

St. Michael Historical Society

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NEWSLETTER
FEBRUARY 12, 2010

St. Michael Dance Hall



The earliest known business on the corner of Central and 1st Street Northeast was Math Barthel's Saloon. He and his financial partner H.W Dick purchased the lot from Frank Preusser in 1901. Within a year Barthel purchased Dick's share in the business.

The west half of his building was a barroom, where the daily business occurred. The east half of the building was the hall and hundreds of weekend and wedding dances were held here. In an attempt to earn a couple of extra bucks, Math Barthel opened the hall

portion of his building for roller skating on Tuesday and Saturday evenings in 1908. He also used the hall to show "moving picture shows" on Sunday evenings during the winter charging 10¢ for admission. Neither the roller skating or movie showings were long-lasting endeavors, but Mr. Barthel seemed interested in trying to get the most use out of his property while providing entertainment for the people of the village. After Prohibition started in 1919, Math did what many others did and turned the bar into a soda fountain, or confectionery, while he continued to rent out the hall for dances.

Math Barthel died in 1923. His wife Pauline still owned the property until 1927 when she sold to Emit and Mary Duerr. "Duerr's Confectionery and Pool Hall" also had a gas pump on the west side of the building facing the school grounds. After Prohibition ended in 1933 the confectionery turned back into a bar and dance hall. As part of an overall interior remodeling, the bar was turned and the dance hall moved to the rear. The exterior was also updated with new siding and smaller windows for the front facade. Other alterations included repeated changes in possession. The ownership changed so frequently after the Duerr's tenure ended in 1937 that it is difficult to know if every owner can be accurately accounted for, especially since some only leased the building.

Reynold and Olivia Duerr ran it in 1937 - 1939, and Leo Zahler operated it as "Zahler's Place" from 1939 - 1942. Jennie Dick held the deed to the property in 1942, but it is not clear who ran the place at that time. The succession of owners becomes more clear after 1944. From 1944 to 1969 there were about 13 owners. John and Carmen Robeck owned it in 1969-1972. Bill and Darlene Gore ran it from 1972 to early 1973 after which Tom Libra took over and converted the place into a restaurant and nightclub that was called "Big Tom's". Libra remodeled the old building inside and out giving the exterior a stucco and half-timber effect. Despite his best efforts Big Tom couldn't make it financially and the Robecks ended up with the restaurant back in their hands. This time John Robeck teamed up with Rick Robeck and reopened the place as the "R & R Club" in 1976.

After having the business for just over two years, the Robecks were looking to get out of it again and sold the place to Miguel Rodriguez and other financial backers in 1978. In December of that year it burned to the ground when a gasoline pipe exploded.

Excerpt from Faith, Family and Farming: A History of St. Michael, Minnesota



Meetings for 2010

- March 1
- April 5
- May 3

Newsletter Created
By Genny Kieley



History of the Blazers

By Sheldon Barthel

When I was in the eighth grade, my dad, who was a local amateur musician, tried to teach me how to play guitar. Because his only remaining guitar at that time, was warped and had strings a half-inch away from the frets, I soon got discouraged and gave up on any plans of being a musician.

Shortly after becoming employed by Gamble-Skogmo (a now defunct chain of hardware and clothing stores) in their printing department in my first full time job in 1964, I met a guy who used to bring a guitar to work and practice at lunch breaks. As we became close friends, he taught me how to play. Along with instructional music books and two hour a day practices for over a year, I soon became fairly proficient at playing rhythm guitar.

As my skills grew, so did my desire to perform with other musicians and so I spent the next year working with various small rock and roll bands such as the Mustangs and the Abrasions, both organized in the Twin City area. Neither one of them got very far off the ground.

The Profiles



In 1965 I formed my first Rock and Roll band, The Profiles, featuring myself on vocals and rhythm guitar, Dennis “Duke” Sipe on Lead guitar, Jerry Jacubiak on bass guitar, and Dale Harff on drums. [Dennis and Dale were from Rogers, Jerry from Otsego]

Practices were always held in the evening at Dale Harff’s house and would last some nights until after 10:30PM. After awhile, Dale’s wife claimed we were keeping the kids from getting a good night sleep as they were starting school and so we had to find a new place to practice.

In 1966 the youngest in our group had just reached the age of 21, and as we were sipping beer at our favorite hangout, the St. Michael ballroom, the owner, Denny Durant overheard our conversation about

needing a place to practice. He offered to let us use the ballroom on Sunday nights. The only stipulation was that he be allowed to keep the ballroom doors open so his customers could hear and enjoy the music. After several practices, customers started drifting into the ballroom and some started dancing. Denny revised his offer to the band, seeing the crowds continue to grow. He said not only would he heat the ballroom on Sunday nights through the winter but he would give the band all the beer they wanted to drink as a sort of payment for the business we were bringing in. By the end of the year the ballroom became packed with locals every Sunday night, and Denny felt he needed to continue to up our “salary.” We were earning \$20 apiece and all the beer we could drink, which was good money back in those days. After gaining popularity on Sunday nights, the band was offered slots on Friday nights at the ballroom. National, regional, and other Rock and Roll bands would be hired to play for teens from all over including the Twin Cities and it’s suburbs.

The Ron Peters Orchestra

As the Profiles were growing in popularity, Ron Peters from St. Michael called and asked if I would be willing to play with his band on nights I wasn’t playing with the Profiles. His rhythm guitar player, Buster Bistodeau was moving up north and leaving the band. One of the other players in the band was Mieny Daleiden of St. Michael, who played the trumpet. Ron had regular engagements on Friday nights at the Buffalo House Supper Club in downtown Zimmerman (since destroyed by fire). All musicians had separate music stands and performed off of sheet music.

The Toppers

In 1975, a band called The Toppers, consisting of graduates from Rockford and Delano High School were looking for a guitar player to finish off their schedule of engagements. Their own guitar player had just lost a finger in an accident and was no longer able to play. The Toppers were a band that played a mixture of Old Time, Country, Rock and Roll, and Modern (swing and foxtrot type) music in local bars. Because one of the principles, Arlyn Koecher from Greenfield Township knew Dale Harff from the Profiles.

Local St. Michael Band



I was introduced and asked to fill out the remaining dates booked by the Toppers. As these dates were being played, establishments insisted that we continue taking more bookings and so the band reorganized under the title “The Blazers” emphasizing the change in personnel and style.

I started playing on Friday evenings with the Ron Peters Orchestra, Saturday evenings with the Blazers, and those Sunday evenings with the Profiles, until the upsurge in the popularity of the Blazers caused me to leave the other two bands. After a few years of playing in mostly bars and taverns, Miény Daleiden joined the Blazers as a regular. Meiny wanted to learn to play music by ear and asked if he could come to Blazer practices, which were held at my house on Saturdays. The Blazers performed all of their music by ear. Just for fun he wanted to sharpen his play-by-ear skills. He became an integral part of the band, and suddenly became popular as the fourth member.



The Blazers

The Blazers now consisted of myself, doing vocals and rhythm guitar, Arlyn Koecher on Accordion and vocals, Miény Daleiden from St. Michael on Trumpet and vocals, and Tim Dalbec on the drums. The Blazer name was taken from a pair of snow skis owned by my brother. The skis just happened to be leaning against the wall in the room in which we were practicing. After putting five or six different names in a hat, each member surprisingly drew out the same name and so it was decided that it must be fate that caused us to pick out the Blazer name.

We grew in popularity in the Northwest area and over the next 20 years we were busy playing almost every weekend. After performing all those years under such a heavy schedule, and everyone in the band still holding down a regular job, it was decided a break was needed and the Blazers decided to call it quits. Retirement from performing didn't last long and as demand for the band continued, we kept taking bookings, but now only as desired.

Tim Dalbec left the band for health reasons, and, after a hiatus in the eighties and nineties with John Hill of Chaska taking over for him on the drums, Tim returned as a regular, bringing the original four members of the band back together. The Blazers continue to perform. But, with the youngest member in the group approaching 65 years of age (myself), we are now quite content to continue playing a smaller schedule. Perhaps one of the largest venues we now perform for is the annual Oktoberfest at the 152 Club in Albertville. A fifth musician, Ken Pung, who plays the tuba, harmonica, and miniature accordion sometimes joins us.



The Blazers have played over the years mostly in supper clubs, ballrooms, nightclubs, and for weddings and anniversaries. We have played in most of the ballrooms in the area such as Medina, St. Michael, Rogers, Maple Lake, and Waconia. Also in too many Legions, VFW's and KC halls to recall. We have entertained at numerous supper clubs all over the region on a regular basis, such as Berkners' in Montrose, Monti Club, in Monticello, to name just a few.

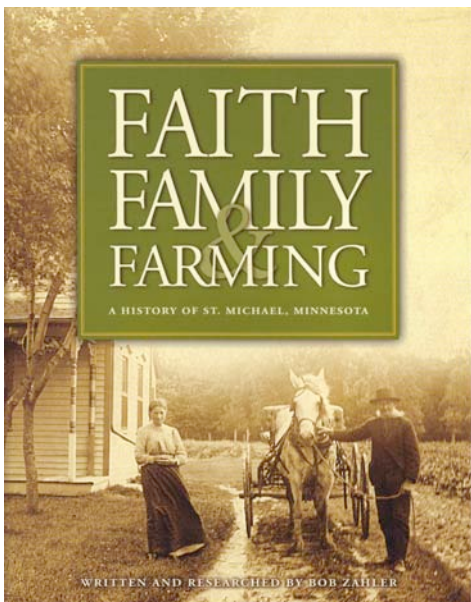
St. Michael Historical Society

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WE'RE ON THE WEB
STMHISTSOC.ORG



Presentation by Bob Zahler

The St. Michael Historical Society invites you to attend a presentation by local teacher and historian, Bob Zahler, on Monday, March 1st at 7:00 PM at the St. Michael City Hall. Bob, who recently published "Faith, Family and Farming: A History of St. Michael, Minnesota" will be showing some of the vintage views of St. Michael that didn't make it into the book. He will also have books available for sale and will sign them if people wish.

Long Awaited Book

Membership Dues are Payable in January

If you have not renewed your membership for 2010, please send your name and address and submit it along with your check to the address provided. If you are unsure of your status, call St. Michael Historical Society at [763] 497-2041 and leave a message. We are always interested in donated artifacts related to St. Michael's history. For more information and how you can help please call.

We appreciate your ongoing support.

If anyone has memories of the St. Michael Dancehall please contact us.