1. NAME AND LOCATION OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Surf Ballroom

Other Name/Site Number:

Street and Number (if applicable)**:** 460 North Shore Drive

City/Town: Clear Lake **County:** Cerro Gordo **State:** IA

Designated a National Historic Landmark by the Secretary of the Interior January 13, 2021.

2. SIGNIFICANCE DATA

NHL Criteria: 1

NHL Criteria Exceptions: n/a

NHL Theme(s): III. Expressing Cultural Values
2. Visual and Performing Arts
4. Mass Media
6. Popular and Traditional Culture

Period(s) of Significance: 1959

Significant Person(s) (only Criterion 2)**:**

Cultural Affiliation (only Criterion 6)**:**

Designer/Creator/Architect/Builder: **Architects/Engineers**
Harry P. Hansen & Karl M. Waggoner Architects

Historic Contexts: D. Popular
K. Performances
O. Recordings

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement. We are collecting this information under the authority of the Historic Sites Act of 1935 (16 U.S.C. 461-467) and 36 CFR part 65. Your response is required to obtain or retain a benefit. We will use the information you provide to evaluate properties nominated as National Historic Landmarks. We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. OMB has approved this collection of information and assigned Control No. 1024-0276.

Estimated Burden Statement. Public reporting burden is 2 hours for an initial inquiry letter and 344 hours for NPS Form 10-934 (per response), including the time it takes to read, gather and maintain data, review instructions and complete the letter/form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate, or any aspects of this form, to the Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 12201 Sunrise Valley Drive, Mail Stop 242, Reston, VA 20192. Please do not send your form to this address.

3. WITHHOLDING SENSITIVE INFORMATION

Does this nomination contain sensitive information that should be withheld under Section 304 of the National Historic Preservation Act?

___ Yes

_X_ No

4. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

1. Acreage of Property: 3.25-acres

2. Use either Latitude/Longitude Coordinates or the UTM system:

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)**:**
Datum if other than WGS84:

Latitude: 43.139924 **Longitude:** -93.389683

OR

UTM References:

Zone **Easting** **Northing**

3. Verbal Boundary Description:

The Surf Ballroom, located at 460 North Shore Drive, is situated on an irregular shaped, 3.25-acre parcel on portions of blocks 27, 28 and 29 of the "Camp Meeting Grounds" in Clear Lake, Iowa. The property parcel covers the majority of a wedge-shaped block that is bound by N. Shore Drive on the south, Buddy Holly Place on the east, and 7th Avenue N. on the west (curving to meet Buddy Holly Place on the north). Small commercial properties not associated with the Surf Ballroom property are located on each of the three corners of the wedge-shaped block. The ballroom's property boundaries abut those three properties, the property demarcation being the edge of the ballroom's parking lot.

4. Boundary Justification:

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Surf Ballroom, purchased for construction of the 1948 ballroom. The parcel includes the ballroom and grounds (parking lot), but excludes the non-associated parcels on each of the three corners of the wedge-shaped block.

5. SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT AND DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION: SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Surf Ballroom in Clear Lake, Iowa, has exceptional national significance under National Historic Landmark (NHL) **Criterion 1**. As the best-preserved venue on the 1959 Winter Dance Party tour, the Surf Ballroom is a regional representation of a national phenomenon of performance and artistic outreach to an audience.

The period of significance is 1959, which embraces the whole of the Winter Dance Party tour, including the stop at the Surf Ballroom in Clear Lake, Iowa. The significant date is February 2, 1959, marking the tour stop at the Surf Ballroom and the date of the final performance of Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and J.P., the "Big Bopper" Richardson, which occurred just hours before the airplane accident that took their lives.

From its 1948 construction on the shores of Clear Lake, Iowa, through the present day, the Surf Ballroom has continuously served this region, bringing music to this small Iowa town and its environs. Over the course of 70-plus years of operation, the Surf Ballroom has featured musical acts stretching from the 1940s Big Band sound to the cross-section of country, rock, and tribute bands that appear on its stage today. Through those many years, some of the nation's most significant musicians, representing a variety of musical genres, appeared at the Surf Ballroom, including the Everly Brothers, Little Richard, the Beach Boys, BB King, Conway Twitty, Santana, REO Speedwagon, ZZ Top, Martina McBride, and Alice Cooper.

The Winter Dance Party tour is representative of the national trend that brought a group of musical acts to a series of venues along a well-publicized route for the purpose of promoting the performers and generating income. In the early years of rock 'n' roll, such tours were the typical means of bringing popular music to towns and cities across the country. Well-known promoters like Irvin Feld and Alan Freed organized tour circuits with line-ups packed with performers that typically had hit songs on the charts. Because these tours were the primary means of seeing musical idols in person, teen fans swarmed to the concerts wherever they were located; reports of long ticket lines and crushing crowds were the norm. As a promotional mechanism, the dance party tour was significant in bringing the music being played on the radio to the fans who loved it. In that way the tour extended the impact of rock 'n' roll, heightened the music's exposure, and established touring as a legitimate business in the music industry. Although many of the best-known dance party tours followed big city routes on the East Coast, they were not untried in the Midwest; the Winter Dance Party tour being a prime example.

In the winter of 1959, the Surf Ballroom was the twelfth stop on a twenty-five-venue tour promoted as the Winter Dance Party. Typical of the national phenomenon, this regional tour brought together multiple, chart-topping performers for a series of one-night performances. The Winter Dance Party was headlined by Buddy Holly who, at the time, had multiple hit songs to his credit, including "Peggy Sue" and "That'll Be the Day"; Ritchie Valens, whose double-sided release had both "Donna" and "La Bamba" heading up the charts; Dion and the Belmonts, with "I Wonder Why" and "No One Knows"; and J.P. "The Big Bopper" Richardson, whose "Chantilly Lace" was gaining airtime and would soon be burning up the charts.

As a regional example of a nationwide phenomenon, the Winter Dance Party stands apart from other dance party tours of its day because of the tragic plane accident that occurred in the hours after the Surf Ballroom performance on February 2, 1959. As the final performance venue of Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and J.P. "The Big Bopper" Richardson, the Surf Ballroom has become recognized by fans across the U.S. and abroad as

the location most intimately tied to the musical legacies of these three performers. Further, through the continuation of the Winter Dance Party, the Surf Ballroom is not only the place where people go to honor the legacy of the performers, it is the place they go to experience the Winter Dance Party very much as it was experienced on that day in February 1959. Finally, as a repository of musical artifacts, including numerous important items from the families of Holly, Valens, and Richardson, visitors to the Surf Ballroom learn about and gain an appreciation of the history of early rock 'n' roll and the significance of those performers within that context.

Like the Ryman Auditorium (NHL, 2001) and the Sun Record Company (NHL, 2003), the Surf Ballroom is associated with a nationally significant trend in American music history. Where Ryman Auditorium, long-time home of the *Grand Ole Opry*, brought country music to the masses through both live shows and its radio program, thereby playing "a pivotal role in the dissemination and commercialization of country music" and Sun Records, in its association with Sam Phillips, was the venue where "artists and the music recorded played a unique and revolutionary role in American music history," so too does the Surf Ballroom stand in association with a place and time in music history that best represents a nationally significant phenomenon. As a venue on the Winter Dance Party tour, the Surf Ballroom is the most significant and well-preserved regional representation of the nationwide dance party tour phenomenon, which played a crucial role in advancing the impact of rock 'n' roll by bringing popular performers directly to the fans who idolized them and establishing touring as a legitimate business in the music industry.

The Surf Ballroom retains a high level of historic integrity, standing as the best-preserved venue among those Winter Dance Party venues that remain extant. Specific to the portion of the Winter Dance Party tour that included Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and J. P. Richardson, the Surf Ballroom is the best-preserved of the eight extant venues. It is also worth noting that of the twelve performance venues associated with the three performers, only eight were ballrooms -- the other venues being spaces within multi-use facilities or a movie theater without a dance floor. Of the eight ballroom venues, only three in addition to the Surf Ballroom remain extant and the historic integrity of the Surf Ballroom far surpasses each of them. As the best-preserved venue on the 1959 Winter Dance Party tour, the Surf Ballroom is nationally exceptional as a regional representation of a national phenomenon of performance and artistic outreach to an audience.

PROVIDE RELEVANT PROPERTY-SPECIFIC HISTORY, HISTORICAL CONTEXT, AND THEMES. JUSTIFY CRITERIA, EXCEPTIONS, AND PERIODS OF SIGNIFICANCE LISTED IN SECTION 2.

Dance party tours, which brought together a group of musical acts to perform at a series of venues over an extended schedule, developed as rock 'n' roll became widely embraced by both Black and White teens. This method of promotion is an outgrowth of large scale, extended performance events held in a single location. Where previously, performances featured a number of acts in a single location and, perhaps, over an extended number of days, the dance party tour brought the performers directly to the fans who might not otherwise have had the opportunity to experience the music of their idols first-hand. The dance party tour was introduced at a moment in the early history of rock 'n roll in which the clamor for "race music" by White teenagers was high, while some of the harshest reactions against it had dissipated. Dance party tours would not, however, be immune to the racial discrimination that prevailed during the period; events at the Surf Ballroom in Clear Lake stand testimony to that fact. As a promotional mechanism, the dance party tour was significant in bringing the music being played on the radio to the listeners. In that way the tour extended the impact of rock 'n' roll, heightened its exposure, and established touring as a legitimate business in the music industry.

Promoters, and Alan Freed in particular, were central to creating the early one-site events as well as the dance party tours that followed. A disc jockey, musician, and promoter, Alan Freed is credited with many things, including coining the term rock 'n' roll. It has been said that, "when Alan Freed appended the phrase 'rock 'n' roll' to black rhythm and blues in the early 1950s, he transformed a music considered alien to other races into a commodity that would be marketed to America's White teenagers."[1] In the arena of the promotion of rock 'n' roll music, Freed laid the groundwork for the dance party tour in 1952 when he organized the earliest, multi-performer music event, the Moondog Coronation Ball in Cleveland, Ohio.[2] The dance drew a crowd that far exceeded the 10,000-person venue capacity, requiring its cancellation before it could get started.[3] Despite the disappointment felt by the crowd, the dance was important in the development of popular music, confirming the demand for rock 'n' roll and the potential for a dance party as a business model. Many such events were to follow in the coming years.

Alan Freed and others like him used multiple methods to promote rock 'n' roll music and performers. The radio brought rock 'n' roll music to its listeners, with disc-jockeys (DJs) like Freed wielding considerable power over what music was broadcast. Successful promoters used tours to leverage airplay, used increased airplay to sell records and tickets to performances, and used record sales and airplay to secure appearances on popular television shows like *The Ed Sullivan Show* or *American Bandstand*. In this way, the dance party tours were an essential element of a multi-pronged promotional strategy for performers and their music.

Irvin Feld, a legendary promoter of rock 'n' roll performers, began organizing and promoting extended rock 'n' roll tours by the mid-1950s. In 1957 he promoted his "Biggest Show of Stars for 1957," an eighty-day fall tour of the United States and Canada that starred Fats Domino, Chuck Berry, Buddy Holly and The Crickets, the Everly Brothers, and a number of other top recording artists. The Feld tour was the first tour for Holly and The Crickets. The "Biggest Show of Stars for 1957" was rock 'n' roll's first successful, large-scale touring show. Not only is the tour's success notable in its contribution to the popularization of rock 'n' roll music, but its success established a business model that proved to be a long-term, viable component of the music industry. Feld's follow-up to the 1957 tour, the "Biggest Show of Stars for 1958" was likewise a large-scale production with an impressive roster of stars topped by the Everly Brothers, the Silhouettes, the Royal Teens, Sam Cooke, LaVern Baker, Clyde McPhatter, and Jimmy Reed.[4]

Feld was not the only promoter with a tour on the road in 1958. Alan Freed undertook his first large-scale "Big Beat" tour with a forty-five-day schedule of sixty-eight shows in thirty-eight cities stretching through the northern and midwestern U.S. before continuing into Canada. Freed's tour was headlined by Jerry Lee Lewis, Chuck Berry, and Buddy Holly and The Crickets, with the Chantels, the Diamonds, Danny and the Juniors, Billy and Lillie, the Pastels, Ed Townsend, Larry Williams, Screamin' Jay Hawkins, and Jo Ann Campbell rounding out the bill.[5]

Beginning in the fall of 1958, Irvin Feld joined with General Artists Corporation (GAC) in a co-venture called GAC-Super Productions. The basic concept expanded upon the standing practice of working with disc jockeys to promote specific artists; the managers of both Buddy Holly and Ritchie Valens actively engaged with disc jockeys in towns where their artist was performing to advocate for local airplay. In the new collaboration, however, Feld intensified that strategy by targeting DJs along tour routes to advertise a new series of dance

[1] John A. Jackson, *Big Beat Heat: Alan Freed and the Early Years of Rock & Roll* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1991), ix.
[2] Ibid., 1.
[3] Ibid., 2.
[4] Ibid., 190.
[5] Ibid., 191.

party tours featuring a line-up of mainly of young, up-and-coming talent. This round of shows was promoted with reduced admission rates, usually under a dollar. The promotions often included discounted records from participating local shops. The new promotional tact by Feld was adopted to counter a growing popularity of DJ sponsored teen hops, which were cutting into the popularity and profits of the large-scale dance party tours.[6]

Because dance party tours were the primary means of seeing musical idols in person, teen fans swarmed to the concerts wherever they were located; reports of long ticket lines and crushing crowds were the norm. The business effect of the dance party tour was boosted radio airtime, increased viewership on associated television programs (e.g. American Bandstand), and record sales. Although many of the best-known dance party tours followed big city routes on the east coast, they often dipped into major midwestern cities. Tours with stops in smaller towns in the Midwest were, however, relatively untried. Because Feld and GAC already had a major winter tour planned for early 1959, the Winter Dance Party was organized as a smaller and shorter tour through the upper Midwest. Although this area of the country had many ballrooms and small dance hall venues and there was demand for dance party tours, few ventured into this sparsely populated section of the country. The potential for a big profit with such a small group of musicians overrode any hesitation on the part of the promoter and plans proceeded for the Winter Dance Party tour.[7]

The Winter Dance Party

The Winter Dance Party tour was organized and promoted by Irvin Feld, who did so in support of Buddy Holly who was in financial straits due to his break with former manager Richard Petty. Holly had been a part of previous Feld tours and had developed a relationship that led to Feld's efforts on his behalf. Because Feld already had a major winter tour planned, he and GAC arranged a smaller tour for Holly. GAC suggested a dance party tour in the upper Midwest. As noted, few tours extended into this part of the country despite the plethora of ballrooms and small dance halls available for performances. The tour itinerary initially included stops in major cities like Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul, Des Moines, and Louisville along with a series of smaller towns. Eventually, the tour schedule of twenty-five venues in twenty-four days through towns large and small was confirmed for January-February 1959. A statement by a GAC representative noted that, GAC was "not familiar with a lot of the cities they had booked . . . our expertise was in bigger shows and bigger cities. We didn't do dances." Although offered in hindsight, the statement sheds some light on the troubles ahead and provides a clue to the challenges presented in this uncharted territory."[8]

The Winter Dance Party was headlined by Buddy Holly and The Crickets (reconstituted, with Waylon Jennings, Tommy Allsup, and Carl Bunch replacing the original members). In addition to playing with Holly, The Crickets also played back-up for the other tour performers which included radio disc jockey-turned performer, J.P. "The Big Bopper" Richardson; the young Latino singer, songwriter, and guitarist, Ritchie Valens; the well-established singing group from the Bronx, Dion and the Belmonts; and the up-and-coming singer, Frankie Sardo.

Friday, January 23, 1959: Devine's Million Dollar Ballroom at Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Departing from Chicago, the Winter Dance Party tour traveled north some 90 miles for their first stop in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, then a city of 500,000 located on the western shore of Lake Michigan. The temperature

[6] Larry Lehmer, *The Day the Music Died* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1997), 41.
[7] Ibid., 42.
[8] Ibid.

in Milwaukee on the morning of their arrival hit a low of 17 degrees below zero, with the thermometer rising to above zero during the day. The tour bus plowed through a record-setting snowfall to reach Devine's Million Dollar Ballroom.

The performers arrived late to the venue because snow-clogged roads impeded their cross-town travel from their hotel to the ballroom. The crowd's impatience grew with the delayed start. According to music historian Larry Lehmer, by the time Frankie Sardo took to the stage to open the tour's first show, "the people were ready to riot." Buddy Holly was the closer. He opened his performance with "Gotta Travel On," a recent hit by Billy Grammer, before turning up the heat with "Peggy Sue" and other hits.[9]

The following day, the *Milwaukee Sentinel* provided a review of the performance, noting that "nearly 6,000 young people turned out to hear such rock 'n' roll stars as Buddy Holly and The Crickets, Big Bopper, Dion and the Belmonts and Ritchie Valens." The reporter observed it was "obvious that the Big Beat still has a hold on the kids and it takes steady nerves to withstand the sound. Electric guitars boomed through two loudspeakers with the force of two symphony orchestras in full sway, with the twitching rock 'n' rollers invoked screams that surely melted the snow on the roof of the ballroom." Holly was described as having "rocked his beanpole figure onstage, clutched his little guitar against his loud, red coat and jerked his way through Peggy Sue." Despite Valens' status as a relative newcomer, the news report noted that, "only the squares don't know that Ritchie's hit 'Donna' is now among the Top 10 tunes in the country." His performance of the slow love song is said to have cast a spell over the swaying audience. The Big Bopper was deemed to have given the liveliest performance. Described as "a chubby crew cut cat," the Bopper "stomped and shuffled his weight around with ease and – surprisingly enough – he had the voice to match his bulk." The Bopper's big hit, "Chantilly Lace" was a crowd favorite.[10]

Devine's Million Dollar Ballroom was constructed in 1927 as the Eagles Club. By most standards, the large-scale building was a grand design with accommodations specific to its function. For its membership, the Eagles building housed an athletic club with a gymnasium, bowling alley, boxing ring, basketball court, handball courts, and a swimming pool. The ballroom, the building's "crowning glory," was widely considered the largest and most beautiful ballroom of its day.[11] Since the mid-1990s, the Eagles Club has been operated as The Rave, a multi-stage venue for live entertainment; currently, The Rave operates seven stages in the building. While the building exterior retains a good level of historic integrity, with the replacement of historic windows being the most significant alteration, the interior floor plan was substantially altered to accommodate the additional stages and the finishes were modified to create the character of a contemporary nightclub venue.[12] Listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1986 for the property's architectural significance, its significance is unrelated to its association with the Winter Dance Party.[13]

Saturday, January 24, 1959: Eagles Ballroom at Kenosha, Wisconsin

The bus departed from Milwaukee on Saturday morning for the 34-mile trip to the small city of Kenosha, Wisconsin. With improving weather, travel was easier and spirits lighter; by noon that day it was 24-degrees. The stop at Kenosha was arranged by Chicago TV personality, Jim Lounsbury, who was the host of Chicago's

[9] Lehmer, *The Day the Music Died*, 62.
[10] "Rock 'n' Roll Show Proves Cool, Crazy for 6,000 Here," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 24, 1959: 02.
[11] Ibid. and http://www.therave.com (accessed October 10, 2018).
[12] On-site evaluation by author, August 15, 2018.
[13] "Eagles Club," Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin, National Register of Historic Places nomination, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1986.

WGN-TV, *Bandstand Matinee*, one of the earliest television dance programs to feature rock 'n' roll. Lounsbury added one act to the Kenosha performance – his wife, Debbie Stevens, who had some regional success as a singer.

With Lounsbury's marketing resources, there was a very strong interest in hosting a Winter Dance Party event. Teen dances were common in Kenosha, but a performance packed with multiple stars was unusual. Despite the winter weather, hundreds stood in line to purchase $1.50 tickets to the performance. When the evening was over, the performers returned to the bus for a 381-mile, all-night trip to Mankato, Minnesota.[14]

Like the Milwaukee venue, the 1915 venue at Kenosha was built for the Eagles and, as a result, accommodated a variety of functions designed to serve its membership. The building remains in use as Marina Shores, an event venue specializing in weddings. It is not listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The venue commemorates the 1959 Winter Dance Party through a series of framed images, newspaper articles, and playbills displayed in the rooms adjacent to the ballroom.

The grand ballroom, located on the upper floor, remains intact with an integrated stage (modified from the original), elegant cove ceiling (although the finish has been altered from the original), and decorative finishes along the perimeter all retained. The historic wood dance floor has been replaced.

The Eagles Ballroom retains a good level of historic integrity on the exterior with the replacement of character-defining historic windows and alteration of the secondary entrance being the only obvious changes. The resource also retains a good level of historic integrity on the interior, with significant design elements retained throughout. Specific to the ballroom, historic integrity is significantly diminished by replacement of the ballroom flooring and resurfacing of the cove ceiling. Although the stage has been modified, the form (size and shape) of the original is retained which mitigates the impact to integrity.[15]

Sunday, January 25, 1959: Kato Ballroom at Mankato, Minnesota

As the bus was traveling the 380 miles from Kenosha to Mankato, Minnesota, a cold front moved in causing temperatures to plummet. The performers did their best to catch some sleep, but the quality of the accommodations made that nearly impossible. As Dion later recalled, "It wasn't a bus . . . it was a piece of shit." By the time they reached Mankato, snow was falling heavily.[16]

The Kato Ballroom had a crescent-shaped stage large enough to accommodate big bands. Smaller groups used the horseshoe-shaped extension, bringing them right onto the dance floor. A short railing around the stage kept the performers from falling into the crowd.[17]

Some 1,500 teenagers paid $1.50 each to see the show at the Kato, which was emceed by Minneapolis disc jockey, Bill Diehl. The story of one young man captures the power of the performances. High school student, Curt Schueneman, recalled gazing across the stage at his former girlfriend while Buddy Holly sang the couple's favorite song, "That'll Be the Day." As the broken-hearted young man described, "I'd look at Holly and I'd

[14] Lehmer, *The Day the Music Died*, 66.
[15] On-site evaluation by author, August 16, 2018.
[16] Lehmer, *The Day the Music Died*, 67.
[17] Ibid.

look at her and the songs would come on and my throat would hurt. I used to sing 'That'll Be the Day' to her when we were holding hands, trying to imitate Buddy. I didn't do it well, but she liked it."[18]

The Kato Ballroom in Mankato, Minnesota, was built to function as a ballroom, without the additional spaces found at the venues in Milwaukee and Kenosha. The building remains in operation as a ballroom. The exterior of the Kato Ballroom retains a good level of historic integrity with the original streamlined modern form retained; an addition on the rear is the only alteration of the exterior form. Retention of the original neon sign mounted on a deep canopy adds to the historic integrity. The current exterior stucco appears to be a recent alteration, its texture and color not typical of the building's mid-century construction date.

Although the interior of the Kato Ballroom remains a ballroom in character, loss of significant historic features and finishes substantially diminishes its historic integrity. The historic ballroom floor has been replaced and its size reduced through the introduction of carpeting around the perimeter. The original booths have been removed and replaced by tables and chairs. An addition has been made to the rear of the building, most finishes have been replaced or covered over, and the stage has been enlarged. No evidence of the horseshoe-shaped stage from the Winter Dance Party performance remains. The ballroom retains its historic front office, coat checks, and a curved bench with leather upholstery and an exotic, wood-veneer back wall.[19]

Monday, January 26, 1959: Fournier's Ballroom at Eau Claire, Wisconsin

After a night of rest at the Burton Hotel in Mankato, the group awoke to a bitterly cold morning and a 5-hour bus ride back to Wisconsin. The group arrived at their hotel in Eau Claire, a community of some 36,000, in mid-afternoon. With much of the afternoon free, the performers ate lunch in a local café before returning to their rooms for some pre-performance rest.

Descriptions of Fournier's Ballroom in 1959 note that the building was deteriorated, "with imitation brown, brick tarpaper sagging over its aging wooden frame. The interior, with its knotty pine floor and walls, was only slightly better." Neither the building's condition nor the weather conditions fazed the 1000 young people who bought advance tickets to the event for $1.00 or $1.25 at the door.[20]

Fournier's Ballroom was razed in the early 1970s to make way for an apartment building, which was never constructed.[21] Today, city service buildings and parking lots occupy the site. A marker commemorates the location of the ballroom.

Tuesday, January 27, 1959: Fiesta Ballroom at Montevideo, Minnesota

The group awoke the next morning and prepared to move back into Minnesota, which on that day registered the lowest temperatures in the country. The Winter Dance Party was headed to the small town of Montevideo, a ride of some 240 miles. The ride that day was typical, with the performers playing card games, telling stories,

[18] Ibid., 69.
[19] On-site evaluation by author, August1, 2018.
[20] Lehmer, *The Day the Music Died*, 70.
[21] Ibid., 219.

napping, and playing music. When they arrived at the Hotel Hunt in downtown Montevideo, temperatures had climbed into the mid-teens.[22]

Although the smallest town on the tour circuit, Montevideo drew teenagers from the surrounding area for events of all kinds, including dances at the Fiesta Ballroom. The Winter Dance Party was the second rock 'n' roll show to perform there in a few short days. The crowd for the Winter Dance Party was large. Bob Bunn, a guitar player in a local band, pushed to the front of the throng to watch Holly play his Stratocaster. Bunn recalled, "everybody just stood and watched him. He played pretty much one song after another." Another fan, Dick Strand, said of Holly, "In those days there wasn't the TV coverage and all that stuff where you'd get so familiar with the looks of the people." That Buddy Holly wore heavy black glasses particularly connected with Strand, who wore a similar style to those of his idol.[23]

Once touted as "the largest ballroom in Minnesota west of the Twin Cities," the Fiesta Ballroom was destroyed by fire on September 12, 1965.[24]

Wednesday, January 28, 1959: The Prom Ballroom at Saint Paul, Minnesota

Having checked for a local repair garage the day prior, the tour bus was left behind in Montevideo for repairs to its faulty heater. A local bus service was hired to transport the performers to the Prom in Saint Paul, about 155 miles to the east. A warming trend pushed temperatures into the upper 20s by that afternoon.

Along with the improved weather, the day brought good news to Ritchie Valens, with "Donna" reaching No. 4 on the *Variety* charts and the B-side, "La Bamba" hitting No. 17. One of Ritchie's fellow tour musicians, Dion, once said of Valens, "he was one of the greatest rhythm guitar players I ever heard, and he sang with a passion."[25]

In 1959, the Prom was considered one of the "classier" ballrooms in the Midwest. As described by music historian Larry Lehmer, the ballroom had a "neat brick exterior and well-lit marquee [with] rows of gleaming booths amid a checkered tile floor leading to its hardwood dance floor." The ballroom owners preferred to book acts in the vein of an orchestra or big band, with second thoughts in the early days of rock 'n' roll about whether they wanted the young artists in their building. Those misgivings were reinforced by acts of vandalism to the building, including one incident that occurred after a mid-1956 showing of *Rock Around the Clock* in Minneapolis.[26]

In contrast to that experience, the crowd that January night, which exceeded the venue's 2,000-person capacity, was orderly and the night passed without incident. One young man in the crowd described his experience, "The Big Bopper actually stood out more than Buddy Holly did, with the coat and ringing telephone. That song was more popular than anything Buddy Holly had had in quite a while."[27]

[22] Ibid., 72.
[23] Ibid., 73.
[24] Ibid., 219.
[25] Ibid., 75.
[26] Ibid., 76.
[27] Ibid., 77.

The Prom Ballroom was located on University Avenue in the Midway neighborhood of Saint Paul. Local news stations aired footage of its 1986 demolition, now available on YouTube.[28]

Thursday, January 29, 1959: Capitol Theatre at Davenport, Iowa

The Winter Dance Party moved on from Saint Paul in a chartered bus. Leaving Minnesota on the morning of January 29, the group headed south to the southeastern Iowa city of Davenport, a drive of more than 6 hours. Unfortunately, the heater of the replacement bus did not function properly; despite the temperature sitting at nearly 30-degrees, the heater was insufficient and the occupants of the bus were miserable.

The performances that evening (one at 7:00 p.m. and a second at 9:00 p.m.) were at the Capitol Theatre – a contrast to the other ballroom venues. The Capitol was a 1920 theater complete with a stage, proscenium, elaborately decorated ceiling and walls, and seating; the Capitol Theatre had no dance floor. The Winter Dance Party was the first, sit-down rock concert brought to that city of 60,000 people.[29]

The 2,500-seat, Palace-type, Capitol Theatre is located in the 10-story Kahl Office Building; the building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983.[30] The exterior of the Kahl Building retains a very good level of historic integrity, as does the exterior of the Capitol Theatre. The alteration of entrance doors and re-facing of the entrance surround diminishes historic integrity specific to the theater portion of the building. Although deteriorated, the interior of the Capitol Theatre retains its early twentieth-century character with an elaborately ornamented stage with proscenium and considerable decorative embellishments on walls and ceiling. Rehabilitation plans call for repair of existing decorative details and finishes and re-use as a movie theater.

Friday, January 30, 1959: Laramar Ballroom at Fort Dodge, Iowa

The musicians headed north out of Davenport on the morning of January 30 with temperatures hovering in the teens and an inch of snow on the ground. Heading northwest to Fort Dodge, Iowa, the bus stopped at Tipton just an hour later, the heat having completely failed. An auto garage diagnosed the problem – all nine heaters on the bus had frozen. The performers were stranded in the small town until the heaters could be thawed and cleaned out. Four hours later and less than five hours until the evening performance at the Laramar Ballroom in Fort Dodge, the bus was again underway.

The Laramar was a regular venue for Friday night dances in the community of nearly 30,000. The Winter Dance Party drew 1,000 teens. Several have shared their memories of that night, with one recalling having snuck into the balcony (typically reserved for parents) where they had a prime vantage point for Holly's performance. "We were looking right down on the stage. We sat there and watched the whole thing. I can remember when they announced Buddy Holly and he stepped out on the stage. He had been standing back in the backdrop and everybody went nuts when he started singing."[31]

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[28] Ibid., 219 and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5EqjOWzknKE (accessed January 21, 2019).
[29] Lehmer, *The Day the Music Died*, 79.
[30] "Kahl Building," Davenport, Scott County, Iowa, National Register of Historic Places Nomination, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1983. The case for registration was made under Criterion C, significant for its use of terra cotta design elements in a manner indicative of Louis Sullivan. No historic associations were developed.
[31] Lehmer, *The Day the Music Died*, 83.

The Laramar Ballroom was constructed in 1903 as the Fort Dodge Armory and Auditorium. The building is a contributing resource to the Fort Dodge Downtown Historic District.[32] The date of conversion from its function as an armory to a ballroom is undetermined, but by 1959 the building had long since been functioning as such. Today, the building is vacant, but reportedly undergoing renovation. No access to the interior is possible.

The exterior of the Laramar Ballroom retains a fair level of historic integrity. Replacement of first floor, facade windows and the infill of the remaining windows on both first and second floors significantly diminish historic integrity. Alteration of the primary entrance further detracts.[33]

Saturday, January 31, 1959: National Guard Armory at Duluth, Minnesota

After an overnight at the Cornbelt Hotel, just across the street from the Laramar Ballroom, the musicians awoke to falling temperatures and faced a drive north to Duluth, Minnesota. Located on the west shore of Lake Superior, some 365 miles from Fort Dodge, Duluth is well-known for the cold coming off the Great Lake. With a bus that continued to provide inadequate heating, the group pushed on to Duluth where upon their afternoon arrival the thermometer registered well below zero.

The dropping temperatures were becoming an increasing danger. Temperatures were forecast to hit 35-below that night. The tour was scheduled to travel overnight from Duluth to a 1:30 p.m. show in Appleton, Wisconsin – a nearly six-hour drive. Even with a working heater, such temperatures were treacherous. In a move aimed to protect the bus from the cold, it was parked in the armory basement during the performance.[34]

The Duluth Armory was packed with fans. The most famous attendee was Minnesota native Bob Dylan who many years later pointed to the moment he locked eyes with Buddy Holly and saw his future as a performer reflected in them.

The National Guard Armory (aka Duluth Armory) was constructed in 1915 with its complex interior plan supporting the various requirements of the original function. The large armory space was expanded in 1940 to include an expanded stage. The adjacent section of the building was predominantly offices. With its purchase by the City of Duluth in 1978, the building became used for storage of large-scale equipment. The building stood vacant from 2000-2004 before being sold to the Armory Arts and Music Center in 2004. From that time, the not-for-profit group has worked to raise funds for its rehabilitation. A deteriorated roof and severe flooding in 2012 contributed to slow progress and the building remains largely unused and in a deteriorated condition today.[35] The Armory was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2009, its significance derived from its function as a military facility.[36]

[32] Alexa McDowell, "Fort Dodge Downtown Historic District," Webster County, Iowa, National Register of Historic Places Nomination, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2010.
[33] On-site evaluation by author, August 1, 2018.
[34] Lehmer, *The Day the Music Died*, 85.
[35] http://dulutharmory.org (accessed August 15, 2018) and on-site evaluation by author, March 19, 2018.
[36] "Duluth Armory," County, State, National Register of Historic Places nomination, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2009. The nomination also noted the local significance related to entertainment/ recreation, though that association does not relate specifically to its place on the Winter Dance Party tour. Although locally promoted as a Winter Dance Party venue, the Duluth Armory is more strongly associated with Bob Dylan, who was born and raised in the area. As noted, Dylan was in the crowd on January 31, 1959, and attributes that experience, specifically Buddy Holly's performance, with inspiring his work

Sunday, February 1, 1959: Cinderella Ballroom at Appleton, Wisconsin (Cancelled)

After the performance at the Duluth Armory, the performers boarded the warmed bus to begin the longest night of the tour. Little more than two hours later, in the middle of nowhere, the bus broke down completely. The musicians were stranded with no heat and little chance of being found before daylight. In an effort to generate heat, they took to burning paper in the aisle of the bus and drinking whiskey. Eventually, the local sheriff happened by and the process of rescue was underway, but not without injury. Holly's drummer, Carl Bunch, was taken to a hospital with a case of frostbite to his feet.

Without a functioning bus, the performance scheduled for that afternoon at the Cinderella Ballroom in Appleton, Wisconsin, was cancelled. The musicians were transported to their next stop in Green Bay by Greyhound bus and train for an evening engagement.[37]

The Cinderella Ballroom was a wood frame building with a shallow, barrel roof. Apparently constructed in 1925, the venue was an area attraction for nearly sixty years. The ballroom is non-extant.[38]

Sunday, February 01, 1959: Riverside Ballroom at Green Bay, Wisconsin

The Winter Dance Party performers arrived in Green Bay to temperatures above zero and the remnants of recent snowfall. Despite the winter weather, teens lined up for three blocks to witness the arrival of the musicians. At the Riverside Ballroom, tickets were sold for $.90 until 8:00 p.m. when the price went up to $1.25. The 2,000 teens that swarmed the event were well familiar with the Riverside Ballroom, which had been the city's premier ballroom since it opened in 1929. This venue was the location which featured rock 'n' roll acts.

Despite their exhaustion and the added challenge of being without a drummer (Carl Bunch remained in the hospital), those who witnessed the show noted that the musicians did not let it affect their performance. They adjusted to Bunch's absence by having Carl Mastrangelo of the Belmonts and Ritchie Valens stand in – neither of which were actually drummers.[39]

The Riverside Ballroom was constructed in 1936 after fire destroyed the original, 1929 ballroom. The building remains in use as the Riverside Ballroom, but is primarily an event venue specializing in weddings. It is not listed on the National Register of Historic Places.[40]

The exterior of the Riverside Ballroom retains a good level of historic integrity, with its Streamline Moderne character relatively intact. The addition of curved awnings over the primary entrance and numerous windows, along with the current monochromatic paint scheme, do the most to diminish historic integrity because they camouflage style-defining elements such as the curve over the primary entrance.

The interior retains a fair level of historic integrity, with substantial alterations made. Although the ribbed roof structure remains exposed, a checkerboard-patterned ceiling, which is documented in historic images, has been

[37] Lehmer, *The Day the Music Died*, 88.
[38] Maureen Wallenfang, "The Buzz: Cinderella bar gets a redo," *Post-Crescent. Wisconsin*, May 22, 2016, https://www.postcrescent.com/story/money/companies/buzz/2016/05/22/buzz-cinderella-bar-gets-redo/84662854/ (accessed October 08, 2018).
[39] Lehmer, *The Day the Music Died*, 91.
[40] https://www.riversideballroom.com (accessed July 21, 2018) and https://npgallery.nps.gov/ NRHP/BasicSearch/ (accessed February 15, 2019).

painted over. Booths, once located on either side of the ballroom, have been removed with bars constructed in their place; the stage has been modified; and the wood dance floor replaced.[41]

Monday, February 2, 1959: Surf Ballroom at Clear Lake, Iowa

The Winter Dance Party performers 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. Although some sources challenge the truth of the commonly related version of a 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 up his seat to Richardson, who had a case of the flu. Thus, it was Ritchie Valens and The Big Bopper who died with Buddy Holly when the plane crashed in a field about five miles north of Clear Lake at 1:05 a.m., killing all passengers aboard, including twenty-one-year-old pilot, Roger Peterson.[42]

Tuesday, February 3, 1959: Moorhead National Guard Armory, Moorhead, Minnesota

Unaware of the crashed airplane and the death of its passengers, the remaining members of the tour boarded a bus headed north to Moorhead, Minnesota. Despite the poor weather that contributed to the crash, the overnight bus ride from Clear Lake to Moorhead went without incident. It was not until they arrived at the Comstock Hotel that they learned what had occurred.

In the face of their shock and sense of loss, the performers agreed that the show must go on. Promoters scrambled to fill the voids created by the loss of Holly, Richardson, and Valens. Another show with a larger playbill of performers was also on the road, so the promoters brought Jimmy Clanton and Frankie Avalon from their stop in Chicago to join the Winter Dance Party at its next venue in Sioux City. Debbie Stevens, who had performed with the tour at their stop in Kenosha, was also added to the show.[43]

To address the pressing need of the Tuesday night performance in Moorhead, word was sent to area radio stations announcing the performance would go on and asking for local talent to fill the bill. The opportunity became the start of a successful career for Robert Velline, who became known as Bobby Vee.

That evening, more than 2,000 people jammed the Moorhead Armory, far surpassing its 1,300-person capacity. The emcee for the evening recalls, “I don’t know if people came to the armory expecting to see coffins laid out in front, but there was a curiosity factor because of the publicity given the tragedy.”[44]

[41] On-site evaluation by author, August 17, 2018.
[42] Lehmer, *The Day the Music Died*, 96.
[43] Ibid., 117.
[44] Ibid., 118.

Despite the somber mood, the crowd responded to the talented young Robert Velline who, with his quickly organized band, performed a number of well-known hits. For one night only, Tommy Allsup, Waylon Jennings, and Carlo Mastrangelo (in place of the recovering Carl Bunch) played as "Buddy Holly's Crickets."[45] The slight modification of the band name from Buddy Holly and The Crickets, reflects the loss of their leader.

The Moorhead National Guard Armory was constructed as a project of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in 1935. The building was similar in form and character to the Duluth Armory, with a large barrel roof over much of the building. The Moorhead armory was razed in 1990; the site is currently occupied by a retirement home.[46]

The Winter Dance Party Continues

The Winter Dance Party tour, without its three headliners, continued over the course of the subsequent two weeks of February to complete the remaining stops on the circuit. In many ways, however, the Winter Dance Party ended with the deaths of Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and J.P. Richardson. Although new careers, like that of Bobby (Velline) Vee, were born out of the tragedy, it is the loss of the young and talented Holly, Valens, and Richardson that, to this day, overshadows the positive aspects of the dance party tour that came after that night.

With no further complications, the Winter Dance Party tour was completed on the following schedule; the current status of the venue at each location is noted.

Date	Venue and Location	Status
4 Feb.	Shore Acres Ballroom (1935-1966), Sioux City, Iowa Sioux City Community Theatre	Extant
5 Feb.	Val-Air Ballroom, Des Moines, Iowa Music Venue	Extant
6 Feb.	Danceland Ballroom, Cedar Rapids, Iowa	Non-Extant
7 Feb.	Les Buzz Ballroom, Spring Valley, Illinois	Non-Extant
8 Feb.	Aragon Ballroom, Chicago, Illinois Music venue	Extant, NRHP
9 Feb.	Hippodrome Auditorium, Waterloo, Iowa	Non-Extant
10 Feb.	Melody Hill, Dubuque, Iowa	Non-Extant

[45] Ibid., 119.
[46] https://www.reddit.com/r/fargo/comments/5ud3s0/old_moorhead_armory/ (accessed January 14, 2019).

11 Feb.	Memorial Auditorium, Louisville, Kentucky Mixed Use venue	Extant, NRHP
12 Feb.	Memorial Auditorium – Canton, Ohio Now Canton Memorial Civic Center - Multi-purpose arena	Extant
13 Feb.	Stanbaugh Auditorium – 1000 5th Ave., Youngstown, Ohio Multi-use: concert hall, etc.	Extant, NRHP
14 Feb.	The Armory – Peoria, Illinois Vacant	Extant
15 Feb.	Illinois State Armory – Springfield, Illinois Vacant	Extant

The Winter Dance Party tour followed the dance tour model created by Irvin Feld, bringing a well-promoted, package of popular performers directly to their fans over a series of one-night stands. The tour departed from the standard itinerary by pushing into smaller venues in the Midwest, a move viewed by the promoter as one with good financial potential. The stresses created by an erratic route, a series of malfunctioning busses, and severe weather led to an outcome that was very different than anticipated. The Winter Dance Party schedule planned for a twenty-four-day, twenty-five-venue tour -- a schedule that was completed except for one cancelled performance in Appleton, Wisconsin, on February 1, 1959. Although the show went on after the deaths of Holly, Valens, and Richardson and those later dates resulted in the launch of Bobby Vee's career, in the minds of many, the Winter Dance Party ended in Clear Lake.

The Surf Ballroom

From its 1948 construction on the shores of Clear Lake, Iowa through the present day, the Surf Ballroom has continuously served the regional Midwest as a concert and dance venue. Within that long history, the Surf Ballroom's legacy is specifically bound up in the history of rock 'n' roll music. In the winter of 1959, the Surf Ballroom was the twelfth stop on the twenty-five-venue tour promoted as the Winter Dance Party. For the last forty years, the Surf Ballroom has been the gathering place for fans around the country who come together on the first weekend of February each year to celebrate the Winter Dance Party tour and to commemorate the music and lives of the musicians lost. The Surf Ballroom has acquired significant meaning in the public's memory over time due to that tragic twist of fate, and as a result, it has come to represent the formative days of rock n' roll.

The Surf Ballroom retains a high level of historic integrity, standing as the best-preserved venue among the fifteen Winter Dance Party venues that remain extant. Further, the Surf is the best-preserved of the seven remaining venues associated with the Winter Dance Party tour that featured Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and J.P. Richardson. The Surf Ballroom was one of seven venues that were functioning ballrooms used during the first part of the Winter Dance Party tour; the remainder were spaces within multi-use facilities or, in Davenport, a movie theater without a dance floor. Of these seven ballroom venues, only three in addition to the Surf are extant and the historic integrity of the Surf Ballroom far surpasses each of the three other remaining ballrooms.

While the Surf retains all the features that characterize its historic function and architecture, more significantly, the Surf Ballroom retains a sense of its history. Perhaps it is simply the accumulated character of the spaces and the finishes: the ballroom with its original floor and booth seating; the green room with hundreds of autographs; or the stage where so many have performed. However, many who enter in the space will tell you that it is something much more than that, something that can only be understood by the experience of being in the space.

History of the Surf Ballroom

The original Surf Ballroom was built on the shores of Clear Lake in 1933. It was destroyed by a fire on April 20, 1947. Plans for its replacement were quickly underway. 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 Dean and Joanne Snyder (both now deceased). The grand re-opening was celebrated at the February 1995 Winter Dance Party event. Through the efforts of the Snyder family, a non-profit organization was established to assure the long-term preservation of the Surf Ballroom. With the substantial, ongoing support of local residents and the patronage of fans across the globe, the Surf Ballroom remains very much as it did when constructed.

In the early morning hours of April 20, 1947, the original Surf Ballroom caught fire and quickly burnt to the ground. Within days of the fire, area newspapers reported a widespread cry of support for its reconstruction. Many letters of regret for the loss of the ballroom were forwarded to the owners, Prom, Inc., from people across northern Iowa. The Clear Lake Lions Club forwarded an official resolution requesting the venue's reconstruction. 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.[47]

The Mason City, Iowa architectural firm of (Harry) Hansen & (Karl) Waggoner were hired to design the Surf Ballroom. Hansen & Waggoner had previously designed three ballrooms: the original Surf Ballroom (1933); the Prom Ballroom in St. Paul, Minnesota (1940), which is no longer extant; and the Terp Ballroom in Austin, Minnesota (1938), which was renovated for use as a church and youth activity center.[48]

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 percent 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.[49]

In September of 1947, the construction contracts were let with the Mason City firm of Rye & Henkel Construction Companies Associated named as general contractors. H.C. Determan of Mason City won the electrical contract and Ed Secovy of Clear Lake won the plumbing contract. In addition, the L. Paulle-Midway Fixture & Showcase Co. of St. Paul, Minnesota was tapped to supply the booths, refreshment bars, back bars, and paneling.[50]

[47] "Plan New $300,000 Surf Ballroom," *Mason City Globe-Gazette*, April 30, 1947, "Lions Club Asks Prom, Inc. to Rebuild Surf," *Mason City Globe-Gazette,* April 24, 1947, and "Surf Ballroom to Be Rebuilt on Same Site at Clear Lake," *Mason City Globe-Gazette*, April 25, 1947.
[48] Surf Ballroom & Museum scrapbooks, unidentified newspaper article.
[49] "Plan New $300,000 Surf Ballroom," *Mason City Globe-Gazette*, April 30, 1947.
[50] Advertisement, *Mason City Globe-Gazette,* June 30, 1948.

Although the exterior design of the new Surf Ballroom took on a much more modern appearance than that reflected in the first design sketch published in the Mason City newspaper, many of the early details were implemented. Of particular note is the use of steel, tile, and brick construction materials in an attempt to build a "fireproof" building. In addition, the new Surf was much larger, with substantially increased seating and a larger dance floor. Another component of the final design entailed "considerably better accommodations for single men (stags) with unreserved tables for their use in the refreshment area." The beach club motif was applied throughout. The final cost of construction was projected at $350,000.[51]

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 set 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 1948 would feature "the famous recording and radio Old Style bands of this territory."[52]

The original Surf Ballroom had established itself as a must-stop venue for a big band seeking 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 one venue to another. Performers commonly stopped at the Surf after having played the Laramar in Fort Dodge or the Mayfair in Sioux City. From Clear Lake, the bands commonly moved onto the Terp and the Prom.[53] The new Surf Ballroom took up the mantle and, beginning in the 1950s, featured the hottest names in rock 'n' roll. The Everly Brothers, Jan and Dean, Conway Twitty, and Dion all played the Surf Ballroom during that period.[54]

As was true of venues across the nation, the Surf Ballroom was involved in controversies over racial discrimination during the 1950s. The state of Iowa had a relatively long history of judicial action in terms of recognizing and protecting the civil rights of its citizens, including passage of the 1884 Iowa Civil Rights Act. Despite this, de facto segregation and racial discrimination continued into the twentieth century; the Surf Ballroom was not exempt from those discriminatory actions with multiple civil liberty charges brought against the management and owners in the 1950s.

In September 1952 two separate cases were brought against the ballroom manager, Carroll Anderson, for allegedly denying admission to a person because of race. Isadore Patterson, Jr., of Waterloo, Iowa, joined a group of associates to attend a square dance demonstration at the ballroom in June of 1952. Patterson and one other Black male were among the group of fourteen White people. An employee of the Rath Packing Plant in Waterloo, Patterson and his associates had been attending a class sponsored by the United Packinghouse Workers (CIO). After purchasing tickets for the entire group, the two Black men were denied entrance to the ballroom.[55] Charles Bennett, of Mason City, Iowa, charged that on the evening of July 30, 1952, he and his date purchased tickets to the Louis Armstrong dance at the Surf Ballroom, but were denied admission to the ballroom by the doorman despite having previously danced at the venue on multiple occasions.[56]

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[51] "Larger Surf Ready for Use by July 4," *Mason City Globe-Gazette,* April 28, 1948, and "Let Contract for Building of New $350,000 Surf Ballroom," *Mason City Globe-Gazette*, September 25, 1947.
[52] Surf Ballroom & Museum archives, Dance Topics, "The New Surf Ballroom Souvenir Edition" July 1, 1948.
[53] Surf Ballroom & Museum archives, "The Surf Ballroom – Guided Tour Presentation", 8.
[54] Surf Ballroom & Museum archives, Iowa Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductions, 1998, and "Larger Surf Ready for Use by July 4," *Mason City Globe-Gazette,* April 28, 1948
[55] "Continue Civil Liberty Cases in Local Court," *Mason City Globe-Gazette,* September 02, 1952: 07.
[56] "Barred from Ballroom," *The Des Moines Register*, September 07, 1952: 19 and "Union Urged Suit on Racial Bar at Dance," *The*

Filed simultaneously, the cases were separated for trial that fall. Patterson's trial was underway in mid-September, the prosecution stating a clear violation of the Iowa Civil Rights Act which stated that, "All person within this state shall be entitled to the full and equal enjoyment of the accommodations, advantages, facilities and privileges of inns, restaurants, lunch counters, and all other places where refreshments are served, public conveyances, barber shops, bathhouses, theaters and all other places of amusement."[57]

The defense worked to shed doubt on the motivation for denying access, with Carroll Anderson stating the ballroom enforced the standing company policy that any person could be denied admission if it was believed that "their manner, dress or known reputation might tend to create a disturbance." Testimony regarding that subjective method of evaluating suitability of their guests expanded to include consideration about whether the guest would "fit into the social group" represented that evening; as the doorman testified, he refused admission to Bennett and his date because he judged the pair would not fit into the social group.[58] Although denied by the property owners, Prom, Inc., of Chicago, Anderson testified that, "the ballroom previously had admitted Negroes occasionally, but that the Chicago firm operating it had sent out orders some time ago that Negroes were not to be admitted."[59]

Ultimately, the case came down to interpretation of the Iowa Civil Rights Act and a dissection of the term "amusements" which the defense asserted did not include ballrooms. The jury of "five retired men and a house wife" found Carroll Anderson not guilty, agreeing with the defense attorney's argument that ballrooms were not "places of amusement" and that the Iowa statute did not specify ballrooms in its listing of places where discrimination was not allowed. This position was bolstered by the absence of an Iowa Supreme Court ruling on the question of how ballrooms were categorized.[60]

Following the judgment against Isadore Patterson, the case on behalf of Charles Bennett apparently did not proceed.[61] However, the question of how ballrooms were categorized under the Iowa Civil Rights Act was resolved the following year in a suit brought against Prom, Inc. by Mrs. LaFaun Amos of Mason City.

In April of 1953, Mrs. Amos filed a $10,000 damage suit in Federal District Court that charged she was refused admission to the Surf Ballroom on December 8, 1951 solely because of her race. The action charged that Prom, Inc., and the Surf violated Chapter 735 of the Code of the State of Iowa.[62]

Amos was among a group of eight Blacks denied admission to the ballroom explicitly due to race, an action stated by manager, Carroll Anderson, that followed direct orders from property owner, Prom, Inc. Kenneth M. Moore, president of Prom, Inc. testified that the guiding policy of the Surf is that "any person admitted must be acceptable as a dancing partner to all other patrons." Further, Moore stated that on past occasions when the performers were Black, such as the Lionel Hampton's orchestra, which was performing on the night of the incident involving Mrs. Amos, there tended to be a greater number of Blacks in the crowd. On previous occasions where that was the case, the management received "numerous protests from regular patrons about the

Des Moines Register, September 07, 1952: 19.
[57] "Clear Dance Hall Man in Rights Case," *The Des Moines Register*, September 18, 1952: 06.
[58] "Civil Liberties Case – Surf Manager Says No Policy Barring Negroes," *Mason City Globe-Gazette,* September 17, 1952: 01.
[59] "Waterloo Man Testifies in 'Rights' Suit," *The (Waterloo) Courier*, September 17, 1952: 02.
[60] "Clear Dance Hall Man in Rights Case," *The Des Moines Register*, September 18, 1952: 06.
[61] "Clear Dance Hall Man in Rights Case," *The Des Moines Register*, September 18, 1952: 06.
[62] "Woman Files Suit Against Ballroom," *Mason City Globe-Gazette*, April 09, 1953: 28.

presence of Negroes." Such protests were cited as influencing the change in policy regarding admission of Blacks. Moore admitted that the Amos party was denied admission because they were Black, but noted he had been assured by legal counsel that the action would not violate the Iowa civil rights statute.[63]

In obvious reaction to the failed case brought the previous year by Charles Bennett, the argument presented at the Amos trial in mid-November of 1953, addressed "the right of Federal Court to act upon a matter of Iowa Civil Rights law which the Iowa Supreme Court ha[d] not yet acted upon." Hearing the arguments, Federal District Court Judge Henry N. Graven ruled that, within the meaning of the Iowa civil rights statute, a ballroom is a place of amusement.[64] As such, in denying admission to Blacks, Prom, Inc. and the Surf were in violation of the law. A jury of five women and seven men (all White) then returned a verdict for $400.00 in compensatory damages to Mrs. Amos; the jury declined to award exemplary damages.[65]

The ruling in the Amos case was hailed as an important victory for civil rights in Iowa. Principally, the case rendered a clear finding that Iowa ballrooms fell under the definition of a "place of amusement" within the civil rights law. As a result, those seeking to discriminate based upon race could no longer hide behind subjective interpretation of the law, as the defense did in the 1952 suit brought by Charles Bennett. The Amos case also contributed to what was described as "a new climate about civil rights" that was elevating awareness and empowering the state's citizens to press for full rights regardless of color.[66]

The growing popularity of rock 'n' 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.[67]

By that time, 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 1963 when the Surf Ballroom was sold as part of a larger plan to liquidate the company's assets outside of Chicago. Clear Lake area businessmen, Ray Seney and Richard Casey, purchased the ballroom from Mitchell. Under their ownership, some alterations were made to the building, including the 1964 construction of a small outside patio on the south side. This alteration included cutting an opening in the front façade wall to accommodate a set of double-wide, aluminum-framed, glass 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. The "Cypress Room" (now the Surfside 6 Café) underwent a minor remodeling as the access point to the new patio.[68] The marquee over the main entrance awning was likely added at that 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. Such conversations intensified with the sale of the Surf in 1968.[69] Despite what appears to have been a regular re-evaluation of the profitability of the building's function as a ballroom, the Surf Ballroom operated continuously from its opening in 1948 through 1994.

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[63] "'Rights' Case Is Near Jury," *The Des Moines Register*, November 24, 1953: 09.
[64] "'Rights' Case Ruling Made," *Des Moines Tribune*, November 24, 1953: 01.
[65] "Negro Wins $400 in Suit Against Surf," *Mason City Globe-Gazette*, November 24, 1953: 01.
[66] "A Victory for Civil Rights in Iowa," *The Des Moines Register,* November 26, 1953: 48.
[67] "Casey & Seney buy Surf Ballroom," *Mason City Globe-Gazette,* November 20, 1963.
[68] "Patio Garden to Open," *Mason City Globe-Gazette*, May 15, 1964.
[69] "Surf Sold to Eatons," *Mason City Globe-Gazette*, January 3, 1968.

In September of 1994, the present owners undertook an historic rehabilitation of the property, which stood in a state of disrepair with damage to the dance floor due to a leaking roof. Rehabilitation plans were developed using the original drawings and numerous historic images, with a high degree of care taken to minimize alteration of historic plans and materials, and to restore or rehabilitate the character-defining features of the 1948 building.

In the lobby promenade, non-historic wallpaper was removed to reveal the historic pineapple stenciling, which was revived. A historically inspired replica of the original lobby carpet was installed. In the ballroom, the original maple dance floor was sanded, resealed, and waxed with only severely deteriorated boards needing to be replaced. To prevent further damage, the building's roof was replaced. The missing palm trees, which historically flanked the stage, were replicated from historic images and returned to their original locations. The stage curtain was replicated from historic images. A stone drinking fountain located along the dance floor promenade was uncovered and made operational. Decidedly less glamorous tasks such as 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 in the trench that extends along the perimeter of the building foundation were completed by a cadre of volunteers.[70]

Subsequent to the 1994 rehabilitation, work on the building has been largely limited to maintenance and to elevating the museum experience through the addition of informational displays and artifacts. In 2016 the lobby carpet was replaced due to wear and the pineapple stenciling was reconstructed by a qualified artisan who used the historic documentation to replicate the palette and details more accurately. In 2019 the roofing was replaced to stem water infiltration; isolated damage to plaster in the women's restroom and ballroom promenade was also repaired. Shortly thereafter, the wallpaper in men's and women's restrooms was replaced with a covering replicated from a sample of the original.

The Surf Ballroom was one of twenty-five venues on the 1959 Winter Dance Party circuit; the last of twelve headlined by Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and J.P. "The Big Bopper" Richardson. The high level of historic integrity retained, the long-time retention of its function as a ballroom, and its longstanding association as the final performance venue for Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and J.P. "The Big Bopper" Richardson, make the Surf Ballroom the most significant remaining Winter Dance Party venue.

Final Performances

The Winter Dance Party is a nationally significant representation of the regional dance party tour phenomenon. It illustrates the important impact made by this business model on the popularization and commercialization of rock 'n' roll music. Dance party tours headlined nationally recognized performers such as the Everly Brothers, the Silhouettes, Sam Cooke, LaVern Baker, Clyde McPhatter, and Jimmy Reed, with lesser-known and new artists rounding out the bill. This formula guaranteed good tickets sales (crowds came for the nationally known acts) while planting the seeds for future ticket sales by introducing new performers, radio play, and record sales for stars and new performers alike.

The line-up of the 1959 Winter Dance Party illustrated the range in performers to appear on dance party tours. Buddy Holly was the star -- a nationally known performer with numerous hits to his credit. Ritchie Valens was a new artist, quickly gaining national recognition with his songs "Donna" and "LaBamba" on the charts at the time of the Winter Dance Party stop in Clear Lake. The Big Bopper was a cross-over artist (DJ, writer, and

[70] Personal interview with Dean Snyder, owner and Laurie Leitz, Executive Director, 2013 and Surf Ballroom & Museum archives, "The Surf Ballroom – Guided Tour Presentation," 9.

performer), with the comic appeal of his hit "Chantilly Lace" placing him on the national stage. As the final performance venue of the three musicians, the Surf Ballroom represents the nationally significant, musical legacies of Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and J.P., "The Big Bopper" Richardson.

Buddy Holly

Buddy Holly was killed in an airplane crash following the February 2, 1959, Winter Dance Party Tour performance at the Surf Ballroom. Though just twenty-three years old, Holly was considered a veteran musician with a long string of hits to his name. His death occurred at a transitional time in his career, leaving much speculation about what would have come next for him. What requires no speculation is the place Buddy Holly holds in the history of rock 'n' roll.

Buddy Holly was born on September 7, 1936, in Lubbock, Texas. Holly's passion for music was apparent in his youth when he chose to learn to play 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 country music, but soon followed Hank Williams, who was breaking from the strictly traditional country sound by infusing element of bluegrass and Black Southern blues – a sound that became known as rockabilly.

As a teen, Holly worked at the Lubbock radio station KDAV, where he became enamored with the music of Fats Domino, Little Richard, and Elvis Presley. From that exposure, Holly began studying the music of Black artists in particular.[71] By 1949 Holly had formed a duo with Bob Montgomery. In 1953, Holly paired with Jack Neal as "Buddy and Jack" to perform on KDAV's Sunday morning, all-country program. That autumn, the pair recorded two country songs at the radio station. When Neal married in 1954, Bob Montgomery took his place as "Buddy and Bob," with the duo performing self-styled "western and bop" music each Sunday morning on the station's program, then known as the Sunday Party. Soon thereafter, Holly and Montgomery added bassist Larry Wellborn, forming a trio called the "Three Tunes."[72]

On January 6, 1955, Buddy Holly and the Three Tunes stood backstage at the Fair Park Coliseum 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 that had characterized his music and to adopt the quickened tempo and heavy rhythm inspired by Presley. As he related to others, "I started thinking different about music."[73] His writing immediately reflected the new direction. In January 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 was not until February of the following year when Holly and the band signed with Norman Petty Studios in Clovis, New Mexico, that the records were released under the name of The Crickets (then composed 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 Number 1 on the British charts. The song is considered an historic benchmark in the history of 1950s rock 'n' roll and it resulted in international fame for Holly and The Crickets. In December of 1957, Holly had three singles in the top 50 of the American charts, including "Peggy Sue." 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.[74]

[71] *The Rockabilly Legends* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Publishing, 2007), 62.
[72] City of Lubbock timeline, http://www.mylubbock.us (accessed December 1, 2016) and Surf Ballroom & Museum archives.
[73] *The Rockabilly Legends*, 63.
[74] Ibid., 65.

In January 1958, The Crickets embarked on a twenty-five-day tour in England, which contributed to the level of British fanaticism for Buddy Holly. The group was only the second White rock 'n' roll band (Bill Haley and the Comets being the first) 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" music, which heightened his connection to the youth of that country. 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. His southern drawl and thick black glasses created a more prosaic charm, which appealed to an audience that could relate to him more easily than to the handsome, undulating Presley.

Immediately after their return from England, Holly and The Crickets departed on a forty-four-day tour in New York. Alan Freed's "Big Beat" tour featured fourteen acts, including Chuck Berry, Danny and the Juniors, the Diamonds, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Frankie Lymon. With as many as three performances scheduled each day, the musicians racked up sixty-eight performances on the tour.[75]

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.[76] 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). Although Holly's musical career was cut short, his contributions to rock 'n' roll continued long after.

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 that he and his music made on some of the greatest performers in rock 'n' roll musical history. Holly had an energy and persona that set him apart. Songwriter Tony Macaulay characterized Holly as "the nerd's hero" who "got more spotty, pre-pubescent boys writing songs and playing the guitar than anybody else." The heavy, black glasses that became such a part of Holly's persona was one of his on-stage "firsts" that impacted musicians to come, including John Lennon, who watched a televised performance of Holly at the London Palladium.[77] Before Holly, musicians did not wear their glasses on stage, regardless of the degree to which the glasses were necessary.

Holly and The Crickets, mistaken as a "negro" group by a booking agency, became the first White performers to play at the Apollo Theatre in Harlem.[78] Initially, the audience was taken aback by the group's race, but Holly's infectious personality eventually won over the crowd and subsequently drew the Black community into his fan base, helping to diminish the racial barrier that separated musical acts and their audiences during rock 'n' roll's early years.

In the studio, Holly was universally acknowledged as an innovator. The freedom he found at Norman Petty Studio in Clovis allowed him to experiment with sounds and techniques, including being among the first to use double-tracking, a recording technique used to produce a fuller sound.[79] The song "Words of Love" (1957) is noted as one of the earliest successful examples of double-tracked vocals in rock 'n' roll music. Such technical

[75] Lehmer, *The Day the Music Died*, 22.
[76] "Oh boy: Why Buddy Holly still matters today," *The Independent*, January 23, 2009, https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/features/oh-boy-why-buddy-holly-still-matters-today-1501271.html (accessed March 1, 2019).
[77] National Public Radio Music, "Buddy Holly: 50 Years After the Music Died," https://www.npr.org/ 2009/02/03/100161470/buddy-holly-50-years-after-the-music-died (accessed March 3, 2019).
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid.

innovation and experimentation exemplified Holly's talent in the studio. Although double-tracking had been employed earlier in the decade by Les Paul and Mary Ford, the technique remained relatively unused. Historians note that Buddy Holly was likely the first rock 'n' roll artist to use vocal and instrumental overdubbing.[80]

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 other musicians including Waylon Jennings' first record, "Jole Blon."[81] 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.[82]

Further, Buddy Holly has been described as one of the first all-around, rock 'n' roll musicians and "the single most influential creative force in early rock 'n' roll."[83] In an era when it was virtually unheard of for a singer to write his own music, Holly rose to the top of the charts on songs he wrote, the number of which heightened the impact. 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!!" 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."[84]

Holly and The Crickets were the first to use what became the standard composition for a rock band - 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 it soon became the guitar of choice. Brian Poole of the Tremeloes described the experience of hearing Holly playing a Stratocaster 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."[85] In 1974 John Lennon was asked to elaborate on Holly's influence. Lennon recalled that the 1958 televised concert of Holly and The Crickets at the London Palladium was the first time he had seen the Stratocaster being played. The additional fact that Holly sang and played simultaneously amazed the young Lennon.

A young Bob Dylan was in the crowd in Duluth, Minnesota when the Winter Dance Party passed through during the winter of 1959. The experience made a lasting impression on Dylan. In the musician's 1998 Grammy acceptance speech following his win for the 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

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[80] John Goldrosen and John Beecher, *Remembering Buddy: The Definitive Biography of Buddy Holly* (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 66.
[81] Lehmer, *The Day the Music Died*, 38.
[82] Ibid., 41.
[83] Michael K. Hall, *The Emergence of Rock and Roll: Music and the Rise of American Youth Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 23.
[84] "Oh boy: Why Buddy Holly still matters today," *The Independent*, January 23, 2009, https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/features/oh-boy-why-buddy-holly-still-matters-today-1501271.html (accessed March 1, 2019).
[85] "Oh boy: Why Buddy Holly still matters today," *The Independent*, January 23, 2009, https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/features/oh-boy-why-buddy-holly-still-matters-today-1501271.html (accessed March 1, 2019).

and I was three feet away from him . . . 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."[86] 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."[87]

Numerous legendary rock 'n' roll musicians acknowledge the influence Holly had on their music. The first record cut by the Beatles (whose name was inspired by 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.[88]

Many artists have had hits covering Holly songs including Cliff Richard ("That'll Be the Day," 1959), The Rolling Stones ("Not Fade Away" was their first Top 10 single, 1964), and Linda Ronstadt ("It's So Easy," 1976). The Grateful Dead, Bruce Springsteen, and Bob Dylan all performed versions of "Not Fade Away."[89] The American rock icon, Bruce Springsteen was quoted as saying, "I play Buddy Holly every night before I go on; that keeps me honest."[90]

A week after Buddy Holly's death, his song "It Doesn't Matter Anymore" was released in the United Kingdom and swiftly climbed to No. 1, making it the first posthumous rock single to top the charts. The compilation, "The Buddy Holly Story," was a huge success in both the United Kingdom and the United States, where it remained on the charts for three years. A backlog of previously unreleased material resulted in releases of Buddy Holly music through the 1960s.[91]

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." Along with recounting his shock at the news of the plane crash and recasting Holly's signature line as "This will be the day, that I die," McLean's refrain "The day the music died" is widely thought to be a reference to the loss of Holly, Valens, and the Big Bopper. 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. Through that broad coverage, teens of the 1970s were thus

[86] 1998 Grammy awards. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cw0u0UbF56Y (accessed October 15, 2019).
[87] "Not Fade Away: Remembering Buddy Holly on the 50th Anniversary of His Death," *Rolling Stone,* January 30, 2009, https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/not-fade-away-remembering-buddy-holly-on-the-50th-anniversary-of-his-death-110621/ (accessed March 3, 2019).
[88] John Goldrosen and John Beecher, *Remembering Buddy. The Definitive Biography of Buddy Holly* (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 172.
[89] Oh boy: Why Buddy Holly still matters today," *The Independent*, January 23, 2009, https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/features/oh-boy-why-buddy-holly-still-matters-today-1501271.html (accessed March 1, 2019).
[90] Rick Jervis, "Voices: Buddy Holly hit a chord for the ages," *USA Today*, September 23, 2014, https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/09/23/voices-buddy-holly-lubbock/15881519/ (accessed March 3, 2019).
[91] Jervis, "Voices: Buddy Holly hit a chord for the ages."

exposed to the musical legacy of Buddy Holly, generating a new generation of fans. In 2001 the "Songs of the Century" project sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts and Scholastic, Inc., the song "American Pie" was named number five in a list of the top 365 songs of the twentieth century.[92]

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 in London 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 the inaugural group of ten performers inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1986. Fellow inductees included Chuck Berry, Elvis Presley, Fats Domino, James Brown, Jerry Lee Lewis, Little Richard, Ray Charles, Sam Cooke, and The Everly Brothers.[93]

If he lived, Buddy Holly would have turned eighty-four years old in September 2020. It is impossible to know what more he might have brought to the world of music or how his contributions may have changed its trajectory. However, Holly's contributions in the history of the genre are undisputed. Despite the passage of sixty years, the death of Buddy Holly is remembered and his music is celebrated. Nowhere does that celebration take on more energy and bring more people together than at the Surf Ballroom where he remains at the center of the Winter Dance Party celebration.

Ritchie Valens

Despite his youth and the brevity of his professional career, Ritchie Valens made a significant contribution to the evolution of rock 'n' roll. Although not the first Latino rock 'n' roll musician, some argue that he was the first to meld a Latin-tinged sound to a rock 'n' roll beat. Ritchie's contribution to musical history, particularly in bringing the influence of Latin music to popular culture, is significant. It is made all the more remarkable by the fact that, as just a seventeen-year-old, he accomplished so much in what amounted to an eight-month career. For these reasons, and owing to the scale of his commercial success, Ritchie Valens is often referred to as the first Latino rocker.[94]

Ritchie Valens (nee Richard Steven Valenzuela) was born on May 13, 1941, to Joseph Steven Valenzuela and Concepcion Reyes, both of Mexican descent. Ritchie was raised in simple conditions, with poverty and change a constant in the life of the family.[95] The area of Los Angeles where Ritchie was raised, known generally as the San Fernando Valley, had a deeply entrenched Latino community. Much of the area's economy rested on fruit farming, which drew a migrant workforce into Southern California. During Ritchie Valens' lifetime, San Fernando and Pocoima were the only communities in the San Fernando Valley with integrated populations of

[92] "Songs of the Century' list: The debate goes on," http://edition.cnn.com/2001/SHOWBIZ/Music/03/08/365.folo/ (accessed March 3, 2019).
[93] Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, https://www.rockhall.com/inductees?name=&field_inductee_ induction_year=1986-01-01+00%3A00%3A00&field_induction_category=All (accessed March 01, 2019).
[94] Beverly Mendheim, *Ritchie Valens: The First Latin Rocker* (Tempe, AZ: Bilingual Press, 1987), 12.
[95] Ibid., 12.

Latinos, Blacks, Asians, and Whites.[96] That blending of cultures clearly impacted Ritchie – both in his musical influences and in the music he himself created.

Ritchie's musical life began early, with various family members providing his first instruction, beginning with a "box guitar" constructed by an uncle who also provided subsequent instruction about chord progressions. By the time he entered seventh grade at Pacoima Junior High School in September 1954, the "box guitar" had been upgraded to a more skill-appropriate model. This guitar accompanied him to school where he commonly played during school breaks, at lunchtime, and at school functions.[97] On the occasions when friends and family would gather at the Valenzuela home, Ritchie would pick up his guitar and provide the music.[98]

Richie's interest in Black rhythm and blues and early rock 'n' roll was indicative of a more generalized reaction on the part of adolescent Latinos who found the music of their parents' stale. Looking for something exciting and new, the youth turned to the music of musicians such as Little Richard, Fats Domino, and the Penguins. They particularly loved ballads sung by Doo Wop groups. White performers like Buddy Holly, the Everly Brothers, and even Elvis Presley held a limited interest for the Latino youth in the barrios of the East L.A. area.[99]

Ritchie's musical performances increased as he entered junior high school and then high school. From 1955 through 1958 he played at many private parties throughout the San Fernando Valley. During his brief attendance at San Fernando High School, Ritchie performed on occasion, including at the school's talent contest, at dances, and for school assemblies.[100]

During that period, Valens became associated with a garage band known as the Silhouettes. The group, which was at its core a group of childhood friends that included Latinos and Blacks, played at larger venues such as the American Legion in San Fernando (602 Pico Street, which remains extant) and Poicoma (later Valdez's Dance Hall, which is non-extant). Through that exposure, the Silhouettes, and Ritchie specifically, gained popularity with more engagements to follow. Members of the Silhouettes describe Ritchie's charismatic performance character, recalling that although he never danced and played guitar at the same time, he would often get down on his knees while playing. One said, "He wouldn't go crazy like Elvis, but he would get the people moving, reacting. People would start moving as soon as he started playing."[101]

In January of 1958 Ritchie played at a dance held at the Pacoima Legion Hall. Through a representative, Ritchie was discovered by Bob Keane. Soon thereafter, Ritchie cut his first demo record at Keane's home recording studio.[102] Keane worked to promote a "Spanish" rock vein in Ritchie's music, which had not been promoted in Latino musicians at the time. Keane himself stated that there were no Latino rock 'n' roll performers around.[103] However, Keane had had considerable success in the record business with an unknown gospel-turned-pop singer by the name of Sam Cooke. In 1957, Cooke shot to stardom with his first single, "You Send Me."[104]

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[96] Ibid., 16.
[97] Ibid., 21.
[98] Personal, videotaped interview with members of the Valens family, February2, 2013; David Reyes and Tom Waldman, *Land of a Thousand Dances* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 11.
[99] Ibid., 11.
[100] Mendheim, *Ritchie Valens*, 37.
[101] Ibid., 35.
[102] Ibid., 39, 42.
[103] Bob Keane, *The Oracle of Del-Fi* (Los Angeles, CA: Del-Fi International Books, 2006), 42.
[103] Mendheim, *Ritchie Valens*, 47.
[104] Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Archives, Michael Ochs Collection, Box 12 "Valens" Ritchie Valens: His Life Story, produced by Bob Keane. 1981, 11; Bob Keane, *The Oracle of Del-Fi* (Los Angeles, CA: Del-Fi International Books, 2006), 42.

Although some contradictions exist about Keane's role in the process, studio musicians who recorded with Valens state that it was Ritchie who was in control of the creative process. As one musician described it, the "music was very well planned in Ritchie's mind. He would sing the melody and he would play the chords on his guitar. Then, he would say what he would like for the other instruments to play to enhance the performance! In those days, we didn't use that title so prolifically as we do today, but Ritchie was actually producing his own records! He was a producer in every sense of the word. Some of the songs [on the first album] were done without arranging, with just him playing. . . . he required a lot of takes because he was a severe critic of his own performance. Whenever he was unhappy with the performance, we would have to go back and do it over again. But it was he who was the critic, not Bob Keane or the other musicians."[105]

After a preliminary limited release of "Donna" in 1958, manager Bob Keane arranged for Ritchie's first tour. In the latter part of September and into October, Ritchie performed in eleven cities beginning in Chicago and moving on to Detroit, Buffalo, New York, and multiple cities in between; the tour ended in Toronto, Canada. The tour included an appearance on "American Bandstand" in Philadelphia, Alan Freed's show in New York City, "The Buddy Deane Show" in Baltimore, and "The Milt Grant Show" in Washington, D.C.[106] Ritchie's first single, "Come On, Let's Go," became a regional hit in the wake of the tour, reaching No. 42 on the Billboard charts.[107] Although Keane's recollections about the 1958 tour do not state whether Ritchie toured on his own or as part of a multi-act touring group, he did note that he accompanied Ritchie, taking every opportunity to promote "Donna" and the young singer. He also noted that the tour "was paying off like a slot machine." Beginning with the tour's first stop of Chicago, "Donna" successively hit No. 1 in each of the cities where Ritchie performed.[108]

Shortly after they returned from the tour in late October, "Donna" was released nationally.[109] In keeping with Latino affection for ballads, in "Donna" Ritchie created a love ballad for his high school sweetheart, Donna Ludwig. The song peaked at No. 2 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart in 1959, becoming Ritchie's highest-charting single. The record's B-side, "La Bamba" was an old wedding *huapango,* or Mexican folk dance and music style, which originated in Veracruz of eastern Mexico. Ritchie hesitated when first faced with the notion of recording "La Bamba." Bob Keane stated, "He was afraid that recording it would demean his culture or something."[110] Perhaps the familial connection and personal sense of tradition played into Ritchie's hesitancy.

The process involved in recording "La Bamba" illustrates Ritchie's skill and creative command of the process. As Bob Keane described it, "We used three or four tracks then. We laid down the rhythm with Ritchie on guitar because he was the driving force in the rhythm section. Then we put his voice on the second track. The third track, Rene [Hall] played a dan-electro bass, dubbed it right on top of the upright bass pattern to give it a more percussive sound."[111] As studio musician Manny Sandoval later recalled, "Ritchie knew what he wanted every instrument to play. He couldn't set it down because he couldn't read or write music, so he'd play riffs on his guitar or hum them to show what he wanted. He had creative ideas. That bass pattern on 'La Bamba,' for

[105] Mendheim, *Ritchie Valens*, 47.
[106] Ibid., 95.
[107] Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Archives, Michael Ochs Collection, Box 12 "Valens" Ritchie Valens: His Life Story, produced by Bob Keane. 1981, 09.
[108] Keane, *The Oracle of Del-Fi*, 83, 85.
[109] Ibid., 86.
[110] Ibid., 81.
[111] Mendheim, *Ritchie Valens*, 62.

instance. Rene wrote out the chords as Ritchie hummed the bass lines. That pattern was his own creation and it sold the song."[112]

In the closing months of 1958, Ritchie again traveled to New York City where he performed on "Alan Freed's Christmas Jubilee." The show was an extended event running several days from Christmas through New Year's weekend. The performance brought Ritchie into contact with the likes of the Everly Brothers, Chuck Berry, Jackie Wilson, and Bo Diddley (one of his idols).[113]

Back in Los Angeles, Ritchie was featured in the Hal Wallis movie *Go Johnny Go*. The film was the last in a series of rock 'n' roll films produced by Alan Freed. Recording resumed in early January 1959. Perhaps due to Ritchie's direct exposure to Bo Diddley while in New York, the influence of that great guitar man became more pronounced in Ritchie's playing. Appearances also continued with Ritchie booked on the January 11 taping of "The Music Shop," which was the first rock 'n' roll prime-time TV series outside of "The Dick Clark Show" and the first rock 'n' roll program filmed in color. Although he was on the show in October, the January broadcast was the first time Ritchie performed as the featured guest. Likely, the elevated billing was a reaction to the recent success of both "Donna" and "LaBamba."[114] Also in early 1959, Ritchie was signed to a long-term contract with Irvin Feld's, General Artist Corporation (GAC), a booking agency responsible for rock 'n' roll package tours. The first of the tours for Ritchie was the Winter Dance Party.[115]

Despite his obvious contributions in the history of rock 'n' roll music, the impact of Ritchie Valens was largely overlooked for decades. Not until the early 1980s was there a concerted effort to properly acknowledge the significance of Ritchie's musical legacy. Those efforts began in his home state of California, but gained steam as music historians took a closer look at his career.[116]

A number of important sources have lauded Ritchie Valens. In 1969, music journalist and cultural critic Griel Marcus wrote in *Rolling Stone*, "Valens sang fragile melodies with the enthusiasm and commitment of Little Richard, and the tension that resulted from the fusion of these two elements in a single song captivated his audience and made him a star." Rock historian Charlie Gillett addressed Valens' importance in 1970, saying, "Although no distinctive 'West Coast' style of rock had developed with any of the four important former rhythm 'n' blues [recording] companies [Alladin, Modern, Specialty and Imperial], a style that was identified particularly with California did develop, showing the strong influence of Mexican rhythms. The most successful singer of this style was Ritchie Valens."[117]

In 1970, musician and music journalist Lester Bangs wrote in *Rolling Stone* that "Valens sang with an unassuming sincerity that made him more truly touching than any other artist from his era." He later added that Valens' "La Bamba" was one of the first examples of punk rock and the granddaddy of the Ramones' 'Blitzkrieg Bop.'" Bangs went on to say, "It's no accident that the Ramones recorded Valens' 'Come On, Let's Go,' or that an L.A. punk band, the Plugz, rerecorded 'La Bamba' with a few more beats per minute."[118]

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[112] Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Archives. Michael Ochs Collection, Box 12, p 11.
[113] Mendheim, *Ritchie Valens*, 96, 98.
[114] Ibid., 100, 102.
[115] Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Archives, Michael Ochs Collection, Box 12, p12.
[116] Mendheim, *Ritchie Valens*, 11.
[117] Charlie Gillett, *The Sound of the City: The Rise of Rock and Roll* (New York: De Capo Press,1970) and Mendheim, 12.
[118] Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Archives, Michael Ochs Collection, Box 12 "Valens" Ritchie Valens: His Life Story, produced by Bob Keane. 1981.

In the 1981 revision of *The Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock 'n' Roll*, Bangs, in his chapter on garage bands, wrote, "Just consider Valens' three-chord mariachi square-up [on "La Bamba"] in the light of 'Louie, Louie' by the Kingsmen, then 'You Really Got Me' by the Kinks, and then 'No Fun' by the Stooges, then 'Blitzkrieg Bop' by the Ramones, and finally note that the 'Blitzkrieg Bop' by the Ramones sounds a lot like 'La Bamba.' There: Twenty years of rock 'n' roll history in three chords played more primitively each time they are recycled."[119]

In 1987 the movie La Bamba was released with Lou Diamond Phillips in the starring role. The movie's soundtrack, including the song "La Bamba," was performed by the then up-and-coming band Los Lobos. The film was nominated for a Golden Globe Award for Best Motion Picture for 1988 with the soundtrack album sitting at No. 1 on the Billboard 200 from September 12-26, 1987, and coming in at No. 11 for the top 25 songs of Billboard's year-end charts.[120]

Carlos Santana, a Latino musician widely acknowledged as one of the greatest guitarists in history, was honored at the 2004 Latin Grammys as the Latin Recording Person of the Year. In a short speech made before performing, Santana stated, "Every generation has its musical idols and for young Latinos growing up in the 50s in America it was Ritchie Valens. Long before he told us his name was Valenzuela, his sound and passion of his voice clued us in and gave us a sense of pride. Over the years many Hispanic artists like Ritchie Valens helped infuse our popular culture with a Latin sound like Los Lobos and Stevie Ray. And tonight, we invite a new and exciting representative of guys on stage. We invited them to carry on the tradition of Ritchie Valens as so many have." Following that acknowledgement, Santana took to the stage with the band Los Lonely Boys to pay homage to Ritchie Valens, the first Latino rocker. Their performance of "La Bamba" was the most fitting of tributes.[121] Santana similarly acknowledged Valens during his 2012 acceptance to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.[122]

Many posthumous honors came to Ritchie Valens, including his own induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2001.[123] In 2009 Valens was inducted into the Native American Music Association Hall of Fame, his mother being a descendent of the Maya and Quaqui tribes.[124]

Ritchie Valens was never forgotten within the Latino communities of the American Southwest. His recording of "La Bamba" opened the eyes of the music industry and made them aware of the potential existing in the Latino market. The music of Ritchie Valens marked the beginning of a movement in rock music that, outside the Latino community, went dormant with his death.[125] At the time of his death, the eighteen-year-old Ritchie Valens was in the early months of his rise to the national music scene. While touring with the Winter Dance Party, his songs "Donna" and "La Bamba" were climbing the charts, so fans at each of the tour venues were clamoring to see this relative unknown.

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[119] Mendheim, *Ritchie Valens*, 12.
[120] https://www.billboard.com/archive/charts/1987/hot-100 (accessed March 1, 2019).
[121] YouTube.com, 2004 Latin Grammy Award Ceremony, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qxbmHc9ZBys (accessed March 1, 2019).
[122] YouTube.com, 2012 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Induction, https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=qkqHYSEGBoc (accessed March 1, 2019).
[123] Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, list of inductees, 2001. https://www.rockhall.com/inductees?name= &field_inductee_induction_year=2001-01-01+00%3A00%3A00&field_induction_category=All (accessed March 1, 2019).
[124] Russ Mitchell, "Life after 'La Bamba': Valens-Anderson remembers her talented brother," *Spencer Daily Reporter,* May 20, 2016, https://www.spencerdailyreporter.com/story/2306811.html, (accessed March 3, 2019).
[125] Mendheim, *Ritchie Valens*, 124.

Today, the Surf Ballroom is the keeper of the collective memory of his appearance on the Winter Dance Party tour. With Buddy Holly and The Big Bopper, Ritchie Valens and his music are honored each February when the Winter Dance Party performance in Clear Lake is commemorated. The Surf Ballroom is also the repository for a number of important artifacts gifted to the Surf Ballroom Museum by the family of Ritchie Valens, who join some 2,000 fans who gather at the ballroom each year to honor their fallen musical idols.

J.P. "The Big Bopper" Richardson

J.P. "The Big Bopper" Richardson is best known for his hit "Chantilly Lace" which was, in late 1958, one of the country's most frequently played songs. The song's popularity rested not just on the lyric and melody, but on the charismatic performance by Richardson – the image of The Big Bopper talking on the telephone to his girlfriend with "her ponytail hangin' down" is familiar to many.

Jiles Perry Richardson, Jr., was born in Sabine Pass, Texas in 1930, but spent most of his childhood in Beaumont, Texas. Known variously as Jape or J.P. (before assuming the larger-than-life persona of The Big Bopper), Richardson learned to play the guitar at an early age. He also showed an early interest in writing music.[126] After graduating from high school in 1947 at the age of sixteen, Richardson attended Lamar College in Beaumont. It appears that he lacked a passion for the coursework because he was lured away by a part-time job as a radio announcer for the local radio station KTRM. While not a scholastic course of study, Richardson had indeed found his passion.[127]

In 1949 J.P. left Lamar College in order to work full-time for KTRM hosting the *Club 990 Show*, which aired from 9:00 pm to midnight. The success of Richardson's late-night show created other opportunities at the radio station and elevated Richardson's exposure in a regional market. By 1952 J.P. was the top-rated disc jockey in the Golden Triangle of Beaumont, Orange, and Port Arthur, Texas.[128]

With the popularity of rhythm and blues on the rise in the state's larger markets, KTRM saw an opportunity to expand its line-up to include a similarly formatted show with Richardson as the host. The new format, built around a genre that remained at the edges of respectability, required a personality in keeping with that character: the Big Bopper was born. Opposite in many ways from the shy, straight-arrow Richardson, the Big Bopper rode the edge of smuttiness in the pursuit of humor. The formula was a success and *The Big Bopper Show* was expanded to run a full hour Monday through Friday.[129]

In 1957 Richardson approached Houston-based, Mercury Records with songs he had written. Mercury signed him with his first record released on October 16, 1957. "Crazy Blues" was a country-tinged rock song credited to Jape Richardson and the Japerts. The record was not successful, nor were those that immediately followed. However, the Big Bopper's novelty song, "Chantilly Lace" was a different story entirely. "Chantilly Lace" entered the *Billboard* chart in early August 1958 and climbed as high as No. 6 (No. 12 in Britain). By the end of the year it was one of the most played records on radio stations and jukeboxes across the country.[130]

[126] Lehmer, *The Day the Music Died*, 28.
[127] Ibid., 26.
[128] Ibid., 27.
[129] Ibid., 28.
[130] Havers, *The Golden Age of Rock 'n' Roll*, 109.

The follow-ups to "Chantilly Lace" were no match for the hit. However, Richardson found success as a songwriter when, in late 1958, George Jones recorded his "White Lightning," which became Jones' first country No. 1 in the spring of 1959. Another of Richardson's songs, "Running Bear" was recorded by Johnny Preston with Richardson on background vocals. The song rose to No. 1 on the *Billboard* chart in early 1960 and stayed there for three weeks.[131]

The story of J.P. Richardson has been commonly over-shadowed by those of Buddy Holly and Ritchie Valens even though the three are bound together in history. While the success and appeal of "Chantilly Lace" is widely acknowledged, little else is told of Richardson's lost potential. One source refers to him as a visionary, relaying an idea Richardson revealed in an interview with the British DISC magazine: music videos. In his imagination, J.P. saw a jukebox that played both music and a short film of the artist performing the song. While not a fully formed concept, Richardson had approached his producers with a sample of three music videos he had completed of his own songs. This can perhaps be taken as one sign of what was lost by the untimely death of J.P. "The Big Bopper" Richardson.

In Summary

The Surf Ballroom has continuously served the regional Midwest for more than seventy years of continuous operation. As the best-preserved venue on the 1959 Winter Dance Party circuit, the Surf Ballroom is nationally significant as a regional representative of the national trend that brought a group of musical acts to a series of venues along a well-publicized route for the purpose of promoting the performers and generating income. This was a key aspect in the development of rock 'n' roll, demonstrating that it was a national phenomenon and could be a commercial success. The Winter Dance Party stands apart from other dance party tours of its day because of the tragic plane accident that occurred in the hours after the Surf Ballroom performance on February 2, 1959. As the final performance venue of Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and J.P. "The Big Bopper" Richardson, the Surf Ballroom has become recognized by fans across the U.S. and abroad as the location most intimately tied to the musical legacies of these three performers. Although there has been much speculation about what Holly and Valens, in particular, would have accomplished had they not perished on that February day, there is no clear answer to such questioning. However, it is undeniable that the accomplishments made by each left an indelible mark in multiple areas of the music world and that those contributions remain celebrated today. Through the continuation of the Winter Dance Party, the Surf Ballroom is not only the place where people go to honor the legacy of the performers, it is the place they go to experience the Winter Dance Party very much as it was experienced in 1959.

The Surf Ballroom in Clear Lake, Iowa, has exceptional national significance under National Historic Landmark (NHL) Criterion 1 with a period of significance of 1959. As the best-preserved venue on the 1959 Winter Dance Party tour, the Surf Ballroom is a regional representation of a national phenomenon of performance and artistic outreach to an audience.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The 1959 Winter Dance Party was scheduled as a twenty-four-day, twenty-five-venue tour crisscrossing the upper Midwest. Ultimately, the dance party performed at twelve venues in the days leading up to and including the performance at the Surf Ballroom in Clear Lake (the last for Holly, Valens, and Richardson). The Surf

[131] Ibid.

Ballroom retains a high level of historic integrity, standing as the best-preserved venue among those Winter Dance Party venues that remain extant. Notably, of those twelve performance venues only eight were ballrooms. The other venues were spaces within multi-use facilities or, in the case of Davenport, Iowa, a movie theater without a dance floor. Of the eight ballroom venues, only four remain extant, further elevating the significance of the Surf Ballroom.

The historic integrity of the other extant Winter Dance Party venues is fair, with the 1915 Eagles Ballroom in Kenosha, Wisconsin and the 1936 Riverside Ballroom in Green Bay, Wisconsin both retaining a good degree of historic integrity. The Eagles Ballroom represents a distinct venue type – a multi-function building constructed for a fraternal organization, one space of which was the ballroom that hosted the 1959 dance party. The ballroom remains intact with an integrated stage (modified from the original), elegant cove ceiling (finish altered from the original), and decorative finishes along the perimeter all retained. The historic wood dance floor has been replaced.

The 1929 Riverside Ballroom remains in use as an event venue specializing in weddings. Although the exterior retains its Streamline Moderne character relatively intact, the interior integrity is diminished by substantial alterations. Although the ribbed roof structure remains exposed, a historic checkerboard-patterned ceiling has been painted over; booths have been removed with bars constructed in their place; the stage has been modified; and the wood dance floor has been replaced.

In contrast to the other venues specific to the portion of the Winter Dance Party tour, the Surf Ballroom is far and away the best-preserved, with its exterior character-defining stylistic elements retained intact as well as the interior functional elements of a dedicated ballroom venue preserved. The Surf Ballroom is the most significant and well-preserved regional representation of the nationwide dance party tour phenomenon, which played a crucial role in advancing the impact of rock ‘n’ roll by bringing popular performers directly to the fans who idolized them and establishing touring as a legitimate business in the music industry. The Surf Ballroom is the nationally significant representative of the 1959 Winter Dance Party because of the concert that occurred here with its association as the final performance venue of the dance party’s key performers, because the Surf has a very high degree of historic integrity for the period of significance, and because the building has continued its historic use.

As a regional example of a nationwide phenomenon, the Winter Dance Party stands apart from other dance party tours of its day because of the tragic plane accident that occurred in the hours after the Surf Ballroom performance on February 2, 1959. As the final performance venue of Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and J.P. “The Big Bopper” Richardson, the Surf Ballroom has become recognized by fans across the U.S. and abroad as the location most intimately tied to the musical legacies of these three performers. Further, through the continuation of the Winter Dance Party, the Surf Ballroom is not only the place where people go to honor the legacy of the performers, it is the place they go to experience the Winter Dance Party very much as it was experienced on that day in February of 1959. Finally, as a repository of musical artifacts, including numerous important items from the families of Holly, Valens, and Richardson, visitors to the Surf Ballroom learn about and gain an appreciation of the history of early rock ‘n’ roll and the significance of those performers within that context.

The Surf Ballroom is compararable to other National Historic Landmarks with historic associations in the context of music in that the property is nationally associated with events or trends that directed the course of musical expression in this country.

As the home to country music's *Grand Ole Opry* between 1943 and 1974, Ryman Auditorium in Nashville played "a pivotal role in the dissemination and commercialization of country music" making it responsible for "the transformation of a regional and largely rural cultural expression to a phenomenon of national worldwide appeal."[132] The *Grand Ole Opry* established a radio show and then a live show that disseminated country music and the culture that surrounded that music to households across the country. Although the *Opry* was established elsewhere, the program's move to and subsequent thirty-plus year tenancy at Ryman Auditorium is directly associated with the explosion of country music in the United States. Between 1928 and 1933 the *Opry* was the only means aspiring country performers had of reaching a national audience. As a result, performing at the *Opry* provided a boost to early careers with increased record sales and demands for live performances.[133]

Like the *Grand Ole Opry*, the Surf Ballroom is associated with a pivotal mechanism for connecting musicians to their audience that resulted in the transformation of a largely localized musical expression to a national music phenomenon. As Ryman Auditorium is associated with the *Opry's* role in reaching a national audience with country performers, dance party tours were a key aspect in the development of rock 'n' roll, demonstrating that the genre was a national phenomenon and could be a commercial success. In the 1950s, participation in a tour circuit was the primary means for rock 'n' roll performers to connect with their audiences. The tours created a fan base, resulting in record sales, radio play, additional live performances, and the dissemination of rock 'n' roll music across the country.

Sun Records in Memphis, Tennessee is similarly associated with the history of music in this country. The National Historic Landmark is significant for its association with Sam Phillips, whose vision and work at Sun Records "played a unique and revolutionary role in American music history and popular culture."[134] Between 1949 and 1960, Sam Phillips operated his recording service and record company from the property; it is the only building associated with Phillips's productive life as a record producer during the years that he made exceptional contributions to American music. Through artists such as Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Johnny Cash, Phillips produced some of the most significant music in early rock 'n' roll history.

Sun Records illustrates the significance of the twentieth-century marriage of culture and technology, which brought music to the lives of people across the country thereby altering culture through accessibility. Through records and radio play, music was brought into homes by radio, record player, and television, with audiences growing larger as technology evolved. The commodification of music as an art form was made possible by the technologies that recorded, replicated, and broadcast it; the impact was a social and cultural revolution.

The Winter Dance Party tour likewise contributed to the commoditization of music in that the tour circuit brought musicians and music to their fans in a manner heretofore untried. The tours were highly advertised and anticipated events financed by tickets sales, with their extended schedule and circuitous routes through towns large and small targeted to reach young audiences spread across the country. The dance party tours were specifically designed to generate additional income from future ticket sales, increase radio play, and record sales. As the most significant and well-preserved regional representation of the nationwide dance party tour phenomenon, the Surf Ballroom is the nationally significant representative of the dance party tour, which played a crucial role in advancing the impact of rock 'n' roll by bringing popular performers directly to the fans who idolized them and establishing touring as a legitimate business in the music industry.

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[132] Dr. Frank J.J. Miele, "Ryman Auditorium," Nashville, Davidson County, Tennessee, National Historic Landmark Nomination, 2000: 7.
[133] Ibid., 13.
[134] Jody Cook, "Sun Record Company, Memphis Recording Service," Memphis, Shelby County, Tennessee, National Historic Landmark Nomination, 2002: 25.

Like Ryman Auditorium (the building most closely associated with the origins and rise of the modern-day genre of country music in the United States) and Sun Records (the building most closely associated Sam Phillips, who played a unique and revolutionary role in American music history, music recording, and popular culture), the Surf Ballroom, as the best-preserved venue on the 1959 Winter Dance Party circuit, is nationally significant in its association with a trend/event that marked the transformation of American music.

As National Historic Landmark designated properties in the context of music, Sun Records and Ryman Auditorium provide the best point of comparison for the Surf Ballroom. While the histories and impacts of neither are direct comparisons, the standards by which they were determined to bear the level of significance required of a National Historic Landmark offers the most relevant comparison. Other music venues such as The Troubadour in West Hollywood, California and The Fillmore in San Francisco, California may provide more analogous points of contextual comparison even though they have not been evaluated for their ability to meet the NHL criteria. The Fillmore represents an elevated level of creative music-making in the 1960s that launched the careers of numerous musicians such as Jimi Hendrix, while the Troubadour was a major center for 1960s folk music providing a springboard for many important American musicians including the Eagles, Joni Mitchell, and Carol King. Despite the acknowledged significance of both venues and their potential to be eligible for NHL consideration, both of these properties represent other genres and other aspects of the music industry in the United States.

6. PROPERTY DESCRIPTION AND STATEMENT OF INTEGRITY

Ownership of Property	Category of Property
Private: X	Building(s): X
Public-Local:	District:
Public-State:	Site:
Public-Federal:	Structure:
	Object:

Number of Resources within Boundary of Property:

Contributing		Noncontributing	
Buildings:	1	Buildings:	
Sites:		Sites:	
Structures:		Structures:	
Objects:		Objects:	
Total:	1	Total:	0

PROVIDE PRESENT AND PAST PHYSICAL DESCRIPTIONS OF PROPERTY
(Please see specific guidance for type of resource[s] being nominated)

Site Description

The Surf Ballroom is located in Clear Lake, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa. A community of approximately 7,500 rear-round residents, Clear Lake encircles the 3,684-acre, natural spring-fed lake for which the town is named. The historic commercial area is located along the lake's northeastern shore, with a cross-section of seasonal and full-time residences stretching around the lake.

The Surf Ballroom is sited on the north side of the lake, about one mile west of the commercial downtown area. The ballroom was constructed following the 1947 destruction of the original Surf Ballroom, which was located on the lakefront just across North Shore Drive. Prior to the 1948 construction of the present Surf Ballroom, the triangular block upon which the ballroom is now located was part of the 1870s era, Clear Lake Camp Meeting grounds, a venue that established Clear Lake as a recreation and tourism destination. By the time the Surf Ballroom was constructed in 1948, residential properties typified the immediate area.

The Surf Ballroom is sited on a wedge-shape lot bounded by North Shore Drive (historically, 2nd Street) on the south, 7th Avenue (historically, Lake View Drive) on the north and west, and Buddy Holly Place (historically, Street Railway Drive) on the east. The ballroom is sited with its façade facing the lake to its southwest.

A public sidewalk runs the length of the east property line (along Buddy Holly Place) and flush to the building on the south. A large paved parking lot abuts the building on the east, west, and north, with vehicular access from North Shore Drive (both east and west of the ballroom) and from Buddy Holly

Place and 7th Avenue North. The site is flat with highly manicured shrubbery flanking the primary entrance.

The historic landscaping on either side of the primary entrance was modified in the late twentieth century. Historically, the landscaping consisted of a straight line of low hedge extending east and west from the entrance bay; the line of hedge delineated the sidewalk from a small area of grass located adjacent to the façade wall. The 1990s alterations introduced hard features including commemorative markers, bench seating, flagpoles, and brick pavers. It also replaced the shrubbery.

A non-historic, perforated steel patio screen surrounding a 20 x 32-foot, exterior patio is located adjacent to the building's east wall. The patio was added in the 1960s to provide outside seating for the Surfside 6 Café. At that time, a fence of decorative, concrete blocks was constructed. In 2016, the steel fence replaced the block fence; the mass and size of the new structure is considerably less than the first.

Rehabilitation of the roadways immediately surrounding the ballroom has been undertaken in recent years. Boulevards with plantings and decorative brick pavers have been introduced. New public sidewalks with brick elements have been added. In addition, a memorial plaza dedicated to Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and J.P. Richardson was constructed one-half block west of the ballroom. The plaza design uses the circular motif of a 45-record with arterial sidewalk converging at a monument representing three 45-records mounted on a turntable. The names of each of the three musicians are etched into the underside of the bottom record.

In summary, the Surf Ballroom site remains largely intact. Specifically, the footprint of the site retains its historic wedge shape; the building retains its historic orientation to the lake; and the historic setback from streets on all sides is retained, including the open ground on the north that accommodates parking. The historic integrity of the site has been impacted by alteration of the historic landscape flanking the primary entrance, by the 1960s addition of a patio on the façade, and the surface paving of the parking area. However, the modest scale of the landscape features and vegetation minimizes the impact to the site while allowing for the memorialization of significant events in the history of the ballroom. Further, the steel patio screen, which replaced a 1960s concrete fence, was designed to minimize its impact on the building: the fence height is below the historic signage to maintain the sightline; the fence color is a neutral gray to minimize visual distraction, but it is not colored to match the building brick to distinguish the screen as a non-historic feature; and the screen is highly perforated in order to maintain a view of the entire façade.

Building Description

The visual character of the 1948 Surf Ballroom is representative of both its function and its mid-twentieth century construction. The Surf Ballroom has functioned continuously as a music venue from the time of its opening on July 1, 1948. An historic rehabilitation completed in the 1990s returned some historic finishes to the building and brought new life to those that remained. Careful maintenance of the building in the years subsequent to the rehabilitation has ensured the preservation of a high level of historic integrity.

The Surf Ballroom is a one-story, concrete, tile block, and brick-faced building with a footprint that is nearly square. The interior functions are called out on the exterior, with the location of the ballroom and dance floor marked by a barrel roof and the locations of the vestibule, promenade, and restaurant

indicated by a flat roof. The stylistic character is confined to the building façade, with the remainder of the building defined by a more functionally driven character.

Exterior: Facade

The Surf Ballroom façade retains all the original design elements that define its Modernist style including the flat roofline; a sleek surface created with a buff colored face-brick with narrow mortar joints of matching color; the curving form of the façade wall; the modern font style and circle motif of the historic signage; and, the stainless-steel utilized in the box office, canopy, entrance doors, and framing. Each of these elements draws on the modernist tendency toward smooth, clean lines, horizontal orientation, and geometric forms, with a particular nod to the Streamline Moderne.

As indicated, the façade of the building (and wrapping approximately 10-feet on the east and west walls) is faced in a buff-colored brick. The smooth-faced bricks are elongated and laid in a common bond with a narrow, raked joint with mortar colored to match the brick. This treatment is a modernist device designed to create the illusion of a smooth, monolithic surface.

The façade curves outward near its center to embrace the building's primary entrance. A simple, stainless-steel canopy, featuring clean modern lines, provides cover at the entrance. The 20 x 15 foot canopy consists of a rigid, flat steel deck that is attached to the exterior wall across the full-width of the entrance opening and supported by a pair of slender posts set on the sidewalk. The canopy is cantilevered beyond the posts to extend nearly the full depth of the sidewalk. The underside of the canopy is fitted with rows of bare light bulbs arranged in rows (perhaps 100 bulbs in total). A ca.1963 signboard surmounts the original awning, extending along three sides of the canopy. The signboard is stainless steel-framed, with an inset linear grid designed to hold lettering. The signboard, which is updated by hand, announces upcoming bands and events.

The primary entrance to the ballroom is recessed within the curved façade wall. The entrance retains its original design elements including: a stainless-steel, profiled header spanning the opening; the glass and stainless-steel ticket booth; two sets of paired doors; and flanking billboards mounted to advertise coming attractions. The only entrance features to post-date the original building are the ca.1963 signboard surmounting the entrance awning and two small billboard frames located on either side of the entrance doors, which were in place by 1950.

The ticket booth is located within the recess of the entrance and between the paired entrance doors, but its semi-circular shape extends beyond the recessed entrance. The ticket booth incorporates a fluted, stainless steel base with panels of glass plates arranged to create a full 180-degrees of glazing. The original ticket slot and communication portal with screen is retained, as is the metal ticket box used during the Surf Ballroom's 1948 grand opening.

The paired doors are fully glazed within stainless steel frames. Each pair is set in a stainless steel frame, with the pair on the east hinged on the right to open for entrance with the west pair hinged on the left to open for exit from the building. Each door has a pair of stainless steel crossbars fitted with red, Bakelite handles.

The façade wall on either side of the main entrance features the name of the venue. The signage, which is original to the building, consists of large, individual, box letters mounted to the wall. The letters are executed in a modern font (similar to the 1950s Lunch Box font) in blue painted metal. The sign to the west of the entrance notes SURF BALLROOM in all caps with SURF being twice the size as

BALLROOM. The sign east of the entrance is the same, but it is followed by four circular discs – a simple, modern motif.

Located below the four discs of the east sign are two sets of sliding glass doors set in stainless steel frames. The openings were cut in the wall in 1964 to provide access to outside seating created for the Surfside 6 Café. Three non-historic light sconces are mounted adjacent to the doors. The door openings are the only significant alteration of the ballroom's façade.

Exterior: Secondary Elevations

As noted, the building's stylistic character is confined to the building façade, with the secondary elevations defined by a more functionally driven character. The most significant element of the secondary elevations is their expression of interior functions. The barrel roof is revealed on the secondary elevations, marking the location of the ballroom dance floor, while the flat roof running the perimeter of the building marks the support spaces such as lobby, promenade, ballroom seating areas, and the Surfside 6 Café.

The secondary elevations of the building are red brick, laid in a running bond with a raked joint and putty-colored mortar. These walls are nearly windowless, with a minimum of door openings. The flat portion of the Surf's roof is built-up with a rubber membrane utilized over the barrel portion. The roof edges are finished with metal flashing. Portions of the concrete foundation are visible on all sides of the building except the façade.

The east wall, near the southeast corner, has an entrance directly into the Surfside 6 Café. The buff colored brick of the façade wraps around to the east elevation some 10 feet, terminating at the café entrance. A metal canopy, now painted, marks this entrance; its character, materials, and profiled edge match the façade canopy. Historic design plans document that the opening is original to the building, as are the doors and the canopy. The red brick surrounding the entrance has been painted a neutral color, similar to the buff-colored façade brick. This superficial alteration may have been made to enhance the visual connection to the façade. In keeping with the modernist design character of the façade, the doors at this entrance are stainless-steel and glass.

The curved form of the barrel roof end dominates the remainder of the east wall. The barrel end sits back from the main body of the building, rising above the height of the adjacent flat roof. The elevation is organized into ten bays using a series of nine, brick pilasters that are evenly spaced along the length of the wall. Although the south three pilasters are painted, the red brick and case stone caps remain unpainted on the remaining pilasters. An equipment entrance with doublewide, steel doors is located near the north end of the east elevation. A short set of double-entry poured concrete steps with a deep landing and tubular steel handrail facilitates access to the entrance.

The north elevation represents the length of the barrel roof, which sits back from the main body of the building. The elevation uses brick pilasters to organize the wall plane. A small bump-out near the northeast corner functions as a loading dock. The bump-out appears to be original to the building. The bump-out has a slightly sloped, shed roof and a single doorway is cut on the north wall. An equipment entrance with doublewide, steel doors is located just south of the bump-out. A short set of straight-run, poured concrete steps with tubular steel handrails facilitates access to the entrance. A slightly projecting pavilion with cast stone coping marks the entrance. A series of four brick pilasters with cast stone

coping are located at irregular intervals between the projecting pavilion and the south end of the wall. An emergency exit with a single-leaf steel door is located near the south end. A short set of straight-run, poured concrete steps with tubular steel handrails facilitates egress from the opening. A metal ventilation grille is located near the southwest corner.

The curved form of the barrel roof end dominates the west elevation. The barrel end sits back from the main body of the building, rising above the height of the adjacent flat roof. In contrast to the east elevation, the wall plane steps up and backward toward the barrel, marking the space above the ballroom stage that houses the rope lines and pulleys for operation of the stage curtain.

The west elevation does not use pilasters as found on the east and north elevations. The elevation has a single-leaf door and window arrangement located near the center of the wall; the openings provide access and light to the small room adjacent to stage right. A single-leaf door provides access to the small room adjacent to stage left. The remainder of the west elevation has a doublewide steel door, a second single-leaf window arrangement, and a single-leaf steel door located along its length, south of center. Large ventilation grilles are located on both ends of the west wall. New mechanical equipment is located adjacent to the building here, with some mechanical boxes and lines mounted to it. As noted previously, the buff colored brick of the façade wraps around to the west elevation some 10 feet.

Two square brick ventilation stacks, or chimneys, are located on the west elevation, one near the west end of the barrel roof and one near toward the south end of the west wall. Both stacks are set back several feet from the edge of the wall plane.

Building Description: Interior

The Surf Ballroom, with a maximum capacity of 2,200 persons, has 30,000 square feet of entertaining space including a 6,300 square foot dance floor. The interior of the Surf carries on the modernist influence established on the exterior with a “beach club” character added through its decorative elements. An historic restoration/rehabilitation following the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards, completed in 1994, restored previously lost elements of the interior motif. In subsequent years, all upkeep has maintained a commitment to retaining the building’s high degree of historic integrity. As a result, the interior of the Surf Ballroom retains the appearance of the building at the time it opened in July 1948, as well as qualities of materials, design, workmanship, setting, and feeling.

The building retains its historic floor plan with a minimum of alteration and those changes are confined to areas outside the primary ballroom space. The primary ballroom space (i.e. the dance floor and immediate associated spaces) retains its historic floor plan and all major features including: the original maple dance floor laid in a log cabin pattern; original stage with extensions made without altering or hiding the curved, notched form of the original; tiered seating around the dance floor, including low ceiling heights with a striped cabana tent finish, wall murals with beach motif, the original booths with wood bench seats featuring underwater motif stenciling and cantilevered tables; barrel ceiling over the dance floor; an original bar with streamlined shape; and the wide ballroom promenade.

Beyond the primary ballroom space, the building retains the original entrance vestibule with wood, stainless steel doors with Bakelite handles, and trellis-like beamed ceiling. The original lobby has one of two original coat checks fully intact, as well as the phone booth and phone used by Buddy Holly and Ritchie Valens on the night of February 2, 1959. The lobby promenade leading to the ballroom is

complete with pineapple stenciled walls and cove ceiling; the ladies lounge with original wall and floor tile; a portion of the men's lounge with original wall and floor tile intact; and the Surfside 6 Café with original flooring and streamlined bar.

The interior of the Surf Ballroom is composed of three primary sections: the lobby (including the vestibule and lobby support spaces), the ballroom (including adjacent seating and ballroom promenade), and the Surfside 6 Café. The building retains its historic floor plan except for alterations made in the lobby.

Lobby Area

The entrance vestibule is an approximately 20 x 15-foot space acting as a transition from the exterior to the interior lobby. The vestibule features a fired clay tile floor, walls faced in stone, and a trellis-beamed ceiling – all original elements. Two sets of paired wood doors provide access from the vestibule into the lobby area. Each door features three glass panel insets and handles of stainless steel and red Bakelite. A deep wood header spans the doublewide doorway, and the curved profile of the jamb frames the opening. The ticket booth is entered from the vestibule. The interior of the booth has a plaster-finished ceiling and walls, a clay tile floor, a narrow, curved wood counter, and a stainless steel surface at the ticket slot.

The original lobby floor plan of the Surf Ballroom was minimally altered during the 1994 historic rehabilitation, with no changes made to the plan since that time. The alteration of the floor plan involved conversion of one of the two coat checks to a small gift store and a hallway leading to the Surfside 6 Café. The men's lounge was also sub-divided to create an office. Retained intact were the lobby itself, one coat check, an original office space, the women's lounge, the telephone booth from which Holly and Valens made their final phone calls home, and the lobby promenade leading into the ballroom itself.

The lobby is a transitional space that connects visitors to adjacent spaces such as the coat check. The lobby features a cove ceiling, painted plaster walls with a deep wood baseboard, and a fired clay tile floor with wide carpet runner overlay. The lobby's remaining original coat check is located on the west, just upon entering the lobby. The coat check retains its long, wood counter with a canted front and a wood panel back wall with four pass-through openings to the coat storage area behind.

The women's lounge is also located on the west side of the lobby, just past the coat check. The restroom comprises an outer lounge and a large inner room with stalls and sinks. The outer lounge retains the original green, square ceramic tile on the lower half of the walls and framing openings; wallpaper replicated from the original in 2020; original basket-weave, green tile flooring; long panels of wall mirrors; and a large, freestanding, full-length, mirrored pier in the middle of the space. The inner room also retains its original finish materials, including green, square ceramic tile on the lower half of the walls and framing openings; original basket-weave, green tile flooring; painted steel stalls; and original wood double-leaf swinging doors between the inner and outer spaces. A second entrance to the women's lounge is located off the ballroom promenade.

The men's restroom is positioned opposite the women's restroom. However, the 1994 historic rehabilitation that modified the floor plan on the east side of the lobby eliminated access to the men's restroom from the lobby. Today, the south (SE) section of the original men's restroom functions as a business office. The entrance to the office, which formerly served as the entrance to the men's restroom,

was not altered; the recessed opening with double-leaf wood swing doors is retained. Entrance into the men's restroom is now made through the original opening off the ballroom promenade. The men's restroom is comprised of a small outer lounge, remaining from the original restroom, and an inner room with stalls, urinals, and sinks. Both spaces retain the original yellow square ceramic tile on the lower half of the walls and framing openings; wallpaper in a tropical motif in the upper wall replicated from the original in 2020; original basket-weave, butter-colored tile flooring; horizontal runs of wall-mounted mirror; bank of ceramic urinals (original); and original, wood double-leaf swinging doors between the two spaces.

A telephone booth is located in a small recessed alcove on the west wall of the lobby promenade, just past the entrance to the women's restroom. The alcove is entered through an uncased opening with a segmental arched header. The telephone booth has a single hinged wood door with a narrow glass panel. The original payphone used by Holly and Valens remains mounted in the booth. A small custodial room is also located in the alcove, next to the phone booth.

The lobby's promenade is the transitional area between the lobby and the ballroom itself. A narrowing of the lobby marks the promenade, with curved walls that carry on the curved lines indicative of the Streamline Moderne style established on the exterior. The original, stenciled pineapples on the promenade walls were uncovered and repainted during the 1994 rehabilitation. In 2016, a professional artist was commissioned to recreate the stenciled walls more accurately. Using historic images, the artist reinterpreted the details and the color palette of the original.

The pineapple motif of the lobby promenade walls sets the stage for the beach club motif of the ballroom. 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.[135] 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 and again in 2016. The cove ceiling, extending from the lobby, adds to the sense of drama that prepares the guest for the experience of entering the expansive ballroom space.

Ballroom

The ballroom is comprised of a 6,300 square foot dance floor, booth seating for 948 persons, three bars (one original), the promenade encircling the dance floor, and a raised stage. The original design plans for the ballroom created a character "fashioned after a Florida beach club" and numerous elements of the ballroom space incorporate decorative devices to create that character. Like the Surf as a whole, the ballroom remains very much as it did when the venue opened in 1948 and through the period of significance, with the original floor plan, dance floor, booths, wall murals, and bar retained in original condition. The original stage, though added on to, remains otherwise unaltered with the form and materials of the original fully visible.

The Surf's dance floor dominates the ballroom, which is set two stair steps (approximately 16 inches) below the height of the rest of the surrounding promenade. The 6,300 square foot, maple floor is laid in

[135] 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 illuminate the impact of the ballroom and its policies on the broad population and the segregation issues of the day.

a log cabin pattern. The log cabin pattern was meant to ensure that dancers move with the grain of the wood as they circle the floor; the log cabin pattern was commonly used on dance floors for this reason. As a result of heavy use, the dance floor has been sanded, patched, and repaired. The extension of the stage intrudes some 12 feet onto the west end of the dance floor, but the original floor remains intact under the stage. The barrel ceiling over the dance floor is painted 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 simulates the sunrise, signaling closing time to the dancers.

The stage is located at the west end of the building, adjacent to the dance floor. The raised stage has been added onto twice and (as noted) now projects over the historic dance floor some 12-feet.[136] Enlargement of the stage was made to accommodate equipment requirements of contemporary performers. The stage stands approximately four feet above the dance floor, with access made through original openings near the back of the stage at both stage-left and stage-right. Later, steps were added in front of the line of the proscenium on both sides to provide access to the extended portion. The stage proscenium is framed by swagged and draped curtains, which were replaced in 1994 using historic images. The curtains extend around the three sides of the rear section of the stage. The stage itself retains its historic tiered decking, which creates three levels for the arrangement of instruments and performers.

Flanking the stage at dance floor level, are a preparation room ("green room") and storage rooms. The walls and ceiling of the "green room" south of the stage are covered with the autographs of musicians who have performed on the stage at the Surf Ballroom; the signatures post-date 1959. Just outside the rooms (nestled between the stage, the dance floor, and the end of the ballroom promenade) at both stage-left and stage-right are small approaches to the rooms. Defined by a short brick wall, the spaces are designed in the character of a beach: floors are sand-colored buffed concrete with paver stones set as paths; palm trees "grow" from the sand beach; and lounge chairs invite relaxation. The approaches are original to the building, adding to the beach club motif. The palm trees are reproductions dating to the 1994 historic restoration/rehabilitation, having been recreated from historic images.

The ballroom promenade serves as a path around three sides of the recessed dance floor, providing access from the lobby promenade to all elements of the ballroom. The promenade connects dancers to the dance floor, to booth seating areas on the east and north sides of the dance floor, to the men's and women's lounges, and to the Surfside 6 Café on the east.

The promenade is characterized by its width of approximately 12 feet, relatively low ceiling, and U-shaped path. On the south, the outer wall of the promenade is brick, with openings to the lobby promenade and the men's and women's lounges. Each opening has curved corners in deference to the streamline forms of the modernist design. Wood lattice-like screens (a feature reiterated adjacent to the wall murals) flank the wide uncased opening to the lobby promenade. Openings to the lounges have rigid cabana-style awnings over their entrances, with the original double-leaf wood swinging doors retained. An original marble drinking fountain is located along the south promenade wall. The dance floor side of the promenade has a brick knee wall with a series of substantial round columns providing

[136] The first addition to the stage is undocumented, but pre-dates the 1990s. The second extension was made specifically to accommodate a performance by Lynyrd Skynyrd in 2000.

structural support for the barrel vault over the dance floor. Spaces between the columns and openings between the knee wall and the columns provide access to the dance floor. The promenade ceiling is plaster with an up-lit soffit. The floor is composition tile laid in a basket-weave pattern.

The ballroom seating area is located on the north and east sides of the dance floor. Tiered seating, low ceilings, booth seating, and a beach motif characterize the seating area with all features and finishes, except two of the three bars original to the building.

The building's beach club motif is particularly strong in the ballroom seating area. The low ceiling is painted in wide green and white stripes to represent an overhead cabana tent. The stripes terminate at the outer walls, where they extend down in scallops to suggest the edge of the tent. Along the perimeter of the north and east walls, scenic murals heighten the illusion of being seated under a cabana tent with views to the outdoors. Narrow decorative lattices frame the murals. The murals, which are original to the ballroom, depict tropical beach scenes. They were covered over in the 1960s, but revealed during the 1994 historic restoration/rehabilitation.

On the east side, seating is located on a series of four tiers; the level of the first tier aligns with the promenade. This tier is single-loaded. The next two tiers, which each step up a single step, are double-loaded with the aisle between the rows of booths being about four-feet wide. The last tier is single-loaded, that row of booths is located next to the east ballroom wall with its scenic murals. The seating on the north is arranged in three tiers; the level of the first, single-loaded tier is aligned with the promenade. The second tier is double-loaded and the third, adjacent to the north ballroom wall, is single-loaded.

All elements of the booth seating are original to the ballroom, including the wood bench seats with stenciling, laminated tabletops, and single leg support. Further, the booths maintain their original dimensions and finishes. The booths were designed to seat four to six people per booth, accommodating up to 948 people. By today's standards, the booths are undersized. The back-to-back booths are arranged on tiers as noted, with partial walls separating the rows. The partial walls are covered in a dark green, textured finish with natural wood trim and composite base. The booths are comprised of a tabletop, with a wood bench seat on either side. The tabletop is mounted to the interior wall and supported by a single wood post at the opposite end. The table is wood with a laminated top and chrome edge trim. The back of the bench seat is minimally padded and upholstered in dark green Naugahyde. The ends of the benches are stenciled with simple underwater elements (including fish and sea ferns) in keeping with the beach club motif. Small gray metal boxes mounted on the back wall of each booth were designed to hold napkins and are numbered to indicate reserved seating. Mounted on the booth wall beneath some of the tables are wood boxes intended for the storage of ladies' purses, but reportedly better used to hide "bootleg" liquor that was covertly added to the soft drinks purchased at the ballroom bar.

Three refreshment bars are located amid the seating. The bar in the northeast corner is original to the building. The bar is L-shaped and reiterates the curved lines and sleek form of the building's modern character. The bar is wood with vertical slatted trim, a profiled lip at counter level, and a wide baseboard. A deep soffit mirrors the streamlined form of the bar. The other bars are located in the northwest and southeast corners. Both are simple, straight bars with mirrors mounted to the back wall and light fixtures that are simple in character suspended above. The bars, which were added in the 1980s, are unobtrusive in scale and character.

Surfside 6 Cafe

The Surfside 6 Café is located in the southeast corner of the building. The café is connected to the ballroom promenade and to the lobby via a corridor. The Surfside retains the original streamline bar with undulating soffit, canted ceiling with cabana tent motif on the south wall, and wood paneled wall finishes. The character of the café rests on retention of these original features, the general openness of the space, and the professionally created artifact displays that document the story of the venue's deep musical legacy.

The Surfside 6 Café is generally L-shaped, with the upright form stretching from the ballroom to the front of the building and the cross bar running along the south wall. The room retains a plaster ceiling, with the north and west walls finished in a wood panel dado with plaster finish in the upper wall. The east wall is fully covered in wood paneling behind the bar and extending to the south wall. The floor is covered in contemporary vinyl tiles. Vintage light fixtures and two contemporary ceiling fans are suspended from the ceiling. The fans are colored to match the ceiling, thereby minimizing their impact on the room.

The south wall is defined by the building's beach theme, which is expressed by a series of canted piers that appear to support a cabana tent. As seen in the ballroom, the ceiling (approximately 15 feet) is painted in wide green and white stripes that extend to a scalloped edge. At this location, the ceiling is canted to convey the character of a tent. This treatment extends the entire width of the south café wall. An original brick knee wall (similar to that used along the ballroom promenade) fills the east bay created by the canted piers.

Two openings were cut into the café's south wall in 1964; the openings are located between the canted piers without impacting the beach motif. A pair of doublewide sliding glass doors provides access to the outside patio described previously. The doors are stainless steel framed and glazed with clear, non-tinted glass.

An original bar dominates the east wall. The bar is L-shaped and reiterates the curved lines and streamlined form of the building's modern character. The bar is finished in wood tongue and groove paneling with a profiled lip at counter level and a wide baseboard. A soffit follows the curved form of the bar with added undulations. The soffit extends past the bar to terminate at the north café wall, above the opening into a storage room.

An original double door is located in the east elevation, adjacent to the bar. The fully glazed doors are set in stainless steel frames, each with a single center cross bar handle.

In the years subsequent to the 1994 historic restoration/rehabilitation, the Surf Ballroom extended its function beyond that of a musical venue. Great care has been taken to properly curate and display the many artifacts that have been given to the ballroom over the past decades. The Surfside 6 Café and the hallway between the café and the lobby house nearly all of what is now a museum collection. While the collection includes items representing the wide variety of musicians who have played the Surf, particular attention is given to Buddy Holly, J. P. "The Big Bopper" Richardson, and Ritchie Valens.

Artifacts and displays are mounted on the north and west walls of the Surfside, as well as on the section of the east wall adjacent to the exit. In addition, a number of guitars are mounted on the bar soffit. A glass display has been constructed atop the knee wall in the southeast corner. The display contains items

donated to the Surf Ballroom by the families of Buddy Holly, J.P. "The Big Bopper" Richardson, and Ritchie Valens.

The hallway from the café to the lobby, altered in 1994, has painted walls a gridded dropped ceiling and carpeted floor. The hallway is lined by framed images that tell the story of the Surf Ballroom, including its purchase and historic rehabilitation by the late Dean Snyder for his wife Joanne (also now deceased) because she loved to dance.

Summary

The Surf Ballroom remains today very as it was when it opened in 1948. The building retains nearly all of its original character-defining features: those that define it as a building designed in the Modernist style (with Streamline elements) and those that mark it as a mid-twentieth century entertainment venue.

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 'n' roll, specifically as the final performance venue of Buddy Holly, 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 'n' 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 modernist 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 1994 alterations 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 sixty-one years ago.

The Surf is a nationally significant historic resource that remains an active and vital connection to the early history of rock 'n' roll, the phenomenon of the dance party tour through continued celebration of the Winter Dance Party, and to the musical legacies of Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and J.P., "The Big Bopper" Richardson.

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https://www.rockhall.com/inductees?name= &field_inductee_induction_year=2001-01-01+00%3A00%3A00&field_induction_category=All

YouTube.com. 2012 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Induction.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qkqHYSEGBoc

YouTube.com. 2004 Latin Grammy Award Ceremony.
https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=qxbmHc9ZBys

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

_X_ Previously listed in the National Register (fill in 1 through 6 below)
__ Not previously listed in the National Register (fill in **only** 4, 5, and 6 below)

1. NR #: 10000261
2. Date of listing: 09/06/2011
3. Level of significance: National
4. Applicable National Register Criteria: A_X_ B__ C__ D__
5. Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A__ B__ C__ D__ E__ F__ G__
6. Areas of Significance: ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION
   PERFORMING ARTS

__ Previously Determined Eligible for the National Register: Date of determination:
__ Designated a National Historic Landmark: Date of designation:
__ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: HABS No.
__ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: HAER No.
__ Recorded by Historic American Landscapes Survey: HALS No.

Location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office: Iowa SHPO, 600 E. Locust St., Des Moines, Iowa
Other State Agency:
Federal Agency:
Local Government:
University:
Other (Specify Repository): Surf Ballroom & Museum, Archive, Clear Lake,

8. FORM PREPARED BY

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Washington, DC 20240

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Photograph Log

Name of Property: Surf Ballroom
City or Vicinity: Clear Lake
County: Cerro Gordo
State: Iowa
Name of Photographer: Alexa McDowell, AKAY Consulting
Location of Original Digital Files: 526 40th Street, Des Moines, IA

1. IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0001
   Site View: Looking east along North Shore Drive

2. IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0002
   Site View: Looking west along North Shore Drive

3. IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0003
   Site View: Looking south

4. IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0004
   Exterior: View of the façade (south) and east elevations, looking NW

5. IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0005
   Exterior: View of the façade (south) and west elevations, looking NE

6. IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0006
   Exterior: View of the north and west elevation, looking SE

7. IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0007
   Exterior Detail: Primary (south) entrance

8. IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0008
   Exterior Detail: Primary (south) entrance, ticket booth and doors

9. IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0009
   Interior: Vestibule, looking NW

10. IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0010
    Interior: Lobby – west coat-check, looking SW

11. IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0011
    Interior: Lobby promenade, looking north toward the dance floor

12. IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0012
    Interior Detail: Lobby - Alcove with telephone booth

13. IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0013
    Interior: Women's Lounge – View of the outer room, looking NW

14. IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0014
Interior: Ballroom, looking NE from the ballroom promenade toward the east seating

15. IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0015
Interior: Ballroom, looking east from the stage

16. IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0016
Interior: Stage, looking NW from dance floor level

17. IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0017
Interior: Tiered booth seating, looking SW toward the stage

18. IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0018
Interior: Tiered booth seating, looking SW toward the original bar

19. IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0019
Interior Detail: Original booths with stenciling of underwater motif

20. IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0020
Interior: Ballroom promenade, looking east with opening to lobby at right, mid-ground

21. IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0021
Interior: Surfside 6 Café, looking south from near the ballroom promenade

22. IA_CerroGordoCounty_SurfBallroom_0022
Interior: Surfside 6 Café, looking NE

HISTORIC IMAGE LOG (Note: all images are the property of the Surf Ballroom & Museum, except 1 and 5 which are held in the photo collection at the Mason City Public Library, Loomis Archives)

1. Aerial View – 1948
2. Aerial View – ca.1950
3. Surf Ballroom, looking NW across North Shore Drive – ca. 1950
4. Surf Ballroom, looking north across North Shore Drive to Primary entrance – ca.1950
5. Surf Ballroom, looking north across North Shore Drive – ca.1970
6. Interior: Vestibule, looking NW - 1949
7. Interior: Lobby, looking NW with coat check (left) - 1949
8. Interior: Ballroom promenade, looking east - 1949
9. Interior: Ballroom, looking west toward the stage - 1949
10. Interior: Dancing at the Surf Ballroom – ca.1949
11. Interior: Ballroom booth seating, looking north - 1949
12. Interior: A group of six (including Bev Elders) in a booth at the Surf – ca.1959
13. Interior: Surfside 6 Bar, looking southeast - 1949



Photograph 1: Site View - Looking east along North Shore Drive. In this view, we can understand how the roof forms vary to accommodate interior functional spaces with the barrel roof indicating the ballroom and the flat roof marking all other interior spaces. (McDowell, 2018)



Photograph 2: Site View - Looking west along North Shore Drive. The lakefront site of the original Surf Ballroom is out of view on the left, immediately across the street from the 1948 ballroom. The original site has been occupied by single-family residences for many years. (McDowell, 2018)



Photograph 3: Site View - Looking south. In this view, the barrel roof over the ballroom is in full view. A shallow section of roof at the west (right) end of the barrel roof marks the stage fly space. The property has included a large parking area from 1948, though the surfacing has been replaced multiple times. (McDowell, 2018)



Photograph 4: Exterior - View of the façade (south) and east elevations, looking northwest. The lines of the Art Moderne style are apparent from this perspective. Although the canopy sign dates to ca.1963 (outside the period of significance), the stainless-steel canopy and ticket booth flanked by paired doors, and the mall-mounted signage are original to the building. The side (east) entrance is also original, though the brick adjacent to the entrance has been painted. (McDowell, 2018)



Photograph 5: Exterior - View of the façade (south) and west elevations, looking northeast. From this perspective, the juxtaposition of roof forms is well understood. The view also shows the 1994-era landscaping and the 2012 bronze marker commemorating the property's listing on the National Register of Historic Places. (McDowell, 2018)



Photograph 6: Exterior - View of the north and west elevations, looking south. The barrel roof over the ballroom dominates the building from the rear perspectives. (McDowell, 2018)



Photograph 7: Exterior Detail - Primary (south) entrance. The canopy with its steel post supports and exposed-bulb lights on the underside, the ticket booth, and the paired entrance doors are original to the building (1948). The three-sided marquee atop the canopy was added in ca.1963. The signboard cabinets flanking the entrance were in place by 1950. The brick pavers date to the 1994 historic rehabilitation; they were part of a fundraising effort for the property. (McDowell, 2018)



Photograph 8: Exterior Detail - Primary (south) entrance, ticket booth and doors. The ticket booth is accessed from the entrance vestibule and retains all original features. The doors retain Bakelite handles. The red pavers are non-historic alterations, but the buff-colored tile abutting the entrance doors is original. (McDowell, 2018)



Photograph 9: Interior: Vestibule, looking northwest. The entrance vestibule retains original face-stone walls, timber beamed ceiling, glazed terra cotta tile floor, and paired, wood doors with Bakelite handles. A comparison with the 1948 historic photograph reveals no discernible alteration of the vestibule. (McDowell, 2018)



Photograph 10: Interior: Lobby – west coat-check, looking southwest. When constructed (1948) in during the period of significance, the Surf had two coat-checks; the east coat-check was removed as part of the 1994 rehabilitation. Historic drawings and photographs document its configuration and appearance as a match to the west coat-check above, which remains unaltered and in use. (McDowell, 2018)



Photograph 11: Interior - Lobby promenade, looking north toward the dance floor. The walls of the lobby promenade were re-stenciled in 1994 historic rehabilitation, having been painted over at an undetermined time. In 2016, the walls were again re-stenciled, this time using additional documentation that allowed a replication that was more accurate in detail and palette. The carpet was replaced in 1994 and again in 2018 using historic photographs. The color of the cove lighting is not historically grounded. (McDowell, 2018)



Photograph 12: Interior Detail - Lobby - Alcove with telephone booth. On the night of February 2, 1959, Buddy Holly and Ritchie Valens made telephone calls to their families in the hours before their deaths. The booth retains the original phone used for those calls. (McDowell, 2018)



Photograph 13: Interior - Women's Lounge – View of the outer room, looking northwest. The tile on walls and floor is original to the building. The wallpaper in this image dates to the 1994 rehabilitation, its choice derived from the beach motif of the original building. The original wallpaper has since been replicated from a sample to replace that in both the women's and men's restrooms. (McDowell, 2018)



Photograph 14: Interior - Ballroom, looking northeast from the ballroom promenade to the east booths. The original, beach-themed murals (background, right) are visible in this view as are the booths that line the dance floor and the original bar with curvilinear soffit (background, center). The contemporary images of Ritchie Valens, Buddy Holly, and the Big Bopper are representative of the continued emphasis of the ballroom's place in the history of the three performers. (McDowell, 2018)



Photograph 15: Interior - Ballroom, looking east from the stage. Although the stage has been extended to accommodate the increasing size of bands and their equipment, the original stage form is discernible. In this view from the original portion of the stage, the scale of the dance floor is understood. The original wood floor, laid in a log cabin pattern, is retained. (McDowell, 2018)



Photograph 16: Interior - Stage, looking north from dance floor level. From this perspective, the demarcation between the original stage and the later expansion is visible. The original stage footprint, including the rear portion, remains unaltered. The stage curtains were replicated from historic images as part of the 1994 historic rehabilitation. (McDowell, 2018)



Photograph 17: Interior - Tiered booth seating, looking southwest toward the stage. When opened in 1948 and through the period of significance, the booths were intended to accommodate six. They are undersized for today's average person, but remain unaltered and in demand by concert-goers. The striped ceiling (representing a cabana awning) and flooring are also original. (McDowell, 2018)



Photograph 18: Interior - Tiered booth seating, looking southwest toward the original bar. The original booths are arranged in tiers to maximize the view to the stage and access to the dance floor. The cabana awning gives way on the south (left) to the painted beach views. (McDowell, 2018)



Photograph 19: Interior Detail - Original booths with stenciling representing an underwater motif. The booths remain unaltered from the period of significance. Although undersized for today's average person, reservations come at a premium due to high demand, particularly during the annual Winter Dance Party. (McDowell, 2018)



Photograph 20: Interior - Ballroom promenade, looking east with lobby opening at right and dance floor at left. The ballroom promenade remains unaltered from the original and through the period of significance, with plan



Photograph 21: Interior - Surfside 6 Café, looking south from near the ballroom promenade. The Surfside 6 Café is minimally altered from the period of significance. In 1964, two openings were cut in the south wall (background) with double-wide sliding glass doors installed to access an exterior patio. The openings were located between the canted piers without impacting the beach motif. The hallway from the café to the lobby was altered in 1994 (background, right). In the previous decade, the property has elevated its function as a museum, with professionally designed and installed displays located in the Surfside 6 Café. (McDowell, 2018)



Photograph 22: Interior - Surfside 6 Café, looking northeast. The space retains the original streamlined bar with undulating soffit and its walls are lined with artifacts representing its long history. The families of Ritchie Valens, Buddy Holly, and J.P. Richardson have all gifted artifacts to the Surf so they are available to the many who visit the final performance site. (McDowell, 2018)

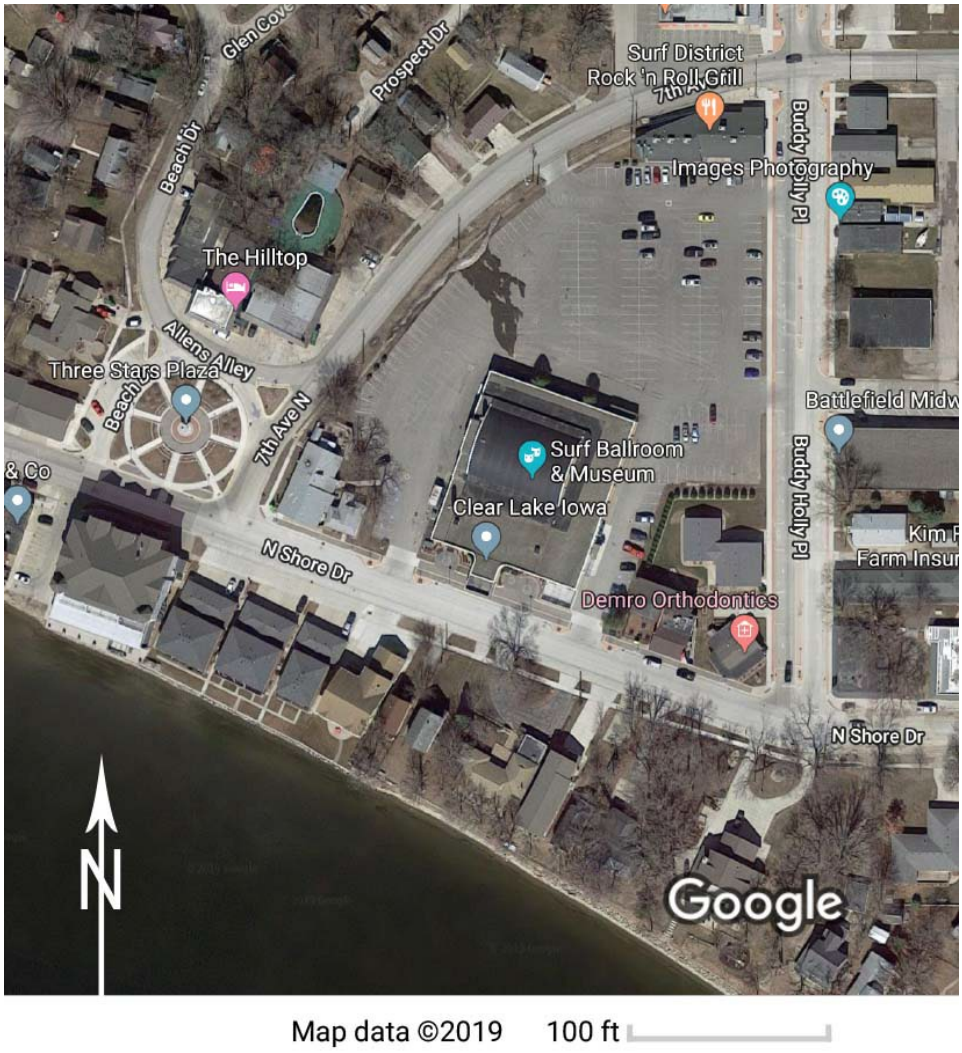
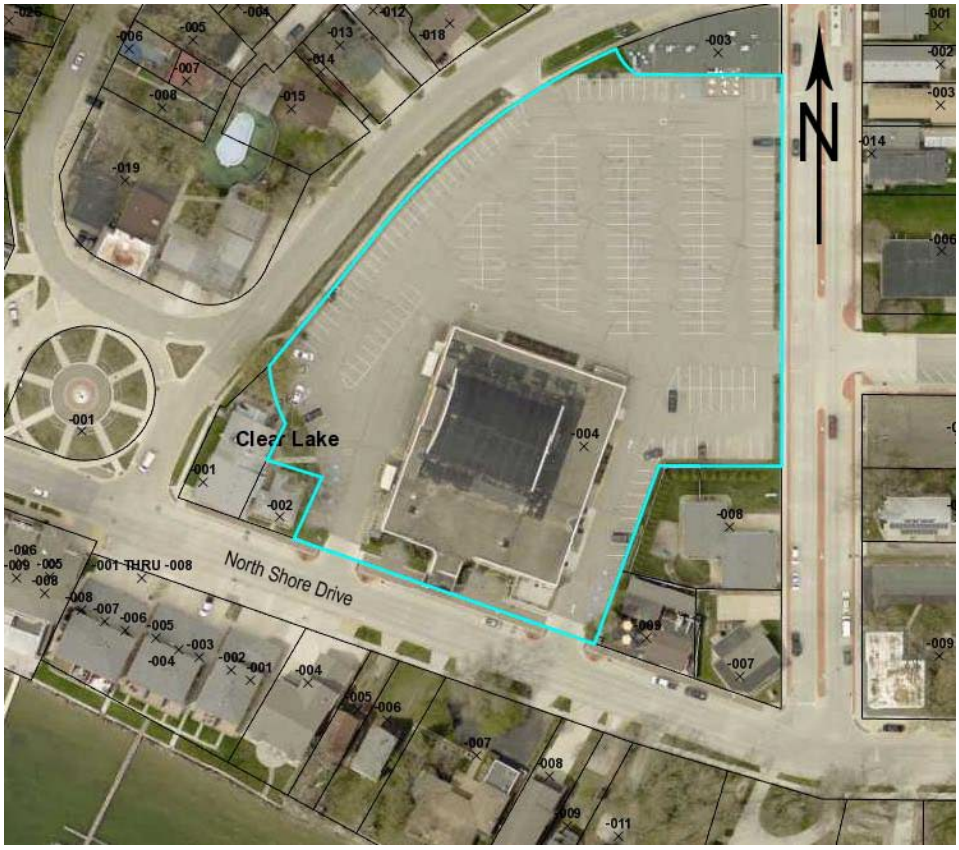


Figure 1. Aerial View (Google) – 2019

Datum: WGS84

Latitude: 43.139924

Longitude: -93.389683



(Source: https://beacon.schneidercorp.com. Retrieved 10/13/2019.)

Figure 2. Assessor's Parcel Map – 2019

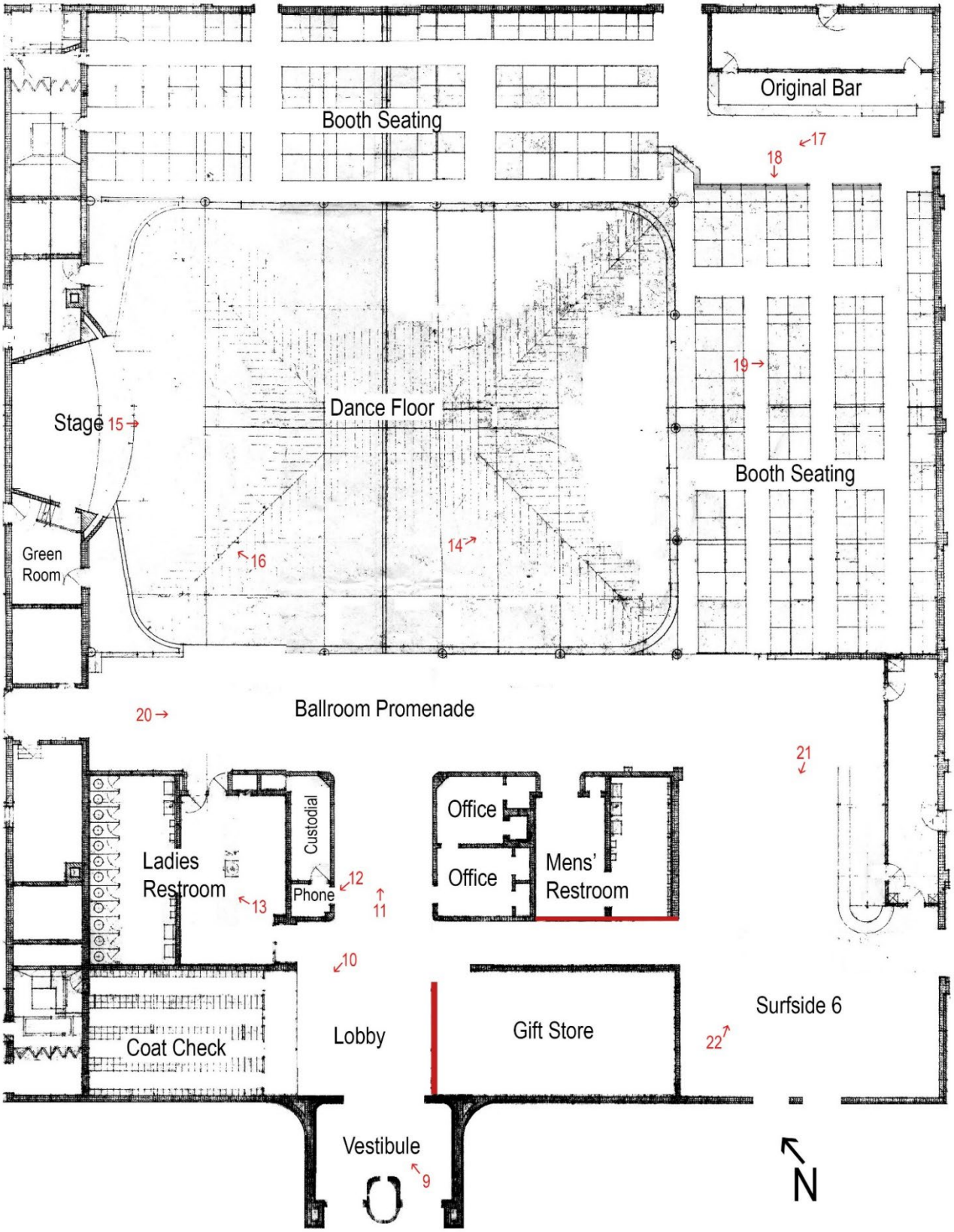
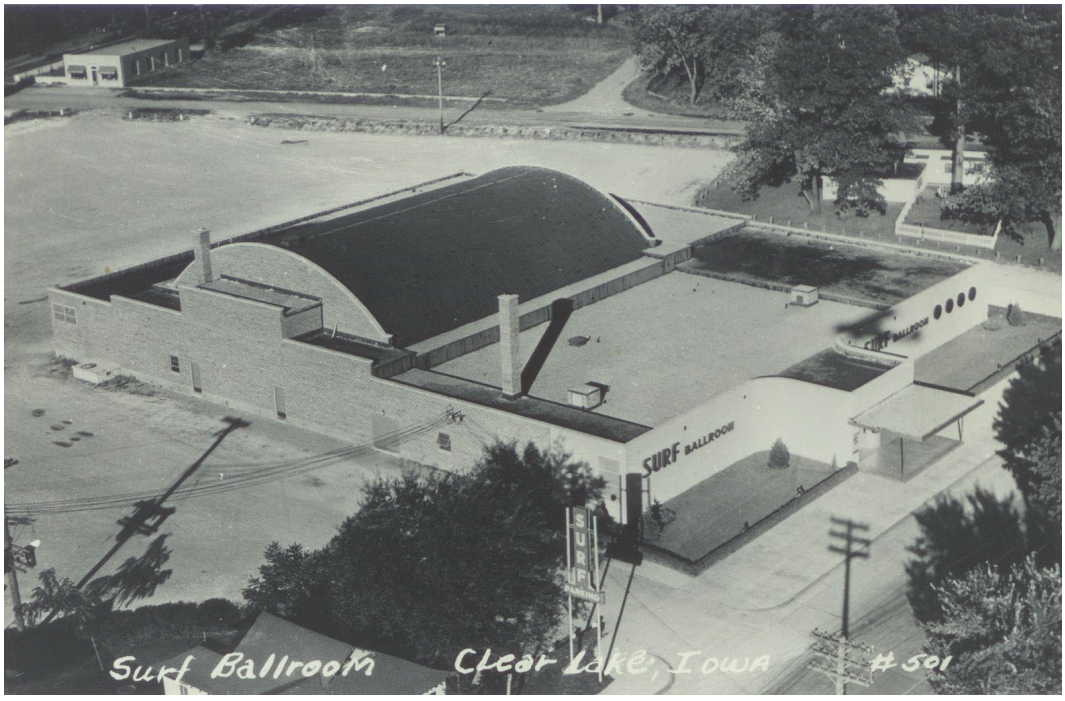


Figure 3. Floor plan and photo key – 2020



Historic Image 1: Aerial View – 1948. Source: Mason City Public Library photo collection, SL18618; 8-23-48.



Historic Image 2: Aerial View looking – ca.1950. Source: Surf Ballroom and Museum.



Historic Image 3: Surf Ballroom, Facade – ca.1950. Source: Surf Ballroom and Museum.



Historic Image 4: Surf Ballroom, Primary entrance – ca.1950. Source: Surf Ballroom and Museum.



Historic Image 5: Surf Ballroom – ca.1970s. Source: Mason City Public Library photo collection.



Historic Image 6: Interior - Vestibule – 1949. Source: Surf Ballroom and Museum.



Historic Image 7: Interior – Lobby, looking northwest – 1949. Source: Surf Ballroom and Museum.



Historic Image 8: Interior – Ballroom Promenade, looking east – 1949. Source: Surf Ballroom and Museum.



Historic Image 9: Interior – Ballroom, looking west – 1949. Source: Surf Ballroom and Museum.



Historic Image 10: Interior – Ballroom, looking northwest – ca.1949. Source: Surf Ballroom and Museum.



Historic Image 11: Interior – Booth seating, looking north – 1949. Source: Surf Ballroom and Museum.



Historic Image 12: Surf Ballroom – Fans seated in a ballroom booth – ca.1959. Source: Surf Ballroom and



Historic Image 13: Surfside 6 Bar – looking southeast - 1948. Source: Surf Ballroom and Museum.