

The Epicenter of Entertainment in East Chain

What can we do now? That phrase has likely been repeated many times by children, young adults, and even adults. It's really a question of, "How can we entertain ourselves?" In the early years of East Chain's existence, well before television, cell phones, and video games, there was one place that seemed to be the hub of the entertainment world for that part of Martin County, namely, the Vermilya Store.

From the early 1900s, and for some time thereafter, the Vermilya Store was a hotbed of entertainment and "the" place to be in East Chain, and maybe Martin County. The lower part of the building was a mercantile, however, the upper part was known as the "Woodman Hall," which was for many years the center of social activities in East Chain. At about the turn of the 20th Century, a Woodman Lodge was organized and nearly everyone in East Chain was a member. Woodman's was a group of people that bought Woodman's Insurance based out of Omaha, Nebraska. Royal Neighbors was the sister organization to the Woodman Insurance Company to which women belonged.

Between these two organizations, they served as sponsors for essentially all of the social life of East Chain as well as the surrounding area at that time. The Woodman held a dance monthly that was attended by virtually everyone in East Chain, and others from the surrounding area including Fairmont, Guckeen, and Center Chain. Admission to the dance wasn't free for the men, as they had to pay thirty-five cents. In addition, if they wanted to dance, the men had to also pay fifty-cents for a colored ribbon which in turn entitled them to dance. As for the ladies, their admittance was free. Although this would not seem fair in today's world, it apparently didn't deter the men from attending.

The dances were so crowded that there was rarely room for everyone to be on the dance floor at one time. Consequently, numbers were called, and those that held those called went out on the dance floor until the dance floor was full. When the dance finished, a new set of numbers were called and, consequently, the people holding those numbers were then given the opportunity to get out on the dance floor. It was rare for anyone to take a break to rest, and if they did, they were almost always quickly replaced by someone else. The dance numbers included the Two Step, the Three Step, the Schotish, and the Square Dance. The orchestra was usually Arthur and Truman Hall, including Mrs. Truman Hall. George Reigel was normally the caller.

The hall was also used for various other social activities, including basket socials. The building evolved over time and eventually served as a grocery store, a coffee shop, and had apartments upstairs.

For more information on this topic, visit the Pioneer Museum in Fairmont.



1 Chicken Andersson
 2 Frank Rich Blacksmith
 3 Geo Barber Clerk 4 Ld Vasilya merchant