

# MENOMINEE RANGE MEMORIES 37: THE ROARING TWENTIES – OTHER DANCE HALLS, PAVILIONS AND RESORTS IN IRON COUNTY, MICHIGAN, AND ON THE WISCONSIN BORDER

By William J. Cummings, Menominee Range Historical Foundation Historian



*This postcard view of the Chicagoan Lake Resort near Iron River, Iron County, Michigan, is postmarked July 25, 1923. An article appearing in The Iron Mountain News on June 6, 1925, noted the formal season opening of the Chicagoan Lake Pavilion that evening, featuring Okie Anderson and his seven piece jazz band from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Dances were to be held at the pavilion every Wednesday and Saturday night throughout the summer. A number of “high class orchestras” had been booked. Free orchestra concerts were given on Sunday afternoons. The article noted, “Chicagoan Lake will be a haven for dancers this summer, being cool and pleasant, the board walk out into the lake providing a novel attraction. [William J. Cummings]*

*[NOTE: Dates, placed chronologically, are highlighted in boldface red letters for easier reading, and names of individuals and places are highlighted in boldface black letters to facilitate finding information.]*

The 37th installment of Menominee Range Memories, a series of articles by William J. Cummings, Menominee Range Historical Foundation historian, now available on the Dickinson County Library's

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website, is titled “The Roaring Twenties – Other Dance Halls, Pavilions and Resorts IN Iron County, Michigan and on the Wisconsin Border.”

Information on other dance halls, pavilions and resorts is quite limited. This

Menominee Range Memories column will provide an overview of some of these popular places which were frequented by many area residents and visitors during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.



*This early photograph by Jorgen J. Eskil was taken from Clubhouse Point at Spread Eagle, Wisconsin, in 1896 and shows Emmanuel Chainey's Resort on Bass Island in the narrow, central area of Bass Lake. The larger building was a hotel built by Chainey on the main land west of his island during the summer and fall of 1893. It was moved over on the ice to this quarter-acre island during late December, 1893. Chainey made many improvements on Bass Island during the years he operated the resort, including a dance pavilion shown at the east end of the island which was then a picnic shelter, the hotel with kitchen wing, latrine, tool shed, ice house and saloon. [Menominee Range Historical Museum]*

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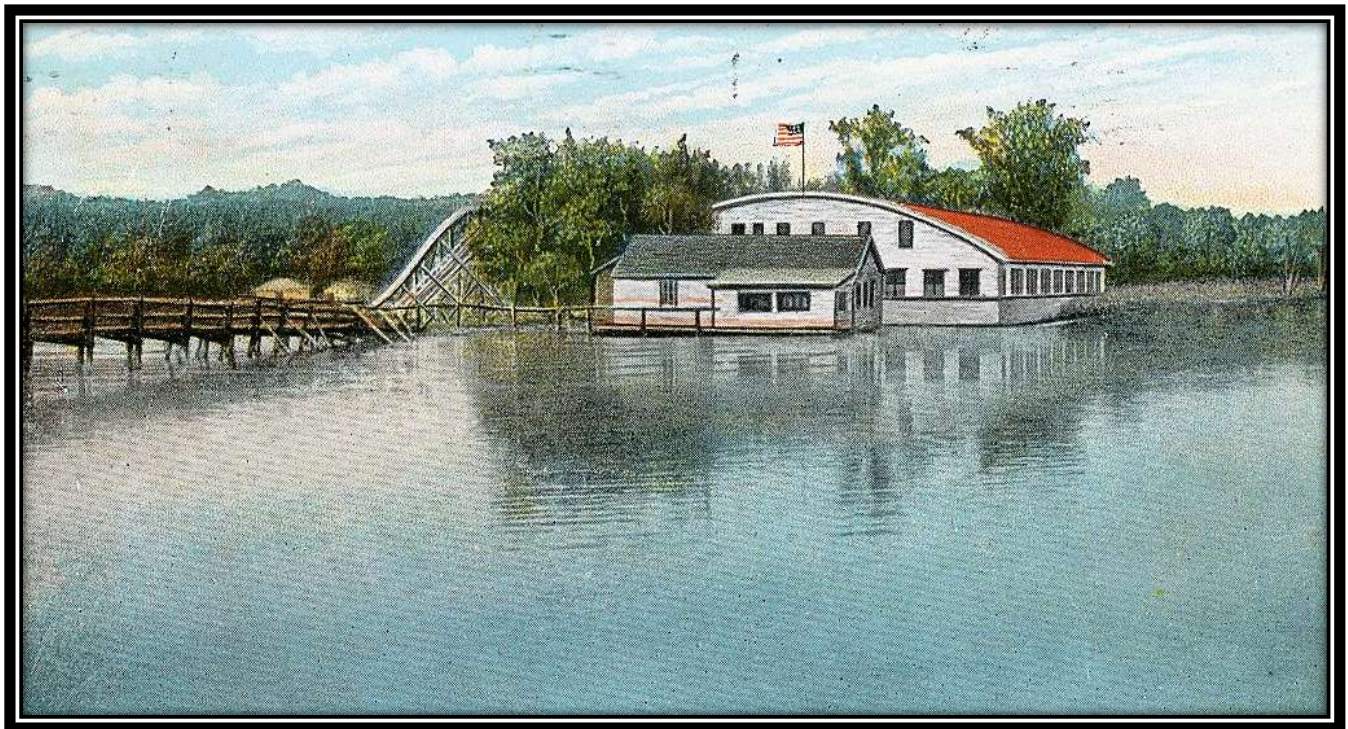
In the fall of 1914, William and Alvina Dennis constructed a dancing pavilion over the water on the north side of Bass Lake.

According to Putnam Robbins on page 156 of *The Eagle Spreads Its Wings*, “The new pavilion had an excellent hardwood dance floor which measured 41 x 75 feet and provided seven times the capacity of the old pavilion with its softwood floor.

“The dance hall, being over the water with porches on the north and east sides, provided docking space for the launches of the Spread Eagle cottage folk when they brought their teenage sons and daughters to dances. The young children down to babies wrapped in blankets would stretch

out on the long seats which ran lengthwise along the sides of the launches, listen to the music and watch their brothers and sisters glide around the dance floor. The young children in the launches would be sound asleep before the dancing and music stopped at midnight.

“Electricity came to Bass Island for the new dance pavilion in the fall of 1915, when Bill Dennis purchased a five horse power gasoline engine to drive the dynamo capable of handling seventy-five lights. The hotel, saloon, dance pavilion, boat docks, ice house and floating boom bridge could not be reached at night without the danger of falling into the lake.”



*This halftone tinted postcard view, postmarked Iron Mountain, June 10, 1930, shows the new Spread Eagle Dance Pavilion, owned by William and Alvina Dennis, which informally opened May 10, 1925. [William J. Cummings]*

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## SPREAD EAGLE DANCE PAVILION Spread Eagle, Florence County, Wisconsin

Under the headline **Season to Open at Spread Eagle: First Dance at Pavilion Will Be Given Next Sunday Evening**, the following article appeared in the **May 11, 1922** edition of *The Iron Mountain News*:

*Opening of the summer season at Spread Eagle will take place Sunday evening, when "The Two Orphans" will give a dance in the pavilion, Cavi's Four of this city furnishing music.*

*The dancing pavilion, lunch stand and other buildings have been repaired and refinished, and put into condition for the season, and the arrival of warm weather was the only thing needed for the opening. William Dennis, proprietor, is now in Chicago buying a new piano and other supplies.*

*Special bus service to Spread Eagle will be inaugurated with the opening of the season by the Iron Range Transportation Co. The schedule, however, has not yet been drawn up.*

*Cottages are also being reopened for the summer. Several weekend parties spent last Saturday and Sunday at the lakes, and an even larger number are expected to do so this week.*

In the **June 1, 1922** edition of *The Iron Mountain News* the following article appeared under the headline **Closes Pavilion at Spread Eagle: Will Reopen Only to Accommodate Respectable People, Says Dennis**:

*There will be no more dances held at the Bass island pavilion at Spread Eagle until further notice, it was announced today by W.L. Dennis, proprietor. This action was taken, Dennis declared, in order to eliminate the "rough element" which made up a fair percentage of the attendance at the pavilion.*

*"I'm going to put a barbed wire fence around the island," he said, "and admittance will be only through a gate. Each patron will be asked to submit to a search so that no moonshine will get onto the island.*

*"I will probably reopen the pavilion a week from today and I intend to make it a thoroughly respectable resort. I don't care if I only get one couple on the floor, I won't allow anyone that isn't decent and respectable to attend the dances.*

*"I'll either have the dances run in such a manner that a man need not be afraid to bring his wife or sweetheart, or I'll not operate the pavilion."*

*A dance was held at the pavilion last night and was said to be one of the best, from a standpoint of decency, ever given there. The patrons were asked to submit to a search when they came on the island and, according to Dennis, none refused. Consequently, it was declared there was no drinking and no drunks interfered with the dance.*

*In addition, four deputy sheriffs and Sheriff Budzak, of Florence, were on duty to preserve order and prevent any of the automobiles parked on the mainland from being rifled.*

*Dennis asserted that in order to get on the island, every person would have to*

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*consent to being searched. "If they don't want to be searched," he said, "they needn't attend the dances. We are merely adopting this course so as to be sure there is no moonshine liquor around."*

A week later – in the **June 9, 1922** edition of *The Iron Mountain News* – the following article appeared under the headline **Dances Will Be Resumed Sunday: "Rough" Element Will Not Be Allowed At Spread Eagle, Claim:**

*Dancing will be resumed at Spread Eagle on Sunday, it was announced today by W.L. Dennis, proprietor of the Bass island pavilion. In addition, Dennis declares, precautions will be taken to see that the so-called "rough" element is barred from the island.*

*The resort was closed down several days ago following complaints that the dances had become objectionable and that moonshine was providing much of the entertainment. At that time, Dennis announced he would ask all patrons to a search so that none of the firey liquid would get on the island.*

*A fence has been built around Dennis' land on the mainland and two deputies will be stationed at the gate. Persons who have an unsavory reputation or who are carrying liquor and refuse to give it up will not be permitted to enter.*

*"All people who desire an evening of clean enjoyment are invited to attend the dance," Dennis declared in a statement today. All objectionable characters will be requested to leave the island.*

*"We desire the patronage of those who are able to conduct themselves properly. As stated before, we are going to make Spread Eagle a place of amusement where*

*the respectable people of the surrounding towns will be protected from obnoxious characters. This is our firm determination and, with the aid of the people seeking such a place, we shall succeed.*

*"Every patron is requested to enter a complaint directly to the manager of the resort of any impropriety that may take place and the party or parties guilty of such impropriety will be requested to leave the island."*

The following article appeared in the **May 11, 1925** edition of *The Iron Mountain News* under the headline **New Pavilion Is Opened Sunday: Many Inspect Enlarged Dance Hall at Spread Eagle:**

*Informal opening of the new Spread Eagle dance pavilion was held last evening. Peterson's orchestra of Green Bay, featuring Rudie Koch, former radio entertainer from the Gimbel station of Milwaukee[,] playing the program. [sic]*

*The pavilion, which has been built on the island south of the old dance hall, is expected to take care of increased patronage according to Robert Dennis, son of the owner. The old hall proved too small. Some delay has been experienced in getting the windows and no date has been set for the formal opening, although another dance will be held next Sunday.*

*A large crowd inspected the hall last evening.*

**THE GREEN LANTERN  
Aurora, Wisconsin**

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The brief history of The Green Lantern dance hall in Aurora, Florence County, Wisconsin, was documented in the **October 5, 1925** edition of **The Iron Mountain News** under the headline **Fire Destroys Green Lantern: Wisconsin Dance Hall Burned With Loss of \$7,500**, as follows:

*The Green Lantern dance hall, just across the Wisconsin boundary line in Aurora, was destroyed by fire of an unknown origin at 4:30 o'clock this morning.*

*Otto H. Brumsted, 1107 West B street, owner of the place, today estimated the damage at \$7,500, part of which was covered by insurance. Brumsted left the dance hall at 1 a.m. [sic – difficult to read number], and said that at that time everything appeared secure.*

*Brumsted did not know of the fire until notified at 8 o'clock this morning.*

*The fire is attributed to one of three causes, a short circuit in the wiring, a cigaret [sic – cigarette] butt or incendiarism.*

*The Green Lantern when opened several months ago was housed under a large tent. A month ago a roof was erected and extensive improvements made on the inside, including decorations. Brumsted was undecided as to whether he will rebuild.*

## **CHICAGOAN LAKE PAVILION Chicagoan Lake, Iron County**

Under the headline **Dance Pavilion To Open Tonight**, the following article appeared in the **June 6, 1925** edition of *The Iron Mountain News*:

*Formal opening of the Chicagoan lake pavilion will be held this evening with music by Okie Anderson and his seven piece jazz band of Pittsburgh, Pa. Dances will be held at the pavilion every Wednesday and Saturday night for the balance of the summer season and a number of high class orchestras have been booked.*

*Chicagoan Lake will be a haven for dancers this summer, being cool and pleasant, the board walk out into the lake providing a novel attraction. Free orchestra concerts will be given Sunday afternoons during the summer months.*

## **SANDSTROM DANCE PAVILION Crystal Falls, Michigan**

Limited information is available on the Sandstrom Dance Pavilion located north of the Bristol Mine in the Crystal Falls area.

In the **September 8, 1922** edition of *The Diamond Drill*, Crystal Falls' weekly newspaper, under the **Personals** column, the following mention was made:

*A dance was given at the Sandstrom pavilion last Monday night and many were attracted there. The music was good and the order perfect. Mr. Sandstrom says he is going to insist on perfect deportment on the part of those who visit his pavilion.*

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Just a week later, under the headline **Sandstrom Burned Out: House and Contents Devoured by Flames Early Sunday Morning**, the following article appeared in the **September 15, 1922** edition of *The Diamond Drill*:

*The house and household effects of Charles Sandstrom[,] who lives north of the Bristol mine, were burned last Sunday morning [September 10, 1922] about one o'clock. The family, with the exception of one small child, was in the pavilion near by [sic – nearby] where a dance was going on when the fire caught so it is not known definitely just how the fire originated but it is thought that a gasoline lamp exploded in the house.*

*Neither is the time of the fire's commencement known exactly, but it must have been just about the time that the dance ended for the flames were discovered by the dancers when they came out of the pavilion to go home.*

*The child was rescued and a few minor articles but everything of value in the line of furniture, clothes and supplies were consumed with the house.*

*The fire department was notified and the truck went to the scene of the blaze after much difficulty in getting the right information. The house was pretty well burned when the truck arrived on the scene but its presence insured the saving of the pavilion. The family took refuge in the*

*pavilion which has been fixed up for living quarters.*

*There was but a small amount of insurance upon the building and its loss hits the Sandstrom family very hard.*