Mason City. They also designed numerous churches and many of Mason City's commercial buildings. The firm designed three ballrooms for Carl J. Fox and Lakeside Amusements: the original Surf Ballroom (1933); the Prom Ballroom in St. Paul, Minnesota (1940), which is non-extant; and the Terp Ballroom in Austin, Minnesota (1938), which was rehabilitated for use as a church and youth activity center. Hansen & Waggoner also designed the 1948 Surf Ballroom. Local newspaper accounts state that Harry Hansen was the architect on the job, stating that he "was responsible for much of the planning of this newest amusement center at Clear Lake."²⁸

Although Hansen & Waggoner's first sketch for the new Surf was far from the final design, it was clear that, with a \$300,000 budget, the new ballroom would be bigger, better and "fireproof." Initially, the architects were working to design a 25,000 square foot venue with a 2,000 seat capacity, 1,200 person booth seating, a dance floor some 30% larger than the original, upgraded air conditioning and heating plants, a double coat check, more space for the "unattached," and an integrated restaurant – all reflecting a beach club theme.²⁹

²⁵ *Mason City Globe-Gazette*. "Surf Ballroom to Be Rebuilt on Same Site at Clear Lake." April 25, 1947, 1.

²⁶ Wesley I. Shank, *Iowa's Historic Architects: A Biographical Dictionary* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999), 76.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 170.

²⁸ Surf Ballroom & Museum scrapbooks, uncited newspaper article.

²⁹ *Mason City Globe-Gazette*. "Plan New \$300,000 Surf Ballroom." April 30, 1947, 19.

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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa.

In September of that same year, the construction contracts were let with the Mason City firm of Rye & Henkel Construction Companies Associated named as general contractors.³⁰ H.C. Determan of Mason City won the electrical contract and Ed Secovy of Clear Lake won the plumbing contract.³¹ In addition, the L. Paille-Midway Fixture & Showcase Co. of St. Paul, Minnesota was tapped to supply the booths, refreshment bars, back bars, and paneling.³²

Although the exterior design of the new Surf Ballroom took on a much more modern appearance than that reflected in the first design sketch, many of the plans came to fruition. Of particular note is the use of steel, tile and brick construction materials in an attempt to build a "fireproof" structure. In addition, the new Surf was much larger, with significantly increased seating and a larger dance floor. Also part of the final design was "considerably better accommodations for stags with unreserved tables for their use in the refreshment area."³³ And, of course, the beach club motif was applied throughout. The final price tag was projected at \$350,000.³⁴

The new Surf Ballroom celebrated its grand opening on Thursday, July 1, 1948. The souvenir edition of "Dance Topics" featured images of the new ballroom's stage and announced the likely dance schedule. The ballroom was scheduled to be open Wednesday through Sunday each week, with "old style music and dancing" featured on Friday nights. The remaining nights would be dedicated to "Modern music and dancing." In addition, every other Tuesday night in July and August of that year would feature "the famous recording and radio Old Style bands of this territory."³⁵

The original Surf Ballroom had established itself as a "must stop" venue for a big band seeking to gain national attention. Performers such as Count Basie, Duke Ellington, and the Dorsey brothers made regular stops at the Surf as they made their way through the Midwest, hopping from venue to venue. Performers commonly stopped at the Surf after having played the Laramar in Fort Dodge or the Mayfair in Sioux City. From Clear Lake, Carl Fox scheduled the bands to move onto the Terp and the Prom.³⁶ The new Surf Ballroom took up the mantle and, beginning in the 1950s with manager Carroll Anderson in control of booking acts, featured the hottest names in Rock and Roll. The Everly Brothers, Jan and Dean, Conway Twitty, and Dion all played the Surf Ballroom during that period. In the early 70's, the Surf brought in Santana, REO Speedwagon, and Kansas.³⁷

³⁰ *Mason City Globe-Gazette*. "Plan New \$300,000 Surf Ballroom." April 30, 1947, 19. Carl Rye died at about the same time and the company became known simply as Henkel Construction.

³¹ *Mason City Globe-Gazette*. "Let Contract for Building of New \$350,000 Surf Ballroom." September 25, 1947, 1.

³² *Mason City Globe-Gazette*. Advertisement. June 30, 1948, 19.

³³ The term "stag" refers to single males who congregated in groups as they awaited their opportunity to approach a female for a dance. *Mason City Globe-Gazette*. "Larger Surf Ready For Use by July 4." April 28, 1948, 5.

³⁴ *Mason City Globe-Gazette*. "Let Contract for Building of New \$350,000 Surf Ballroom," 1.

³⁵ Surf Ballroom & Museum scrapbooks, *Dance Topics*, "The New Surf Ballroom Souvenir Edition" July 1, 1948.

³⁶ Surf Ballroom & Museum records, "The Surf Ballroom - Guided Tour Presentation", 8.

³⁷ Surf Ballroom & Museum records, Iowa Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductions, 1998 and *Mason City Globe-Gazette*. "Clear Lake's \$250,000 Ballroom to be Opened Monday." April 14, 1933, 10.

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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa.

The advent of Rock and Roll signaled a shift in attitude and taste, which likely accounts for the Surf Ballroom's first major remodeling completed in 1961. Alterations focused on updating the interior décor, which changed from the beach club motif to a theme reflecting the changing of the four seasons.³⁸

Although the specifics of the chain of ownership are unclear, by the early 1960s the property was in the hands of C.C. Mitchell & Co. of Chicago. Kenneth Moore (former president of Prom, Inc.) was president of C.C. Mitchell Co. in May of 1963 when the Surf Ballroom was sold as part of a larger plan to liquidate the company's assets outside of Chicago. New owners, Ray Seney and Richard Casey were both Clear Lake area businessmen. Seney, president of the American State Bank in Mason City, lived in Clear Lake on North Shore Drive. Casey was the owner of the local Rexall Drug as well as several other area businesses.

At the time of the sale, the new owners announced no plans for immediate changes in the ballroom's operations.³⁹ However, some alterations were made to the building during this period, including an outside patio that was added on the south in May of 1964. This required cutting an opening into the façade wall to accommodate a set of doublewide doors. A concrete pad was poured flush to the building and a screen of decorative concrete blocks was installed between the patio and the sidewalk. At this time the existing "Cypress Room" (now the Surfside 6 Cafe) underwent a relatively minor remodel as the access point to the new patio.⁴⁰ The marquee over the entrance awning was likely added at this time. Numerous plans for the Surf Ballroom were under discussion during the 1960s, including adapting the building for a new use such as a convention center, public library, or hotel. Casey & Seney sold the Surf Ballroom to Bill Eaton of Clear Lake and his brother Kenneth Eaton of Chicago in January of 1968.⁴¹

The Surf Ballroom operated continuously from its opening until 1994. In September of that year the present owner (Dean Snyder) undertook an historic rehabilitation of the property, which stood in a state of disrepair with significant damage to the dance floor due to roof leakage. Rehabilitation plans referred to the original floor plans and historic images (many of which exist) to return the facility to its 1948 appearance. In the lobby area, wallpaper was removed to reveal the historic pineapple stenciling, which was restored. An historically inspired replica of the original carpet was installed. In the ballroom, the maple dance floor was sanded, resealed, and waxed with some severely deteriorated boards requiring replacement. To prevent further damage, the building's roofing was replaced. The missing palm trees, historically flanking the stage, were replicated from historic images and returned to their original locations. A stone drinking fountain along the promenade was uncovered and remains operational.⁴² Decidedly less glamorous tasks were completed by a cadre of volunteers including cleaning the booth seating, bathrooms, and the building as a whole, and removing tons of unneeded materials (e.g. broken furniture) that had been thrown into the trench that runs the perimeter of the building.

³⁸ *Mason City Globe-Gazette*. "Casey & Seney buy Surf Ballroom." November 20, 1963, 30.

³⁹ *Mason City Globe-Gazette*. "Casey & Seney buy Surf Ballroom." 30.

⁴⁰ *Mason City Globe-Gazette*. "Patio Garden to Open." May 15, 1964.

⁴¹ *Mason City Globe-Gazette*. "Surf Sold to Eatons." January 3, 1968, 5.

⁴² Surf Ballroom & Museum records, "The Surf Ballroom – Guided Tour Presentation," 9.

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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa.

When the first Surf Ballroom was built on the north shore of the lake in 1933, many of the earliest tourist attractions were a thing of the past. The Surf quickly became a favorite venue for dancers and performers alike and its location near Highway 18 made for convenient access via automobile. When the ballroom burned, calls for its reconstruction were immediate and hearty. The new Surf Ballroom, constructed in 1948, built upon the strength of the existing recreation and tourism base and, despite some struggles over the years, remains Clear Lake's best-known tourist attraction.

Rock and Roll at The Surf

Like ballrooms across the country, the history of the Surf Ballroom in Clear Lake closely follows that of Rock and Roll music itself. At the original Surf, Big Band music reigned with the likes of Duke Ellington and the Dorsey brothers playing its stage. The new Surf Ballroom carried on that tradition, bringing in big-name entertainers and making it a "must-play" venue on the Big Band performance circuit. By the mid-1950s, change was in the musical air and the Surf responded to the demands of its young audience by changing its musical format – Big Bands were replaced by more current performers - Rock and Roll had arrived at the Surf.

A variety of performers associated with the early period of Rock and Roll played the Surf, including Little Richard, Jerry Lee Lewis, Roy Orbison, Ricky Nelson, the Everly Brothers, Ike and Tina Turner; all went on to become major stars in the music industry and to make a name for themselves in music history. It was, however, a young, spectacled man from Lubbock, Texas who would make the deepest, most lasting mark on the ballroom.⁴³ Buddy Holly entered the world of music during the early years of the evolution of Rock and Roll and brought with him a composite of influences that altered the course of the genre's trajectory. Holly's brand of music was regarded as "Rockabilly," defined as a confluence of black Southern Blues and Bluegrass (or hillbilly music), and Holly combined those sounds with a dynamism that set him apart from other musicians of the time, including Elvis Presley. His impact was felt in the innovations of his studio work and the persona he brought to the live performance. The legacy of Buddy Holly, which has become intimately connected to the Surf Ballroom, is found in the songs he performed, in the written music left behind, and in the deep and lasting impact he and his music made on some of the greatest performers in Rock and Roll history.

Charles Hardin (Buddy) Holley

Charles Hardin Holley was born on September 7, 1936, in Lubbock, Texas (a clerical error in his first recording contract led to the more familiar spelling of his surname, which will be used from this juncture). Holly was raised in a family with three older siblings, son of Lawrence and Ella Holley. His passion for music was apparent in his youth when he began to seek out a musical instrument to his liking; he finally settled on the acoustic guitar. Without music lessons, he relied on the radio and learned by listening and playing along. Early on he was influenced by traditional

⁴³ Surf Ballroom & Museum records, "The Surf Ballroom – Guided Tour Presentation," 9.

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Country music, but soon followed Hank Williams who was breaking from the strictly traditional country sound by infusing elements of Bluegrass and black Southern Blues - a sound that became known as Rockabilly.⁴⁴

While working at a local radio station, Holly became enamored with the music of Fats Domino, Little Richard, and Elvis Presley, studying the music of the black artists in particular.⁴⁵ By 1949, Holly had formed a duo with Bob Montgomery and through 1953 they were playing a self-styled "Western and Bop" music. In 1953 Holly and Montgomery formed a trio called the Three Tunes, adding Larry Wellborn on bass.⁴⁶

On January 6, 1955, Buddy Holly and the Three Tunes stood backstage in Lubbock, Texas and witnessed a performance by Elvis Presley. The experience changed Holly's musical expression, causing him to abandon the traditional Country and Bluegrass sounds and to adopt the quickened tempo and heavy rhythm inspired by Presley. As he related to others, "I started thinking different about music."⁴⁷ His writing immediately reflected the new direction and in January of 1956 he recorded "That'll Be the Day," "Don't Come Knockin'," "Love Me," and "Blue Day and Black Nights" for Decca Records, which ultimately did not distribute them. It wasn't until February of the following year, when Holly and the Crickets signed with Petty Studios in Clovis, New Mexico, that Norman Petty released the records under the name of the Crickets (then comprised of Holly, Jerry Allison, Niki Sullivan, and Joe B. Maudlin). By September of 1957, "That'll Be the Day" hit the top of the American charts and by October was No. 1 on the British charts. The song is considered an historic benchmark in the history of 1950s Rock and Roll and it resulted in international fame for Holly and the Crickets. In December of that year, Holly had three singles in the top 50 of the American charts, including "Peggy Sue."⁴⁸ On the first of that same month, Holly and the Crickets performed "That'll Be the Day" and "Peggy Sue" on the Ed Sullivan Show.⁴⁹

Holly's decision to work with Norman Petty played a critical role in the development of his career. Located in Clovis, New Mexico, Petty's recording studio was located outside the more controlled environment of locations such as Nashville, Tennessee, where recording executives and union rules constricted the creative process. In Clovis, Holly was free to experiment, to record and re-record, taking the time necessary to find the sound he wanted. That freedom resulted in a number of musical innovations, such as double tracking, which became industry standards.⁵⁰ During his association with Petty, Holly recorded both as a solo artist and with the Crickets on two different labels (both of which

⁴⁴ Surf Ballroom & Museum records, "The Surf Ballroom - Guided Tour Presentation," 12.

⁴⁵ *The Rockabilly Legends* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Publishing, 2007), 62.

⁴⁶ Surf Ballroom & Museum records, "The Surf Ballroom - Guided Tour Presentation," 12-15.

⁴⁷ *The Rockabilly Legends*, 63.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁴⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddy_Holly. Accessed October 15, 2010.

⁵⁰ *The Independent*, "Oh boy: Why Buddy Holly still matters today," January 23, 2009, 2. Accessed October 19, 2010 at <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/features/oh-boy-why-buddy-holly-still-matters-today-1501271.html>.

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were subsidiaries of Decca Records). As a result, during the short course of his career, Buddy Holly's production was twice that of comparable musicians.⁵¹

In January of 1958, the Crickets embarked on a 25-day tour in England, which contributed to the level of fanaticism for Buddy Holly by the British. The group was only the second white Rock and Roll band to tour the United Kingdom; even Elvis Presley did not do so. Holly's style on the rhythm guitar has been described as reminiscent of British "skiffle"⁵² music, which heightened his connection to the youth of that country.⁵³ Holly's popularity in Britain as well as the United States is often explained by the quality of normalcy he possessed, which contrasted with the overt sexuality of Elvis. Rather, his southern drawl and horned rimmed glasses created a sort of boy-next-door-charm that appealed to an audience that could relate to him more easily than to the handsome, undulating Presley.

By the end of 1958, Holly had split with Norman Petty and the Crickets, turning his focus to writing. During this period, Holly's music was maturing and becoming more complex. Songs such as "Moondreams," "It Doesn't Matter Anymore," and "Raining In My Heart" reflect that evolution.⁵⁴ Financial pressures related to the separation from Petty led him to join the Winter Dance Party tour that moved across the Midwest during the frigid winter months of 1959. For the tour he recruited Tommy Allsup (lead guitar), Waylon Jennings (bass), and Carl Bunch (drums). The group joined a cavalcade that included J.P. Richardson (aka The Big Bopper), Ritchie Valens, and Dion and the Belmonts for the long, cold bus ride that was scheduled to criss-cross Kentucky, Illinois, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa for a series of 24 one-night stands in 24 days.⁵⁵

The Winter Dance Party cavalcade arrived at the Surf Ballroom in Clear Lake on Monday, February 2, 1959 after a 350-mile drive from Green Bay, Wisconsin; multiple breakdowns en route stretched the drive to nine hours. After performing for a crowd of 1,000 in Clear Lake, the tour was scheduled to move on for a performance in Moorhead, Minnesota. The long days of travel and the discomfort of the cold weather led Holly to abandon his seat on the bus and to charter an airplane to take him to Moorhead. A simple twist of fate placed The Big Bopper and Ritchie Valens on the plane with Buddy Holly. Originally, Waylon Jennings and Tommy Allsup had planned to fly with Holly to their next performance at the Armory in Moorhead. Although some sources challenge the truth of the commonly related version of the fabled coin toss, it appears that, at the very last moment and after much cajoling, Allsup agreed to toss a coin with Valens for his seat on the flight. Waylon Jennings gave his seat up to Richardson, who had a case of the flu. In response to a comment from Buddy Holly about his not traveling on the plane, Jennings joked, "Well, I hope your 'ol plane crashes" – a comment he later regretted having made. Thus, it was Ritchie Valens and The Big

⁵¹ *The Independent*, "Oh boy: Why Buddy Holly still matters today," 3.

⁵² The widely popular British skiffle music of the 1950s was a fusing of hillbilly and Rock and Roll played on instruments as incongruous as a washtub, a kazoo, and a guitar.

⁵³ Allmusic.com. Accessed October 25, 2010.

⁵⁴ *The Independent*, "Oh boy: Why Buddy Holly still matters today," 8.

⁵⁵ Cavalcade was a term given to groups of musicians that toured together. The cavalcades, which, in the 1950s, were typically racially segregated, traveled from venue to venue by bus or automobile on a pre-booked circuit. In the Midwest, the Surf Ballroom was commonly a prominent stop on the circuit. The cavalcades were demanding and wearing on the musicians due to the relentless schedule of one-night stands.

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Bopper who died with Buddy Holly when the airplane crashed in a field about five miles north of Clear Lake at 1:05 a.m., killing all passengers aboard, including the 21 year old pilot, Roger Peterson.⁵⁶

Although Buddy Holly was the best-known of the three entertainers who died that day, both Ritchie Valens and The Big Bopper had growing careers with records ranked in the top ten that year. Seventeen-year-old Ritchie Valens (born Richard Steven Valenzuela), considered the original Latin Rock and Roll heartthrob, was expected to rise to great heights as a singer. His music showed the influence of his Mexican heritage combined with black Rhythm and Blues. Ritchie Valens had two major hits: "LaBamba", which has been described as having a "driving simplicity [that] foreshadowed garage-rock, frat-rock and punk-rock" and "Donna", considered one of the greatest Rock and Roll singles of the 1950s. He was a great fan of Little Richard, Bo Diddley and Buddy Holly. Ritchie Valens was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2001.⁵⁷

The Big Bopper was known for his diverse set of skills as singer, songwriter, entrepreneur, radioman, and promoter. His major hit was "Chantilly Lace," which was in the Top Twenty at the time of his death. The song was named by the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame to the top 500 songs that shaped Rock and Roll.⁵⁸

At the time of the crash, the deaths of Holly, Valens, and Richardson were not given wide coverage, a reflection of a generation of newsmen whose musical taste and interests had not yet shifted to Rock and Roll and who thus found limited significance in their untimely deaths. The youth of Buddy Holly and Ritchie Valens heightened the sense of tragedy for their fans so near to their age and, for many, the deaths were their first experience with such loss. In a larger context, the accident was the first to take the life of a well-known, white, Rock and Roll musician, let alone the loss of three in a single event. Other popular twentieth century American musicians had died young, most notably, Hank Williams. However, Williams' proclivity for excess set the stage for a shortened life and laid the responsibility for his death on him. Later deaths of Rock musicians such as Jimi Hendrix (1970), Janis Joplin (1970), and Jim Morrison (1971), while tragic losses, were also a result of life choices, rather than an unpredictable accident. As described by one music aficionado, the "emotional resonance of this event [the crash] was totally different in every way possible from those tragedies. In comparison, Holly seemed eternally innocent, both personally and in terms of the times in which he lived."⁵⁹ Because Holly died when his career was soaring and with so much unrequited promise, his music is intimately connected to his loss, making it impossible to hear without recalling his death.

The legacy of Buddy Holly, which is now so familiarly connected to the Surf Ballroom, is found in the songs he performed, in the written music left behind, and in the deep and lasting impact he and his music made on some of the greatest performers in Rock and Roll musical history. In the studio, Holly was universally acknowledged as an innovator. The freedom he found at Petty's Studio in Clovis allowed him to experiment with sounds and techniques,

⁵⁶ Surf Ballroom & Museum records, "The Surf Ballroom - Guided Tour Presentation," 16-21.

⁵⁷ Rock and Roll Hall of Fame website. <http://www.rockhall.org>.

⁵⁸ Author interview with Terry Stewart, Director of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, June 2009 and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame website - <http://www.rockhall.com/exhibithighlights/500-songs>.

⁵⁹ Allmusic.com. Accessed October 25, 2010.

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including being among the first to use double-tracking, a recording technique used to produce a fuller sound.⁶⁰ The song "Words of Love" (1957) is noted as one of the earliest, successful examples of double-tracked vocals in Rock and Roll music. Such technical innovation and experimentation has been described as "[giving] shape to the next wave of Rock and Roll, and, especially, to early British Rock and Roll and the subsequent British Invasion beat."⁶¹

Holly was also a session musician, working primarily with new musicians recording in Petty's studio. In the months prior to his death, Holly was venturing into producing the music of other musicians, having produced Waylon Jennings' first record, "Jole Blon."⁶² At the time of his 1958 marriage to Maria Elena Santiago, Holly was laying the foundation to open recording studios in Lubbock, New York City, and London.⁶³

Further, Buddy Holly has been described as one of the first all-around Rock and Roll musicians and "the single most influential creative force in early Rock and Roll."⁶⁴ In an era when it was virtually unheard of for a singer to write his own music (the music business being still patterned after that from the 1920s when songwriting was a specialized profession on the publishing side of the industry), Holly rose to the top of the charts on songs he wrote, the number of which heightened the impact made. Although this aspect of his musical skill was not widely recognized by the general population, other musicians took note and a shift toward singer-songwriting occurred, paving the way for musicians such as Paul McCartney and John Lennon, whose songwriting collaborations are legendary. In 1974 John Lennon stated that, while Holly's music itself certainly inspired all groups to want to be the Crickets, it was the songwriting that most directly impacted the Beatles, Lennon and McCartney in particular. Lennon said, "What he [Holly] did with '3' chords made a songwriter out of me!"⁶⁵ Holly and Lennon biographer Philip Norman said, "John and Paul used to do a pastiche of Buddy Holly, but then everybody used to imitate Buddy; that was the whole point. Buddy's voice invited you to imitate him and if you did that, you could see how the songs were put together."⁶⁶ Although, in some cases, written in the studio, Holly's songs were brought to life on stage.

As noted, Buddy Holly, the performer, had an energy and persona that set him apart. Songwriter Tony Macaulay explains Holly as, "the nerd's hero" who "got more spotty, pre-pubescent boys writing songs and playing the guitar than anybody else."⁶⁷ The heavy, black glasses that became such a part of Holly's persona is one of his on-stage "firsts" that impacted musicians to come, including John Lennon, who watched a televised performance of Holly at the

⁶⁰ Rock and Roll Hall of Fame website and *The Independent*, "Oh boy: Why Buddy Holly still matters today," 8.

⁶¹ Allmusic.com. Accessed October 25, 2010.

⁶² *Rolling Stone*, "Buddy Holly", 2001. Accessed at <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/artist/news/artists/8828/59941/59957> on October 26, 2010.

⁶³ <http://www.buddythemusical.com/true-love-ways.htm>.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ <http://everything2.com/title/John+Lennon+on+Buddy+Holly?displaytype=printable> and <http://www.electricearl.com/dawson/lennon.html>. Accessed on October 27, 2010.

⁶⁶ *The Independent*, "Oh boy: Why Buddy Holly still matters today," 6.

⁶⁷ *The Independent*, "Oh boy: Why Buddy Holly still matters today," 6.

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London Palladium.⁶⁸ Before Holly, musicians did not wear their glasses on stage, regardless of the degree to which they were necessary.

Holly and the Crickets were the first to use what became the standard composition for a Rock band, utilizing two guitars (lead and rhythm), a bass, and drums. Holly was the first to popularize the Fender Stratocaster, bringing the instrument to the attention of many up-and-coming guitarists through live performance. This was particularly true for audiences in the United Kingdom where the Stratocaster had not yet been seen or heard. The volume and quality of sound created by the Stratocaster in a live performance was unforgettable to many and soon it became the guitar of choice. Brian Poole of The Tremeloes described the experience as "... the loudest thing we'd ever heard. It was a small band but they made such a crack when they came on and it was very, very exciting. We were doing Buddy Holly songs for the next five years."⁶⁹ In 1974 John Lennon was asked to elaborate on Holly's influence. Lennon recalled seeing the televised concert of Holly and the Crickets at the London Palladium in 1958, stating that it was the first time he had seen a Fender guitar being played. The additional fact that Holly sang and played simultaneously amazed the young Lennon.⁷⁰

Holly and the Crickets, mistaken as a "negro" group by a booking agency, performed at neighborhood, black venues, making them the first white performers to play at the Apollo Theatre in Harlem.⁷¹ Initially the audience was taken aback by the group's race, but Holly's infectious personality won over the crowd and drew the black community into his fan base, diminishing the racial barrier that separated musical acts and their audiences during Rock and Roll's early years.

A young Bob Dylan was in the crowd in Duluth, Minnesota, when the Winter Dance Party passed through during the winter of 1958. The experience made a lasting impression on Dylan. In the musician's 1998 Grammy acceptance speech following his win for his album *Time Out of Mind* Dylan said, "And I just want to say that when I was sixteen or seventeen years old, I went to see Buddy Holly play at Duluth National Guard Armory and I was three feet away from him ... and he looked at me. And I just have some sort of feeling that he was – I don't know how or why – but I know he was with us all the time we were making this record in some kind of way."⁷² Music critics have made comparisons between the vocal styles of Holly and Dylan, noting various instances of Dylan channeling Holly's use of a "clipped, staccato delivery that communicates a sly sense of cool, almost teenage masculinity."⁷³

⁶⁸ National Public Radio Music, "Buddy Holly: 50 Years After The Music Died." Accessed October 25, 2010 at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=100161470>.

⁶⁹ *The Independent*, "Oh boy: Why Buddy Holly still matters today," 4.

⁷⁰ <http://everything2.com/title/John+Lennon+on+Buddy+Holly?displaytype=printable> and <http://www.electricearl.com/dawson/lennon.html>. Accessed on October 27, 2010.

⁷¹ *The Independent*, "Oh boy: Why Buddy Holly still matters today," 8.

⁷² <http://expectingrain.com/dok/set/98/02/980225a.html>. For video of acceptance speech see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k5HaGgSJRso>, accessed on October 28, 2010.

⁷³ *Rolling Stone*, "Not Fade Away: Remembering Buddy Holly on the 50th Anniversary of His Death", January 30, 2009. Accessed online at <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/15765/91656> on October 27, 2010.

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Numerous legendary Rock and Roll musicians acknowledge the influence Holly had on their music. The first record cut by the Beatles (who were so-named after the Crickets) while still known as the Quarrymen was "That'll Be the Day." In 1964 the Beatles did a cover version of "Words of Love" for their album *Beatles for Sale*; that album was released in the United States the following year under the name *Beatles VI*. During the 1969 recording sessions for their final album *Let It Be*, the Beatles recorded "Mailman, Bring Me No More Blues." Although not written by Holly, he popularized the song. The impromptu recording, on which Lennon mimicked Holly's vocal style, was included on the *Anthology 3* album, released in the mid-1990s. John Lennon covered "Peggy Sue" on his 1975 album entitled *Rock-n-Roll*. Paul McCartney purchased the publishing rights to the Holly song catalogue in 1975.⁷⁴

Immediately after Holly's death, other musicians stepped in, their careers placed on track by the void created by his loss. Bobby Vee and his band assumed Holly's slot on the Winter Dance Party circuit. In the UK, Adam Faith and Mike Berry followed in Holly's footsteps.⁷⁵ Many artists have had hits covering Holly songs including Linda Ronstadt ("It's So Easy"), Cliff Richard ("That'll Be the Day", 1959), The Rolling Stones ("Not Fade Away" was their first Top 10 single, 1964). The Grateful Dead, Bruce Springsteen, and Bob Dylan all performed versions of "Not Fade Away."⁷⁶ The 1970s-1980s American Rock icon, Bruce Springsteen is quoted as saying, "I play Buddy Holly every night before I go on; that keeps me honest."⁷⁷

A week after Buddy Holly's death, his song "It Doesn't Matter Anymore" was released in the United Kingdom and swiftly rose to No. 1, making it the first posthumous Rock single to top the charts. The compilation, "The Buddy Holly Story", was huge in both the United Kingdom and the United States, where it remained on the charts for three years.⁷⁸ A backlog of previously unreleased material resulted in releases of Buddy Holly music through the 1960s.⁷⁹

In 1971, twelve years after the death of Buddy Holly, the Don McLean album "American Pie" was released. The song of the same name became a musical icon – a musical representation of the evolution of American political, social, and cultural history. The song also paid homage to McLean's musical idol, Buddy Holly, to whom he dedicated the album, citing Holly as a critical influence on his own music. Although McLean provided little personal interpretation of the song's meaning – preferring to leave that to the listener – he did note that the first verse "exorcised his long-running grief over Holly's death."⁸⁰ Radio stations across the country devoted airtime to interpretive discussions of the song lyrics, heightening interest in both the song and in the music of Buddy Holly and creating broader coverage than at the time of the plane crash. The teens of the 1970s were thus exposed to the musical legacy of Buddy Holly, breeding a new generation of fans. In 2001, in a "Songs of the Century" project sponsored by the National Endowment for the

⁷⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddy_Holly. Accessed October 15, 2010.

⁷⁵ *The Independent*, "Oh boy: Why Buddy Holly still matters today," 6.

⁷⁶ *The Independent*, "Oh boy: Why Buddy Holly still matters today," 6.

⁷⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddy_Holly. Accessed October 15, 2010. (Rolling Stone, 8-24-1978)

⁷⁸ *The Independent*, "Oh boy: Why Buddy Holly still matters today," 5.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁸⁰ The Fifties Web website. <http://www.fiftiesweb.com/amerpie-1.htm>.

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Arts and Scholastic, Inc., the song "American Pie" was named in a list of the top 365 songs of the twentieth century, coming in at number five.

The lyrics of the first verse of "American Pie" are:

A long, long time ago,
I can still remember how
That music used to make me smile
And I knew if I had my chance
That I could make those people dance,
And maybe they'd be happy for a while
But February made me shiver,
With every paper I'd deliver,
Bad news on the doorstep
I couldn't take one more step.
I can't remember if I cried
When I read about his widowed bride
But something touched me deep inside,
The day the music died.

One of the common interpretations of this verse points out McLean's allusion to the popularity of dancing during the early years of Rock and Roll and his belief that his music could "make those people dance." Further, the lyrics describe McLean's discovery of Holly's February 1959 death when, as a young boy with a paper route, he read the headline of a paper he was delivering announcing the plane crash that killed Holly, Valens, and Richardson. That Buddy Holly left behind a young bride is a historical fact – her name is Maria Elena. The loss of The Big Bopper and Ritchie Valens along with Holly – each in the early years of careers full of great promise – became to McLean (and, through his "American Pie", to the world) "the day the music died."⁸¹

In 1977 Buddy Holly Week was held in England. The event, which was sponsored by Paul McCartney, featured a reconstituted Crickets. The group also played at the festival in 1988 with McCartney joining them on stage. The musical, "Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story" opened on London's End in 1989 with a run on Broadway in 1990. In 1996 MCA records released the album "Not Fade Away: Remembering Buddy Holly" that featured performances by Waylon Jennings, Los Lobos, the Band, and the Crickets. In 2008 Hip-o Select released an exhaustive 6-disc box set entitled "Not Fade Away: The Complete Studio Recordings and More."

Buddy Holly was one of ten performers inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1986 – the first year of inductions. Fellow inductees included Chuck Berry, Elvis Presley, Fats Domino, James Brown, Jerry Lee Lewis, Little Richard, Ray Charles, Sam Cooke, and The Everly Brothers. He is honored in his hometown of Lubbock, Texas in the

⁸¹ The Fifties Web website. <http://www.fiftiesweb.com/amerpie-1.htm>.

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city's downtown "walk of fame" where a statue of Holly playing his Fender Stratocaster stands as centerpiece. The city also created the Buddy Holly Center of Texas Art and Music in 1999 and the Buddy and Elena Holly Park.⁸²

Beginning in February of 1978 the Winter Dance Party at the Surf Ballroom in Clear Lake has brought Buddy Holly fans from across the United States, England, and Europe together. The Winter Dance Party created an occasion to remember the music of Buddy Holly, to marvel over the contributions made during his short career, and to share the thoughts of what might have been. On February 3, 1994, with the historic rehabilitation of the ballroom just completed, the Winter Dance Party was held with Don McLean as the headliner. McLean's website includes a lengthy letter that details the experience for him and describes the Surf Ballroom as "a shrine to Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and The Big Bopper ... a temple to the day the music died."⁸³

The Winter Dance Party was born as a promotional campaign with an unanticipated widespread and long-lasting appeal. Further, it could not have been known how the event would bring the legacy of Buddy Holly and the Surf Ballroom back together. The Surf Ballroom was inducted into the Iowa Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 1998 along with the Val Air Ballroom (1939) in West Des Moines.

On January 28, 2009 the Surf Ballroom was designated as an historic landmark by the American Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, significant as the final performance venue of The Big Bopper, Ritchie Valens, and Buddy Holly. The Surf joined only nine other sites designated as significant in telling the story of "Rock and Roll's formative moments." The other sites include King Records in Cincinnati, which was a prominent recording label of the 1940s, Brooklyn High School in Cleveland where Elvis Presley played his first concert north of the Mason-Dixon Line, Cleveland's WJW Radio from which Deejay Alan Freed popularized the term "rock and roll", and, most recently, the Austin City Limits studio.⁸⁴ At the 2009 Winter Dance Party, the Surf Ballroom & Museum joined with the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the death of Buddy Holly, The Big Bopper, and Ritchie Valens at the Surf Ballroom in Clear Lake. A tribute concert was held and a monument memorializing the day the music died was dedicated. Today, a visit to the Surf, either to dance or to tour the building and museum, is a step back toward Buddy Holly and the music that, as stated in the Surf's motto, "... didn't die. It lives on every time we play rock 'n' roll."⁸⁵ The Surf Ballroom & Museum is open to the general public every day from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., with guided tours available "by chance or appointment."

The deaths of Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and The Big Bopper are memorialized at the crash site, which is located some five miles north of Clear Lake, Iowa. The cornfield into which the airplane plummeted continues to be cultivated, but a small area set about one-half mile from the road can be reached on foot for those wishing to pay their

⁸² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddy_Holly. Accessed October 15, 2010.

⁸³ Don McLean website. <http://www.don-mclean.com/buddyholly.asp>.

⁸⁴ Rock and Roll Hall of Fame website. <http://www.rockhall.org>.

⁸⁵ Surf Ballroom & Museum promotional materials.

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respects. Small markers memorialize those lost, including pilot Roger Peterson, with personal mementos left by the trio's many fans.

While the technical innovations of Buddy Holly are associated with the Petty Studios in Clovis, New Mexico and his death is memorialized at the crash site outside Clear Lake, it is the Surf Ballroom that represents Holly as the performer who was to his fans a regular guy whom they could admire and emulate, an entertainer whose energy was infectious, a singer-songwriter and guitarist whose music and talent stood him apart from the many musicians of his time, and a friend they lost far too soon.

The Moderne at The Surf Ballroom

Although built in 1948, the Surf Ballroom exhibits a clearly Modernistic influence more predominantly identified with the years between the two world wars (1918-1941). Various referred to as Art Moderne or Streamlined Moderne, the style drew on the influences of a period motivated by the growing dominance of the machine in all aspects of daily life. As such, building designs drew on the streamlined forms of period technology, particularly the airplane, the automobile, and the steamship, resulting in architecture with clean lines, curvilinear forms, a minimum of applied ornament, a monochromatic palette, and the use of industrial metals such as stainless steel. The impact of the Moderne was more clearly evident in America's large metropolitan areas, with examples of the style very limited in the state of Iowa. The Surf Ballroom exhibits the stylistic devices of the Moderne on its exterior, with many carried to the interior. Clear Lake has no other commercial examples of the Moderne.

Modern architecture was born in an era dominated by the rise of industrialization and driven by the achievements of American technology. All forms of artistic endeavor were impacted by the new dynamic, which provided a platform for separating design from historic precedents. People in all walks of life were challenged to integrate new technology both into their consciousness and into the practical aspects of daily living. Through the act of conscious integration, the machine became part of living, and design of all kinds began to draw on the new reality. A 1986 exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum and the book that followed focused on the connection between the dominance of the machine during the period between the world wars (1918-1941) and the resulting sensibility that informed modernism.⁸⁶ Particularly tantalizing to artistic design were machines related to transportation: the speed inherent in the automobile, the steamship, and the airplane became central to design and when made manifest in architectural design was referred to as Streamline Moderne.

In the Surf Ballroom the Moderne is particularly evident in the primarily flat roofline, the nearly groutless, buff colored brick-facing of the façade, the font style and circle motif of the historic signage, the stainless steel utilized in the box office, awning and entrance, and in the curving form of the façade wall. Each of these elements draws on the modernistic tendency toward smooth, clean lines, horizontal orientation, and flattened, geometric forms. The use of

⁸⁶ Richard Guy Wilson, *The Machine Age in America 1918-1941* (New York: The Brooklyn Museum in association with Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1986), 23.

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the Moderne in a ballroom of the 1930s and 1940s is in keeping with nationwide tendencies. The stainless steel, glass and curving lines of the Moderne reflected the prevailing music culture of "the swing" and was a stylistic reaction against the more intimate cabarets and nightclubs of the 1920s.⁸⁷

As indicated, the façade of the property is faced in a buff colored brick. The brick is elongated and laid in a common bond with a narrow, matching grout line, creating the illusion of a smooth finish. The brick façade curves outward near its center to embrace the building's primary entrance where a simple, stainless steel awning featuring the clean lines of the Moderne provides cover. The entrance to the ballroom sets recessed within the embrace of the curved façade, with a stainless steel header to define the opening and flanking billboards mounted to advertise coming attractions. A semi-circular, stainless and glass ticket booth sets within the recess of the entrance and between the paired, stainless steel and glass doors leading to the vestibule.

The interior of the Surf Ballroom carries on the modernistic influence established on the exterior. The wood vestibule doors, which open into the lobby area, are absent decorative embellishment. Rather, they rely on the geometric form of simple glass panel insets and handles of modern materials (stainless steel and Bakelite) in an expression of modern sensibility. That sensibility is further expressed in the curved profile of the doorjamb and in the canted counter of the lobby's coat check. A narrowing of the passageway marks the promenade, which provides the transition between the lobby and the ballroom itself. The curved walls and linearity of the promenade carry on the feeling of the Moderne, as does the curving line of the refreshment bars in the booth areas and the Surfside 6 Café.

The Surf Ballroom exhibits a clearly Modernistic influence in its use of streamlined, curving forms and modern materials. These devices reveal the preoccupation with technology and the machine that directed the rise of the Moderne in the period between the world wars. The Surf Ballroom exhibits the Moderne's stylistic devices in both the exterior and the interior. The impact of the Moderne was more limited in the state of Iowa than in other areas of the country with large metropolitan areas, elevating the importance of its manifestation in the design of the Surf Ballroom.

⁸⁷ David W. Stowe, *Swing Changes, Big Band Jazz in New Deal America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 94.

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RELEVANT CULTURAL RESOURCE DOCUMENTS

No comprehensive survey and evaluation of historic resources in Clear Lake has been completed to date. However, some individual evaluations are included on the Iowa SHPO database, though none of the Surf Ballroom despite its generally accepted historical significance. The most relevant cultural resource works address Clear Lake history, in particular the 2006 Paul C. Juhl publication, *Clear Lake: The Earliest Images, 1870s and 1880s*, which uses stereographic cards to create a visual and narrative history of the community during that specific period. Also of note, is the extensive and well-organized collection in the Iowa Room at the Clear Lake Public Library, which includes historic images, local history accounts, newspaper microfilm, and a gem of a local historian in H. Milton Dusenberg, and the records kept by the Surf Ballroom.

POTENTIAL FOR HISTORIC ARCHAEOLOGY

The potential for historical archaeology was not assessed as part of the present National Register nomination. The presence of the paved roadway (North Shore Drive) and surrounding paved parking suggests the likelihood that the ground disturbance resulting from the construction of those elements may have destroyed localized archaeological resources. However, the paving (particularly that of the parking area) may have been laid over ground with a minimum of earth movement. In that case, archaeological resources may merely have been encapsulated. In the future, any significant excavation and/or grading should take into consideration the possibility that archaeological resources may remain. Property owner, Dean Snyder, indicated that a perimeter trench was used for many years as a dumping ground for debris, particularly broken furniture and equipment. Although Snyder states that the debris was removed during the 1994 rehabilitation, the trench was not examined to verify the degree to which it was cleared. Consideration of the trench from an historical archaeological perspective may yet be warranted.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This National Register nomination utilizes a wide array of reference resources in an attempt to create a full picture of the historic significance of the resource. Of particular importance were the various resources found in the Iowa Room at the Clear Lake Public Library, the resources at the Loomis Archives in the Mason City Public Library, and the extensive newspaper accounts that documented both the Surf Ballroom's construction as well as the story of its predecessor. Understanding the role of Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and The Big Bopper in the history of Rock and Roll came through conversations with Terry Stewart, Director of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and various printed histories.

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- Mason City Globe-Gazette*. "Clear Lake's \$250,000 Ballroom to be Opened Monday." April 14, 1933, 10.
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Interviews

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Personal interview with Dale Snyder, Owner of the Surf Ballroom. (May 19, 2009).
Personal interview with H. Milton Dusenberg. (June 20, 2009).

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Historical Newspaper Database. NewspaperARCHIVE. <http://www.newspaperarchive.com>.

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You Tube. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k5HaGgSJRso>.

Surf Ballroom
Name of Property

Cerro Gordo County, Iowa
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 3.25

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

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4		<u> </u>		<u> </u>		<u> </u>	
Zone		Easting		Northing			

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Alexa McDowell, Architectural Historian
organization AKAY Consulting date July 15, 2011
street & number 1226 6th Street telephone 515-491-5432
city or town Boone state Iowa zip code 50036

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs - Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items - (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Surf Ltd.
street & number P.O. Box 181 telephone 641-357-6151
city or town Clear Lake state Iowa zip code 50428

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

The Surf Ballroom, located at 460 North Shore Drive, is situated on an irregular shaped parcel on portions of blocks 27, 28 and 29 of the "Camp Meeting Grounds" in Clear Lake, Iowa. The legal description for the Surf Ballroom is as follows:

BLK 28 EXC A STRIP 17.5' WIDE ABUT & LYG PARA TO SELY LINE PAVEMENT US HWY 18 & ALL THAT STRIP BETW BLK 28 & 29 & BETW W 2ND STR & US HWY 18 EXC A STRIP 17.5' WIDE WHICH ABUTS & LIES PARA TO PAVEMENT TO US HWY NO 18 & L'S 1 & 2 EXC W 10' ALL IN AUD PL L'S 1 TO 4 SUB BLK 27 SUB PART CAMP MTG GRDS & BEG AT SWLY COR L 4 BLK 29 TH ALG WLY SIDE L'S 4 & 5 TO NWLY COR L 5 E ALG N LINE L 5 21' SWLY 119.2' TO POB & L'S 6-7-8-9-10-11-12-13 BLK 29 CAMP MTG GRDS¹



(SOURCE: <http://www.mapquest.com>)

Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Surf Ballroom.

¹ <http://www.iowaassessors.com>

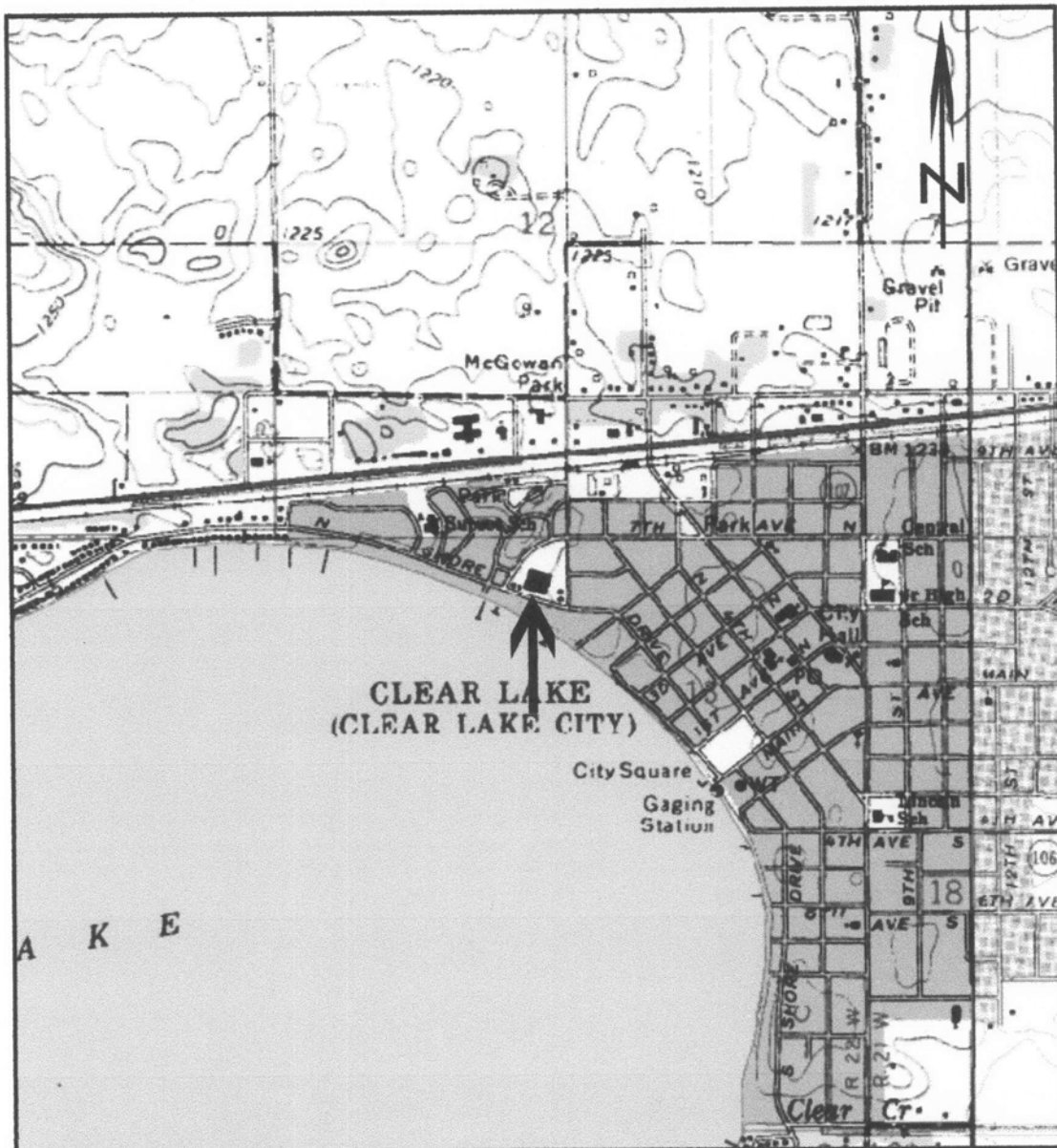
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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa

Figure 1. USGS 7.5 MINUTE TOPOGRAPHIC MAP— CLEAR LAKE WEST QUAD



(SOURCE: <http://www.trails.com>)

The location of the Surf Ballroom is indicated by the arrow.

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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa

Figure 2. SITE MAP - 2010



(SOURCE: <http://www.mapquest.com>)

The location of the Surf Ballroom is indicated by the arrow.

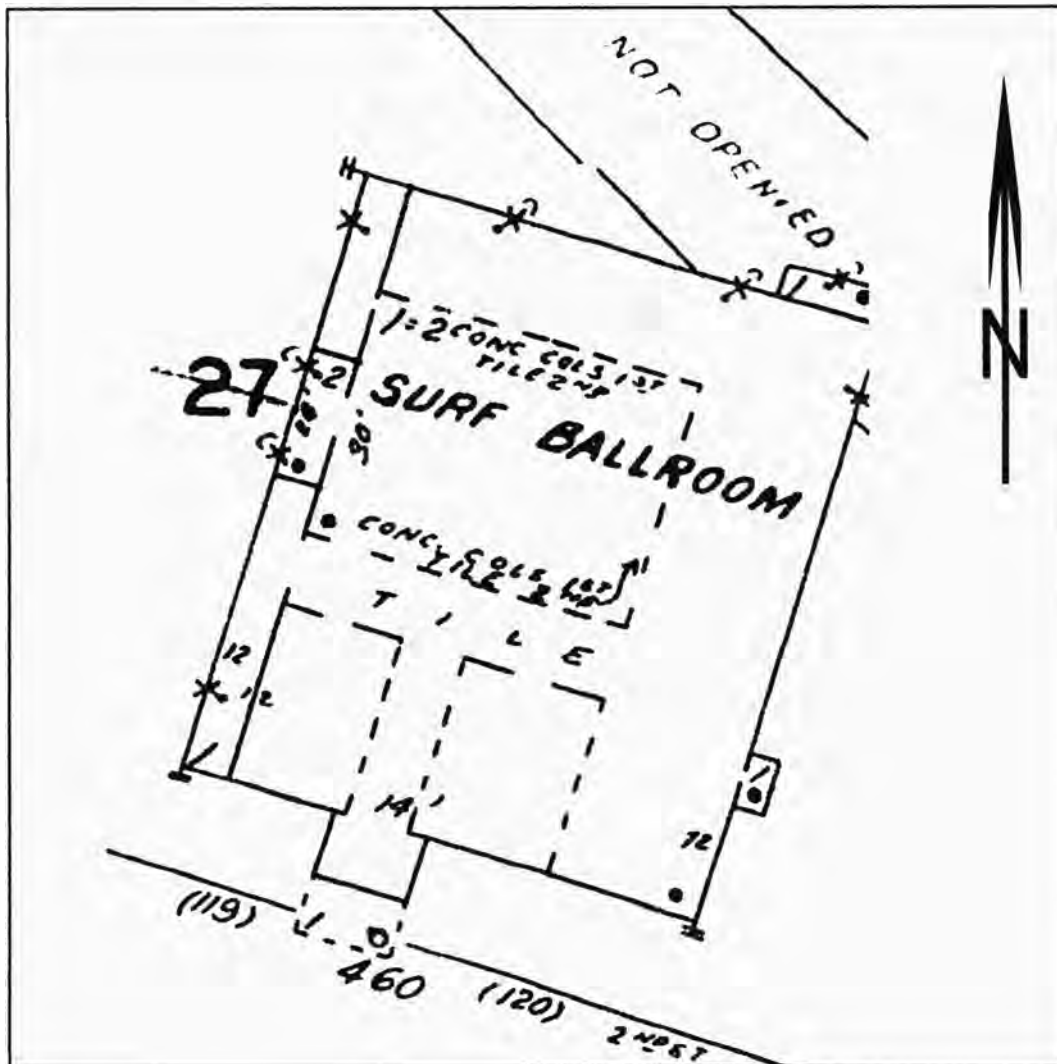
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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa

Figure 3. PLAN VIEW - 1951



(SOURCE: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map 1931, Revised 1951.)

The Surf Ballroom is sited at an angle, with its façade facing southwest. As this 1951, revised version of the 1931 Sanborn Fire Insurance map indicates, the building is constructed of concrete, tile, and brick. The barrel roof over the dance floor is outlined on the plan, as are the coat-check areas flanking the promenade.

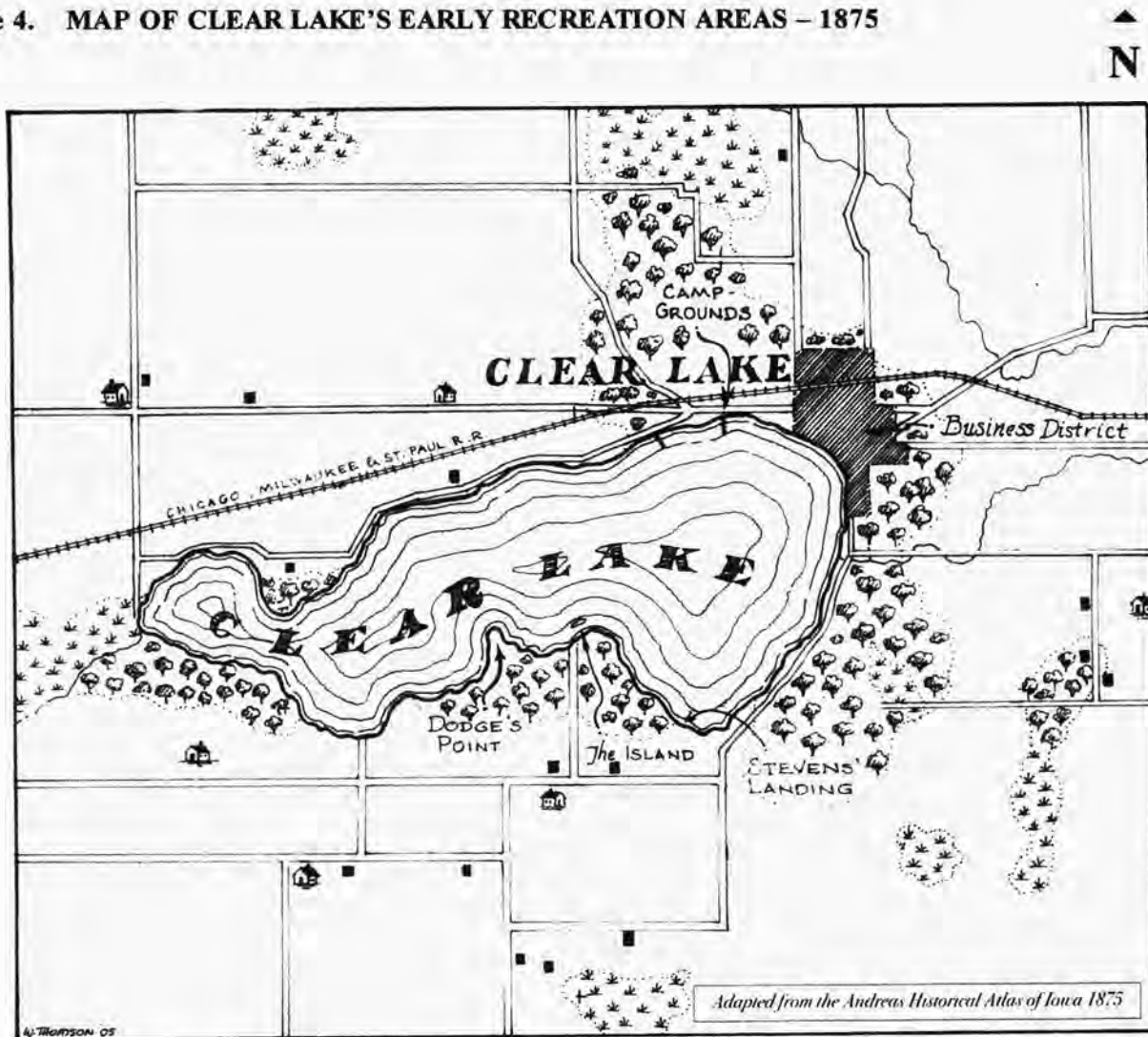
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Figure 4. MAP OF CLEAR LAKE'S EARLY RECREATION AREAS – 1875



(SOURCE: Paul Juhl, *Clear Lake: The Earliest Images, 1870s and 1880s*. Re-printed here with the author's permission.)

This map (an adaptation from the 1875 Andreas Atlas) provides the setting for the rise of the recreation and tourism industry that the Surf Ballroom would come to be a part of. The map notes the location of the "Camp Grounds" on the north side of the lake; the ballroom is sited in that historic location, adjacent to what had been a very active railroad line (the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul.)

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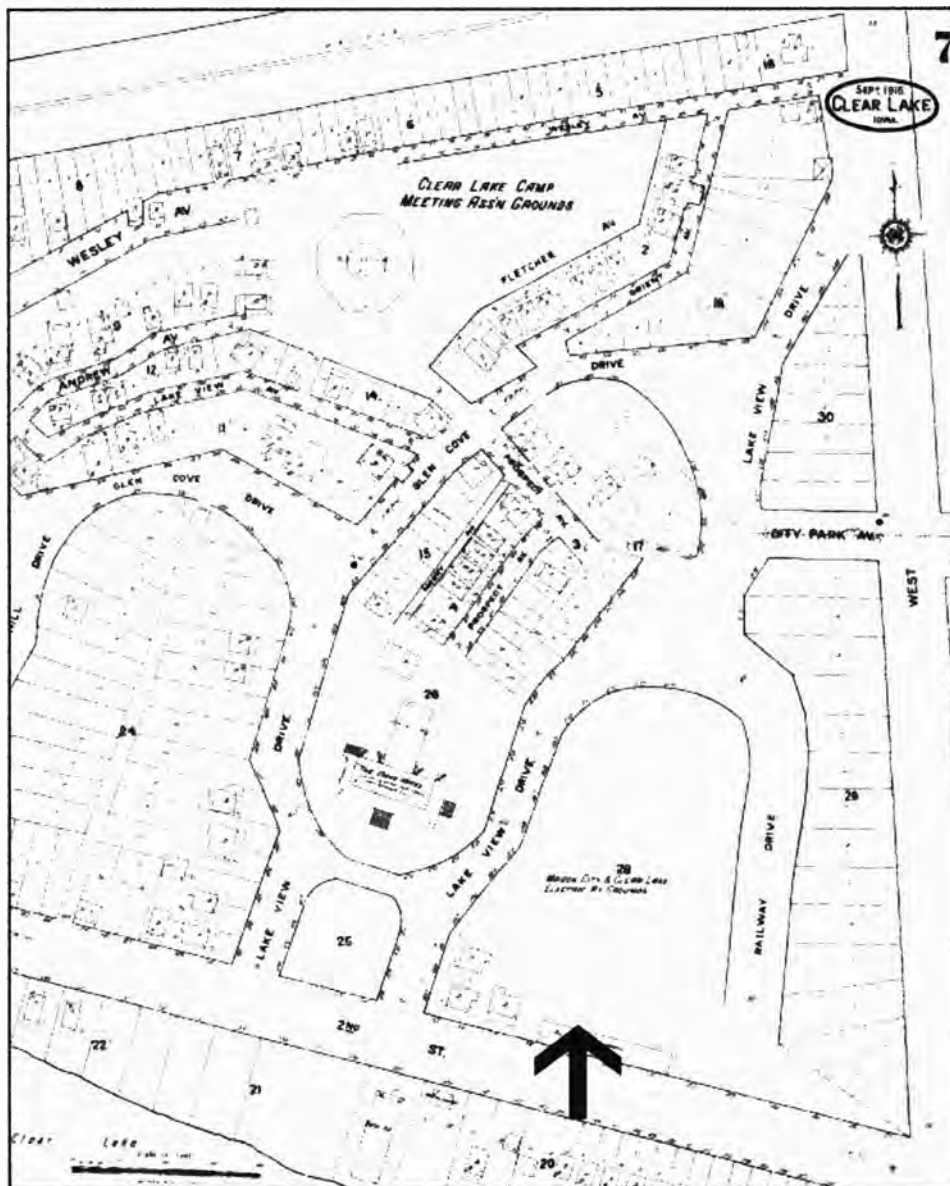
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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa

Figure 5. FIRE INSURANCE MAP – 1916



(SOURCE: <http://0-sanborn.umi.com/catalog.cbpl.lib.ia.us:80/>)

This 1916 Sanborn Company map documents the Ballroom site (indicated by the arrow) long before the building's construction. Note that the triangular block was part of the Clear Lake Camp Meeting grounds and that the Oaks Hotel's garage occupied the future site of the Surf Ballroom.

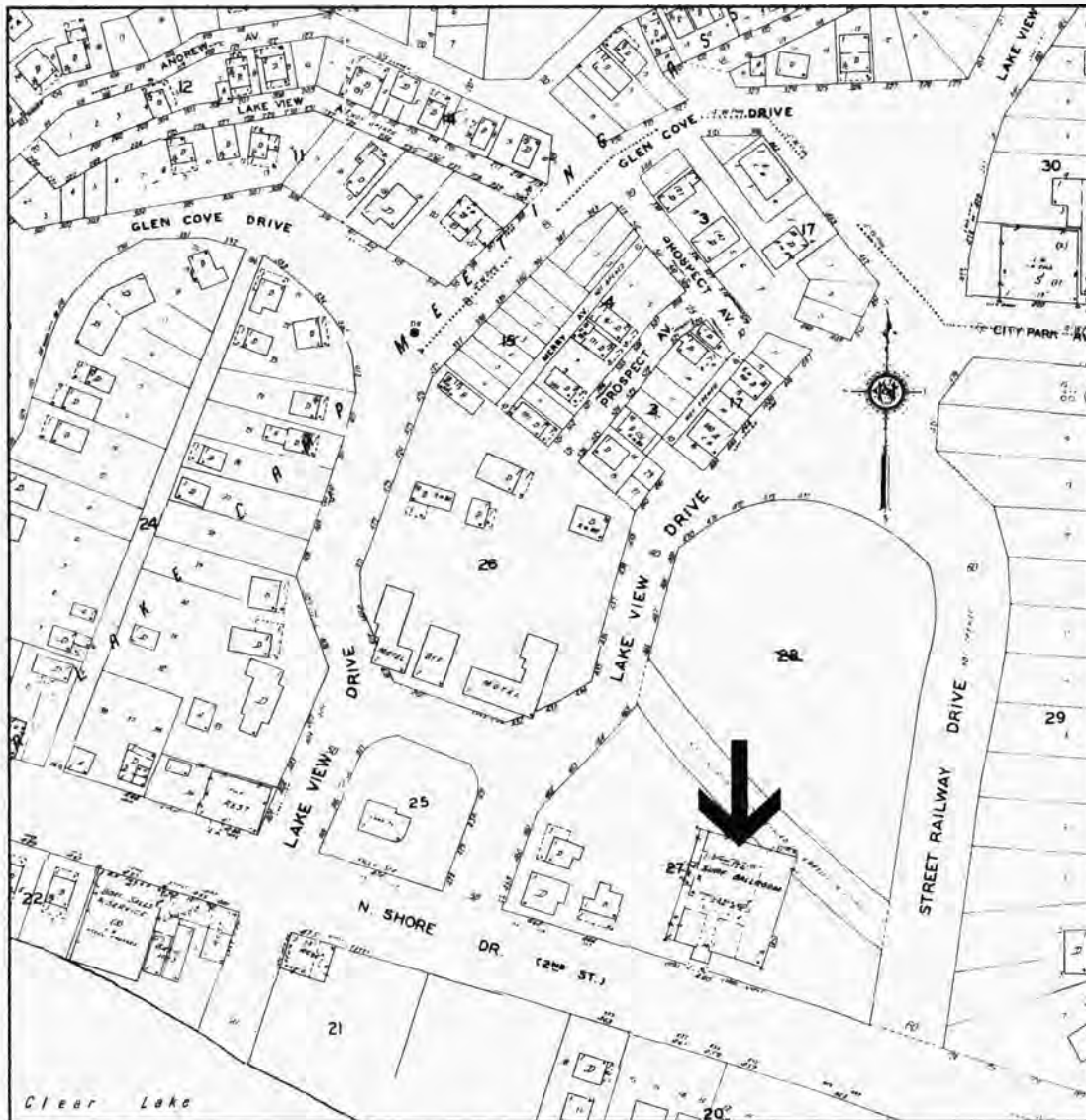
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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa

Figure 6. FIRE INSURANCE MAP – 1931, Revised 1951



(SOURCE: <http://0-sanborn.umi.com/catalog.cbpl.lib.ia.us:80/>)

As this Sanborn Company map indicates, residential property types (many historically associated with the Camp Meeting grounds) have historically dominated the area within which the Surf is located. Today the area is considerably more densely developed, but remains primarily residential. The arrow indicates the Surf Ballroom.

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Figure 7. HISTORIC AERIAL – ca. 1948



(SOURCE: Loomis Archives, Mason City Public Library)

Aerial view of ballroom looking to the northeast. From this perspective, the location of the dance floor is easily distinguished by the form of the barrel roof. Note the curving façade, indicative of the stylistic influence.

Note that the rubble (indicated by the arrow) of the first Surf Ballroom remains on the lakeside site.

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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa

Figure 8. HISTORIC AERIAL – ca. 1948



(SOURCE: Surf Ballroom & Museum)

Aerial view of the Surf Ballroom looking to the northeast.

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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa

Figure 9. HISTORIC IMAGE – 1948



(SOURCE: Surf Ballroom & Museum)

View of the Surf Ballroom looking to the northwest.

The image documents the façade long before the openings were cut for sliding doors at the east end of the elevation, providing access to the Surfside 6 Café.

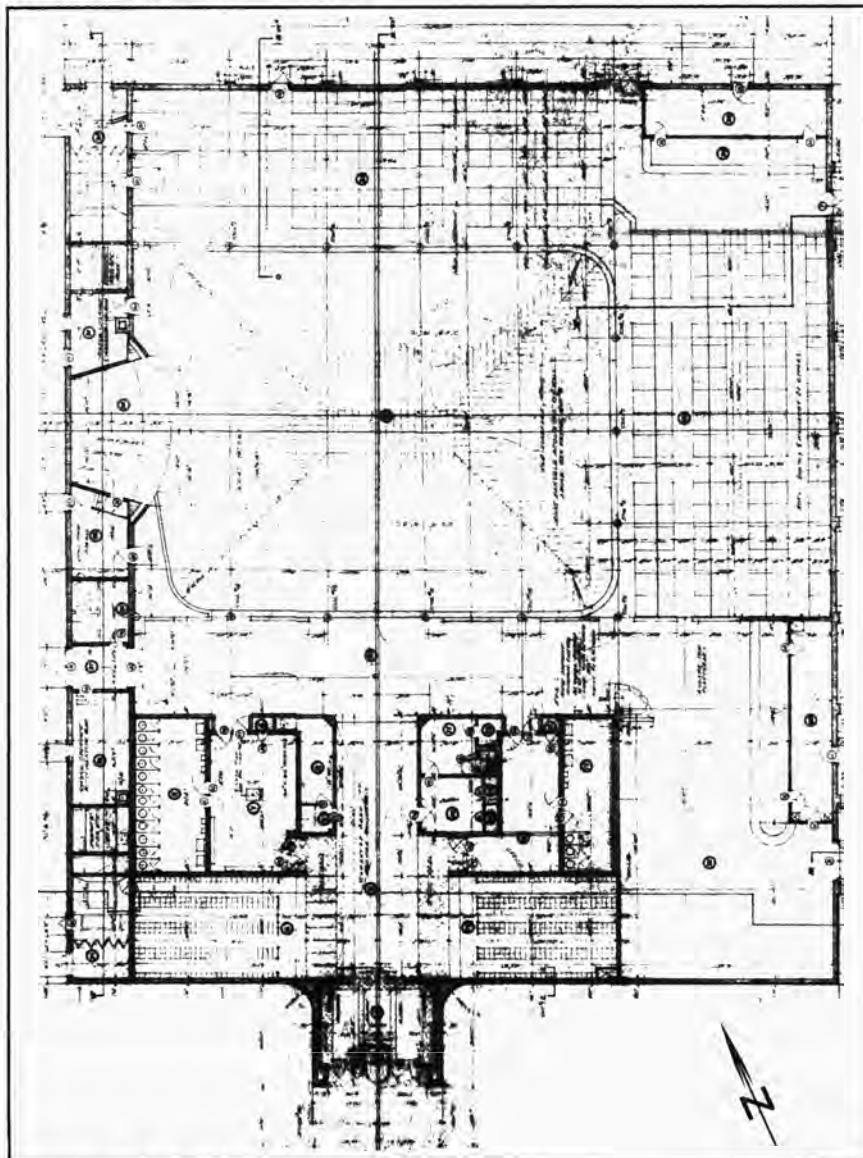
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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa

Figure 10. HISTORIC FLOOR PLANS – 1948



(SOURCE: Dean Snyder Family)

As the historic floor plans document, the interior is dominated by the dance floor, which covers most of the north half of the building. The plans also document the second (east) coat check, which was removed to create a small gift shop and a hallway (the "wall of fame") to the Surfside 6 Cafe and the original hallway leading into the men's restroom from the lobby; it was converted into an office.

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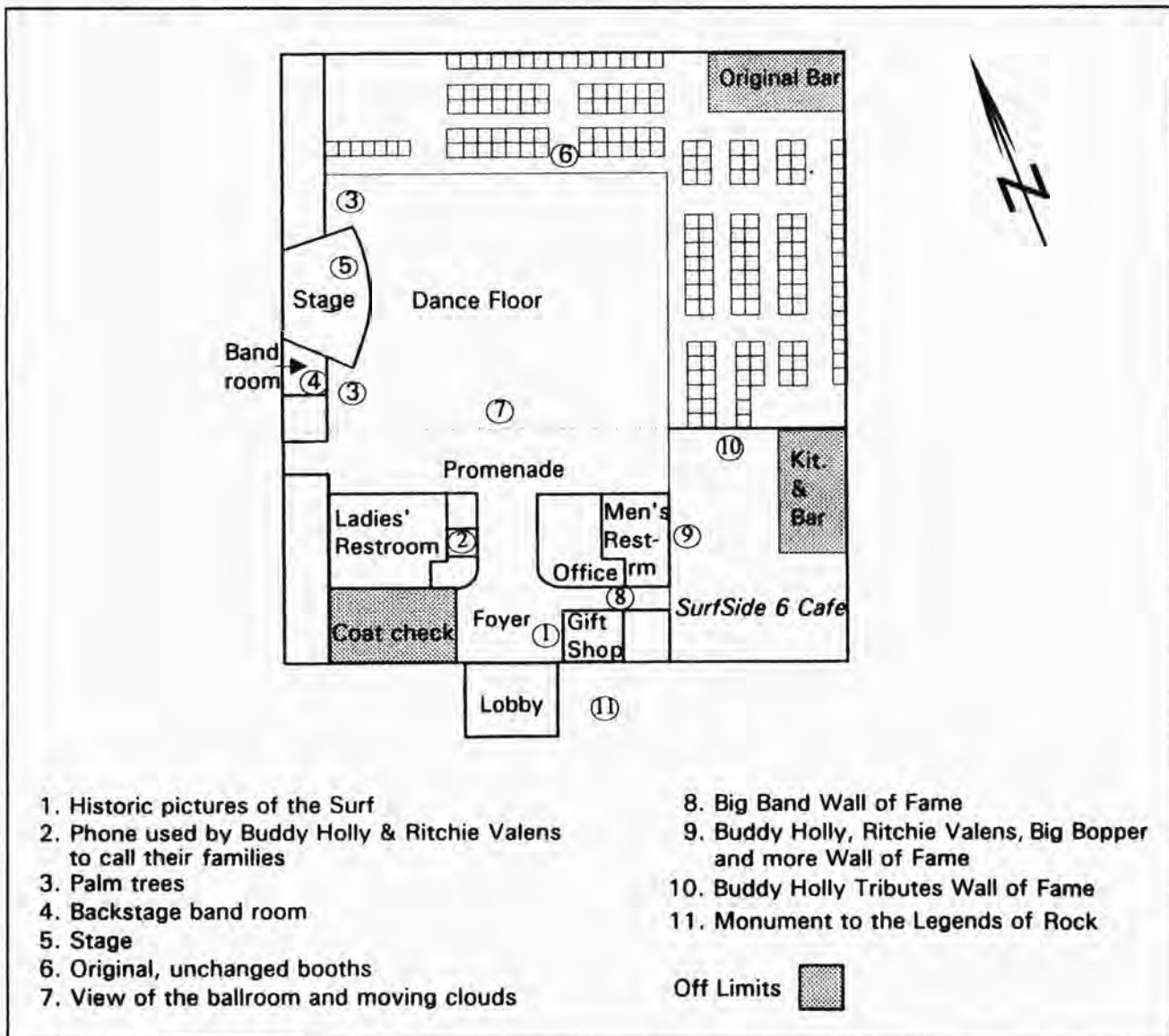
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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa

Figure 11. FLOOR PLAN - 1994



(SOURCE: Surf Ballroom & Museum)

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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa

Figure 12. HISTORIC IMAGE – 1948



(SOURCE: Loomis Archives, Mason City Library)

View of the Surf Ballroom's vestibule entrance.

The vestibule features stone-faced walls, tile flooring, and a boxed timber ceiling. The doors, which open into the main building and promenade, have chrome and Bakelite handles.

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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa

Figure 13. HISTORIC IMAGE – 1948



(SOURCE: Loomis Archives, Mason City Public Library)

View of the Surf Ballroom's promenade (with coat check at far left) leading to the ballroom at right. The entrance to the ladies restroom is to the right of the coat check (double doors), with the cased-opening marking the location of the telephone booth. Images such as this provided the visuals for reproduction of the pineapple stenciling and the return of an historically sympathetic carpet in 1994.

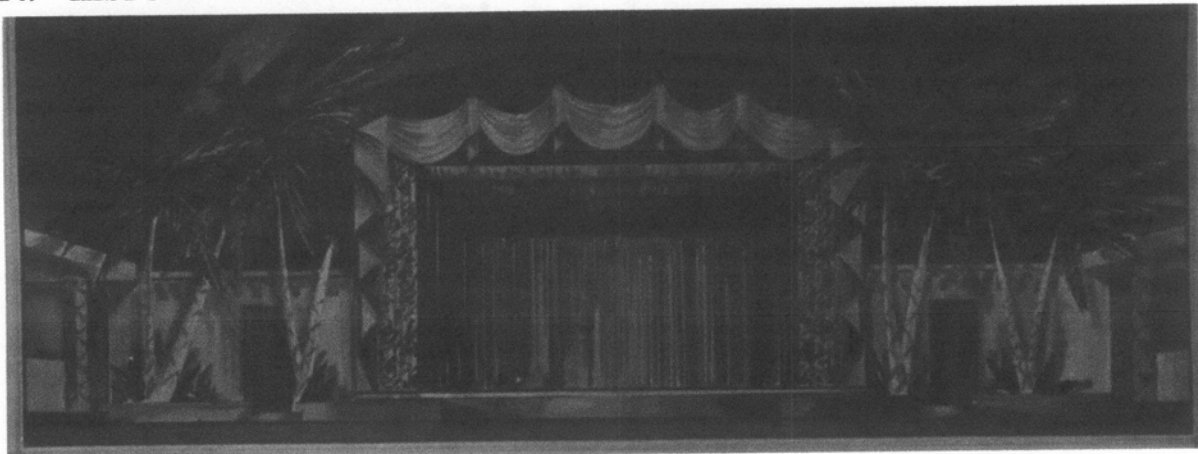
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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa

Figure 14. HISTORIC IMAGE – 1948



(SOURCE: Loomis Archive, Mason City Library)

View of stage located at the west end of the dance floor. Using this image, the stage curtain and swag were restored in 1991 and the palm trees were returned to the stage area as part of the 1994 historic rehabilitation.

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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa

Figure 15. HISTORIC IMAGE – 1948



(SOURCE: Loomis Archives, Mason City Public Library)

Patrons dancing at a Surf Ballroom in 1948. The dance floor is laid in a log cabin pattern, so that dancers circling the floor move with the wood grain for smooth movement.

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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa

Figure 16. HISTORIC IMAGE – ca. 1948



(SOURCE: Loomis Archives, Mason City Public Library)

Girls posing for a picture at a Christmas formal at the Surf Ballroom. The 1994 rehabilitation returned palm trees to the stage area.

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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa

Figure 17. HISTORIC IMAGE – 1948



(SOURCE: Surf Ballroom & Museum)

Souvenir photo of guests at the Surf Ballroom.

The group is snuggled into a booth along the ballroom's dance floor. The booths remain intact and complete with original seats, decorative stenciling, and tabletops. The under-the-table purse/booze racks have been removed, but one was saved and is mounted on the "Wall of Fame" with other museum artifacts.

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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa

Figure 18. HISTORIC IMAGE – ca. 1955



(SOURCE: Clear Lake Public Library – Iowa History Room)

The Surf Ballroom has long been a family place, with special events held on Saturday afternoons in particular.

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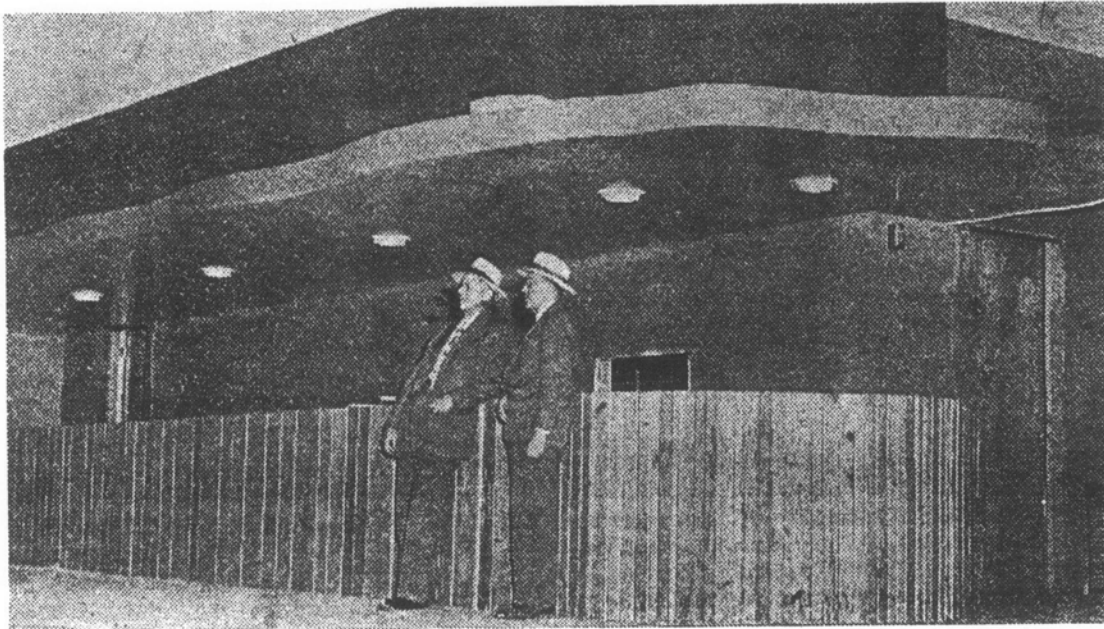
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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa

Figure 19. HISTORIC IMAGE – 1948



(SOURCE: Loomis Archives, Mason City Public Library)

This image of the building architect (Harry Hansen of Hansen & Waggoner, Mason City) and builder (Carl Henkel of Henkel Construction, Mason City) leaning against the bar in the Surfside 6 Café appeared in the *Mason City Globe-Gazette* just prior to the Ballroom's opening in July of 1948. Unfortunately, the news article did not indicate which man was which.

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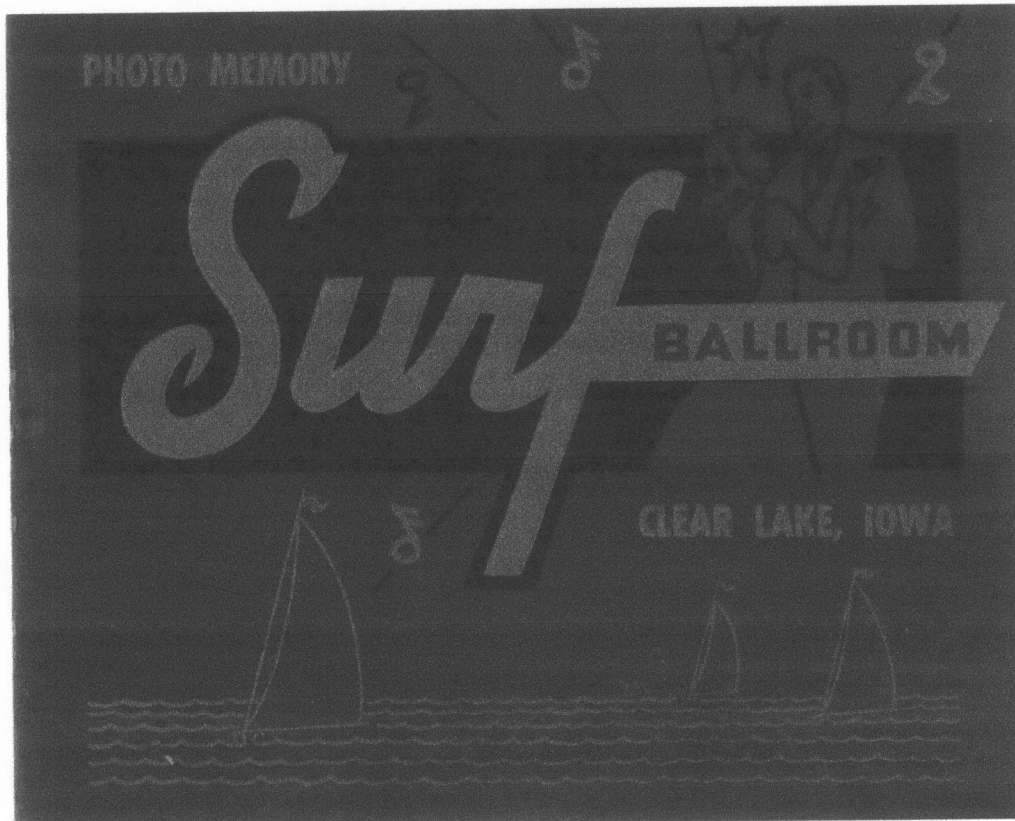
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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa

Figure 20. HISTORIC IMAGE – ca. 1948



(SOURCE: Surf Ballroom & Museum)

Surf Ballroom advertising piece.

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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa

Figure 21. HISTORIC IMAGE – ca. 1935 – Original Surf Ballroom



(SOURCE: Surf Ballroom & Museum)

View of the original Surf Ballroom, which was located lakeside across Lake Shore Drive from the present ballroom. The original burned in April 1947, with the present ballroom placed in service the following year.

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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa

Figure 22. HISTORIC IMAGE – ca. 1935 – Original Surf Ballroom



(SOURCE: <http://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/u/?noble,146>. Used with permission.)

View of the original Surf Ballroom viewed from the lake.

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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa

Figure 23. HISTORIC IMAGE – ca. 1940



(SOURCE: Surf Ballroom & Museum)

Postcard of the original Surf Ballroom. The card was an advertising piece from the Campbell Heating Co. of Des Moines, who installed the heating system in each of the three Fox ballrooms: The Surf Ballroom, The Terp Ballroom in Austin, MN, and The Prom in St. Paul, MN.

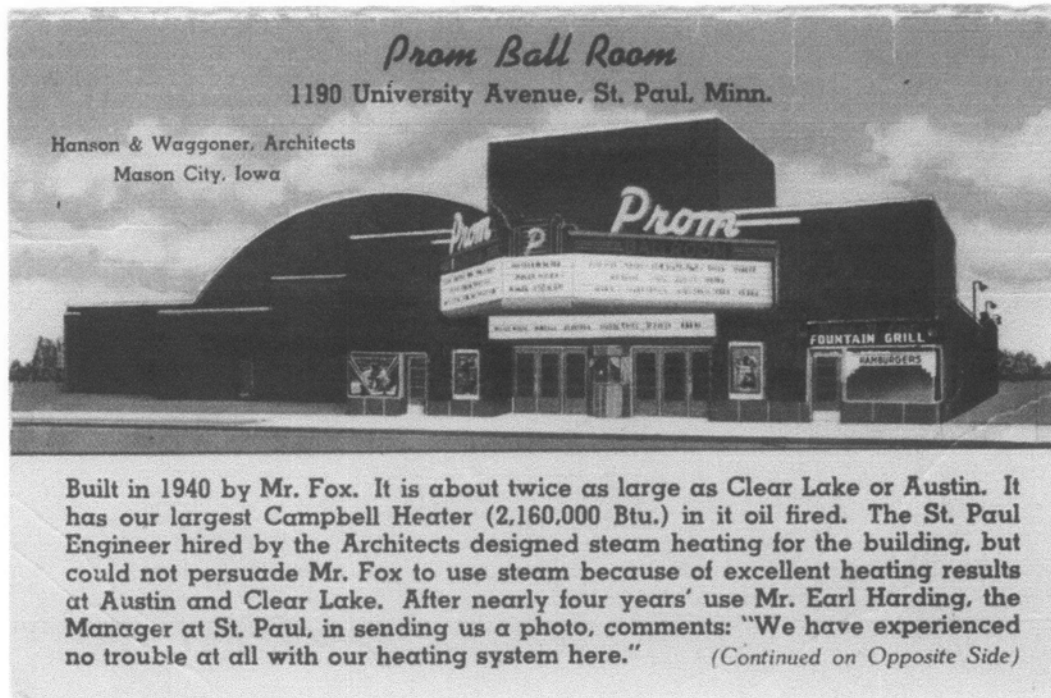
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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa

Figure 24. HISTORIC IMAGE – ca. 1944



(SOURCE: Surf Ballroom & Museum)

Postcard of the Prom Ballroom in St. Paul, Minnesota. Like the previous postcard for the Surf Ballroom, this card was an advertising piece for the Campbell Heating Co. As the text notes, the Prom, like the Surf, was built by Carl Fox and designed by the Mason City architecture firm of Hansen & Waggoner.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa

Figure 25. HISTORIC IMAGE – ca. 1940



(SOURCE: Surf Ballroom & Museum)

Postcard of the Terp Ballroom in Austin, Minnesota. The Terp was the third of Fox's major ballrooms. Note that like the Surf and the Prom, the Terp was designed by the architecture firm of Hansen & Waggoner, which was later called upon to design the new Surf Ballroom.

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National Park Service

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Figure 26. HISTORIC IMAGE – February 2, 1959



(SOURCE: Surf Ballroom & Museum)

This image of Ritchie Valens was taken by Mary Gerber of the singer's final performance.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa

Figure 27. HISTORIC IMAGE – February 2, 1959



(SOURCE: Surf Ballroom & Museum)

This photograph of Buddy Holly was taken by 15-year old Mary Gerber at the Surf Ballroom on February 2, 1959 – Holly's final performance. The image hangs with other museum artifacts on the walls at the Surf.

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National Park Service

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Surf Ballroom, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

All Photographs: Surf Ballroom
Cerro Gordo County, Iowa
Photographer: Alexa McDowell, AKAY Consulting, Boone, IA
May 19, 2009
CD-ROM on file at Surf Ballroom & Museum and the IA State Historic Preservation Office.

1. Exterior: view of primary and east elevations, looking northwest across North Shore Drive
IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0001.tif
HP Premium Plus Photo Paper and Vivera Ink
2. Exterior: view of primary and west elevations, looking northeast across North Shore Drive
IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0002.tif
HP Premium Plus Photo Paper and Vivera Ink
3. Exterior: view of north and west elevations, looking southeast
IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0003.tif
HP Premium Plus Photo Paper and Vivera Ink
4. Exterior: view of north and east elevations, looking southwest
IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0004.tif
HP Premium Plus Photo Paper and Vivera Ink
5. Exterior: detail of exterior entrance
IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0005.tif
HP Premium Plus Photo Paper and Vivera Ink
6. Interior: detail of vestibule entrance
IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0006.tif
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7. Interior: view of promenade looking north into ballroom
IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0007.tif
HP Premium Plus Photo Paper and Vivera Ink
8. Interior: view of coat check in southwest corner
IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0008.tif
HP Premium Plus Photo Paper and Vivera Ink
9. Interior: ladies bathroom lounge area
IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0009.tif
HP Premium Plus Photo Paper and Vivera Ink

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National Park Service

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10. Interior: hallway "Wall of Fame" looking east from the lobby toward the Surfside 6 Café
IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0010.tif
HP Premium Plus Photo Paper and Vivera Ink
11. Interior: Surfside 6 Café looking to the north
IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0011.tif
HP Premium Plus Photo Paper and Vivera Ink
12. Interior: ballroom looking east from stage
IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0012.tif
HP Premium Plus Photo Paper and Vivera Ink
13. Interior: ballroom looking west to stage
IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0013.tif
HP Premium Plus Photo Paper and Vivera Ink
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IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0014.tif
HP Premium Plus Photo Paper and Vivera Ink
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IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0015.tif
HP Premium Plus Photo Paper and Vivera Ink
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IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0016.tif
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IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0017.tif
HP Premium Plus Photo Paper and Vivera Ink
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IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0018.tif
HP Premium Plus Photo Paper and Vivera Ink
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IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0019.tif
HP Premium Plus Photo Paper and Vivera Ink
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IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0020.tif
HP Premium Plus Photo Paper and Vivera Ink

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National Park Service

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Surf Ballroom
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: IOWA, Cerro Gordo

DATE RECEIVED: 4/02/10 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 5/07/10
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 5/22/10 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 5/17/10
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 10000261

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: Y NATIONAL: Y

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 5/14/2010 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

See attached Return Sheet for detailed comment.

RECOM./CRITERIA Return

REVIEWER Patrick Andrus

DISCIPLINE Historian

TELEPHONE _____

DATE 5/14/2010

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1849 C Street, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:
(2280)

National Register of Historic Places Evaluation/Return Sheet

Property Name: Surf Ballroom (Cerro Gordo Co., IA)
Reference Number: 10000261

Reason for Return:

The Surf Ballroom in Cedar Lake, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa is being returned for the following substantive reasons.

Overall, the nomination does a good job of documenting the Surf Ballroom's significance in Criteria A-Entertainment/Recreation (Tourism) and in Criteria C- Architecture (Art Moderne) in the local history of Cedar Lake, Iowa from 1948 to 1959. While the current documentation supports the local level of significance under Criteria A and C for these two areas of significance, in order to evaluate Surf Ballroom within a national context for Criteria A-Entertainment/Recreation (History of Rock and Roll), additional documentation is needed to address the issues below.

According to the present documentation, the Surf Ballroom's national significance is largely derived from this being the last performance venue of Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and J.P. Richardson. Please explain why the final performance venue and not the crash site itself is the better representation of this significance. What other sites represent the crash and how does the strength of each site's association to the crash compare with the strength of the Ballroom's association? Are these other sites extant?

In addition, please expand upon how the artists' deaths affected the development of Rock and Roll as a genre of music. How did this impact compare to the impact caused by other tragic deaths within the history of rock and roll?

The nomination does not provide sufficient information on the significance of the Surf Ballroom in the history of Rock and Roll prior to the last performance of Holly, Valens, and the "Big Bopper." The documentation could do this by comparing the Surf Ballroom to other nationally-recognized rock and roll venues during the period of significance, especially those associated with performances by these three artists.

If the Surf Ballroom is nationally-significant in establishing the "legacy of Buddy Holly" (Sect. 8, p.7), would Criteria B - Significant Person be an appropriate criteria for the nomination at the national level?

The nomination also has one technical issue in Section 10-Geographical Data:

The nomination did not provide the acreage of the property. Please fill in the "Acreage of the Property" section.

Turkiya Lowe, Historian
National Register of Historic Places
202-354-2266
5/14/10

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: RESUBMISSION

PROPERTY Surf Ballroom
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: IOWA, Cerro Gordo

DATE RECEIVED: 7/22/11 DATE OF PENDING LIST:
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 9/06/11
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 10000261

DETAILED EVALUATION:

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT _____ DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

The Surf Ballroom is nationally significant under Criterion B as the last place Buddy Holly performed, immediately before he was killed in a plane crash near Mason City, Iowa, that also killed Ritchie Valens and J. P. Richardson (aka The Big Bopper). Buddy Holly is an iconic figure in Rock and Roll history, who influenced a generation of important musicians, including Bob Dylan and The Beatles. The Surf Ballroom was an important Midwestern venue for musicians. It is locally significant under criteria A and C for its association with recreation and tourism and Moderne architecture.

RECOM./CRITERIA A, B, C
REVIEWER Barbara W. Wall DISCIPLINE Historian
TELEPHONE 202-354-2252 DATE 9-6-11

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



5:30 PM
THE LEGS
IN SHOW

MAY 20th
LEISURE SOCIETY PARTY
THE HOT & BUICK MUSIC BY
CHRISTY LOVE & YOU KNOW WHY

SURF BALLROOM

Amelia's Cafe

IA - Cerro Gordo - Surf Ballroom - 0000

SURF BALLROOM

WALTONS POINT
12 CORSETT LANE
WALTONS BEACH, FLORIDA
PHONE: JOHNS HALL 2-1411

JULY 2ND 2008
ON STAGE IN CONCERT
THE ASTORIA

1958

IA - CerroGordo - Surf Ballroom - 600Z



IA - Cerro Gordo - Surf Ball room - 0053



IA_CerroGordo_SurfBallroom_0004



460
NORTH
SHORE
DRIVE

IA - Cerro Gordo - Surf Ballroom - 0005



Occupant Load
Capacity
2,100

IA - Cerro Gordo - Surf Ballroom - 0000



IA_CerroGordo-SurfBallroom-0007



IA - Cerro Gordo - Surf Ballroom - 0008



IA - Cerro Gordo - Surf Ballroom - 0009



IA - Cerro Gordo - Surf Ballroom - 0060



IA - Cerro Gordo - Surf Ballroom - ~~0076~~
0011



IA - Cerro Gordo - Surf Ballroom - 0072



SURF
BA.LROOF

IA - Cerro Gordo - Surf Ballroom - 0043



IA - Cerro Gordo - Surf Ballroom - 0014



IMPORTED

Canadian Club

Blended Canadian Whisky

Produced and Bottled in Canada

Hiram Walker & Sons

Walkerville, Ontario, Canada

Imported into the United States by Hiram Walker & Sons, Inc.

NEW YORK & LONDON, CAN.

1914-15



IA - Cerro Gordo - Surf Ballroom - 0015





IA - Cerro Gordo - Surf Ballroom - 0016



Budweiser

THIS BAR ACCEPTS DRINK TICKETS ONLY

Menu board with various items listed

THIS BAR ACCEPTS DRINK TICKETS ONLY

POP CORN

EL VALLE DE LOS ANGELES



IA - CerroGordo - Surf Ballroom_0017- ~~0023~~

X XXX

B

THE DAN RIDGE SOYS

THE JIMMY ROGERS
BLUES BAND
3-1-79
JAZZ



HEARTLAND EXPRESS

THE DAVID ALLAN CREW BAND

TRICK
POND

THE HEADHUNTERS

THE NEW ORIGINALS

CREW LOGZ

WE WILL RETURN
SOME DAY

Rarefaction
WISH
ASA

Summer '99

THE LIGHTNING
BOLTS
THE SECOND
KROON

TNN 2-5-79

HIS

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WIFE

WIFE

IA - Cerro Gordo - Surf Ballroom - 0018

SURF BALLROOM & MUSEUM

There are few buildings in existence today that represent a complete shift in our musical history. As the last concert venue for Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens and J.P. "The Big Bopper" Richardson, the Surf is the bedrock of where the sound and attitude of rock and roll changed forever.





IA_CerroGordo - Surf Ballroom - 0019



Ritchie
Valens

Buddy
Holly

J.P.
Richardson
"Big Boy"

in memory of

ROCK 'N ROLL

☆ *Legends* ☆

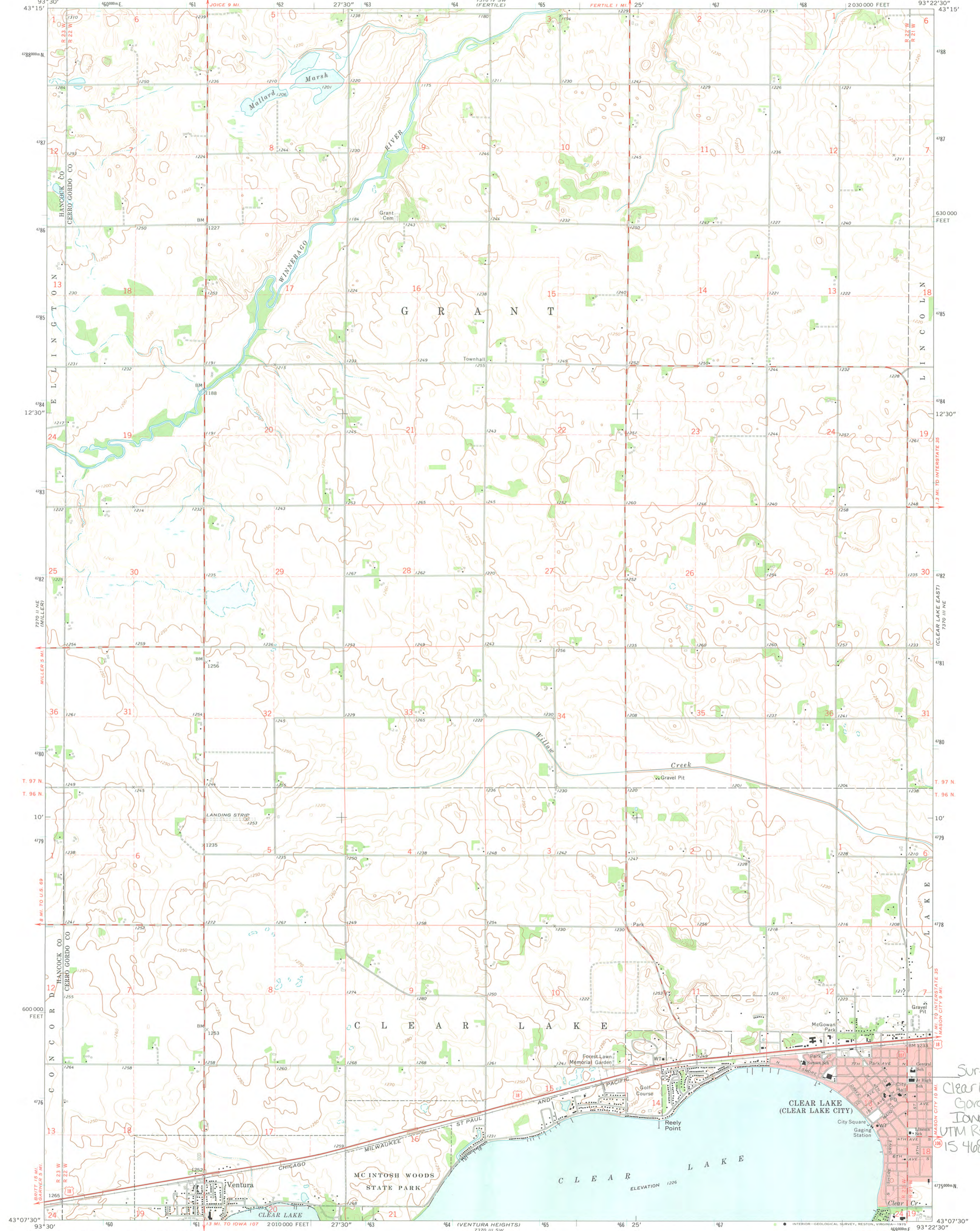
PILOT
ROGER PETERSON

THE ABOVE LEGENDS
PLAYED THEIR LAST CONCERT
AT THE SURF BALLROOM,
CLEAR LAKE, IOWA,
ON FEBRUARY 2, 1959.
THEIR EARTHLY LIFE
TRAGICALLY ENDED
IN A PLANE CRASH
5.2 MILES NORTHWEST OF
THE MASON CITY AIRPORT.
FEBRUARY 3, 1959

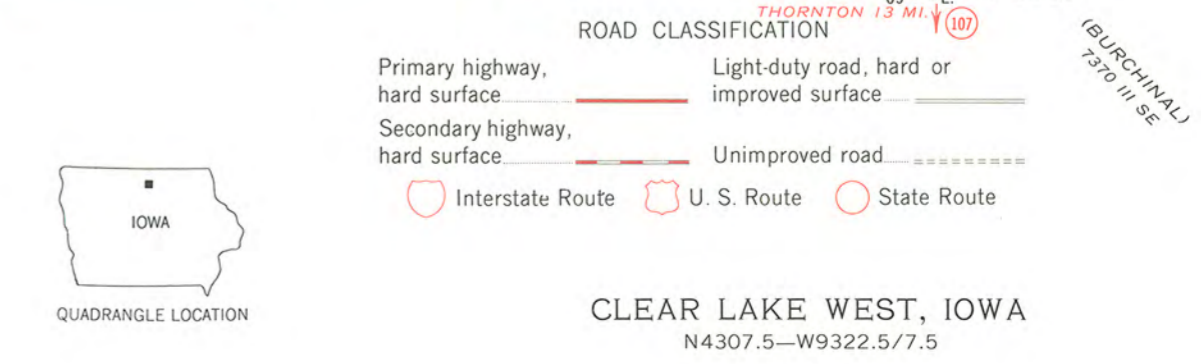
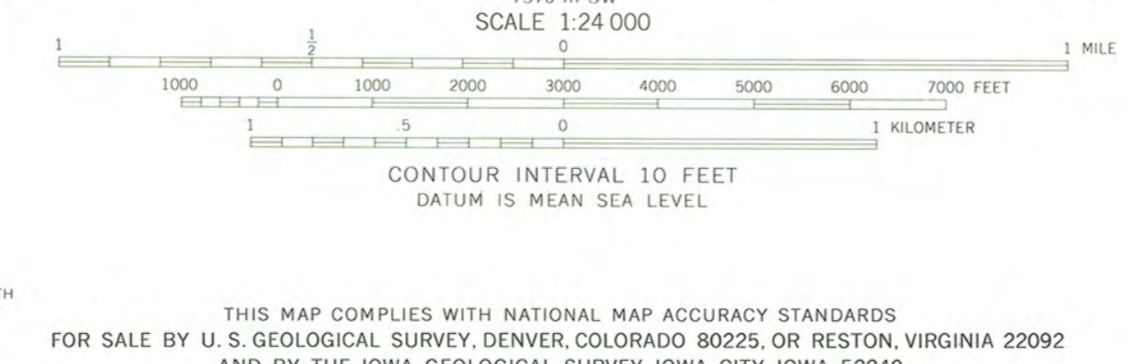
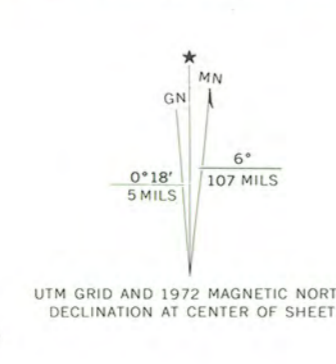
THEIR MUSIC LIVES ON

DONATED BY DARREL R. HEIN & FAMILY
MGR. SURF BALLROOM

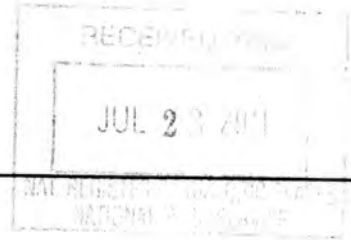
IA-CerroGordo-Surf Ballroom - 0020



Maped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS and USC&GS
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial
photographs taken 1972. Field checked 1972
Projection and 10,000-foot grid ticks: Iowa coordinate
system, north zone (Lambert conformal conic)
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 15, shown in blue. 1927 North American datum
Red tint indicates area in which only landmark buildings are shown
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where
generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked



Surf Ballroom
Clear Lake, Cerro
Gordo County,
Iowa
UTM Reference
15 408305E 4776425N



July 19, 2011

Carol Shull, Chief
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1201 Eye Street, N.W.-- 8th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed is an amendment for the following nomination:

Iowa Commission for the Blind Building (Amendment to Document National Significance), 524 4th Street, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa

Enclosed is a re-submittal of the following returned nomination:

Surf Ballroom, 460 North Shore Drive, Clear lake, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barbara Mitchell".

Barbara Mitchell
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer