

The Rock 'N' Roll Preservation Society

The Martin County Historical Society in highlighting its latest exhibit, “*Great Sounds of Interlaken*,” is presenting an article from the *Rock 'N' Roll Preservation Society* regarding one of the featured groups, *The Brotherhood*. This exhibit is on loan from the Rock 'n Roll Preservation Society and includes many musical groups with ties to Fairmont. The display now features soundtracks from the following groups: *Epicureans*, *Nellie's Folk*, *Brotherhood*, *Brandywine Singers*, *Marvelous Marauders*, and the *Lyn Kerns Orchestra*. Visit the Pioneer Museum in Fairmont to view the exhibit and listen to the soundtracks.

The Rock 'N' Roll Preservation Society is dedicated to preserving the sights and sounds of Fairmont's legendary Interlaken Ballroom. The “GREAT SOUNDS OF INTERLAKEN” exhibit features a rare collection of rock 'n' roll, swing band, and ballroom dancing photographs, including live recordings, all of which shaped Interlaken Ballroom's rich musical history from 1916 to 1972.

In the end fire destroyed Interlaken Ballroom, but its heritage lives on, even if only in memory. This exhibit is a tribute to that era and the many musical groups who made significant contributions to Minnesota's cultural history through their recordings and live performances.

The Brotherhood Dream

The Brotherhood, like all of Fairmont's rock n' roll bands before them were a product of May Ward Pfiffner's Youth Center. All of these local bands shared the same vision-- to cut their own record and to someday play on the same Interlaken stage where The Glen Miller Orchestra, Lawrence Welk, Duke Ellington and Count Basie all once played.

The Interlaken also helped produce its own legends, the Al Menke band, The Amby Meyer Orchestra, the Freddie Frederick Orchestra and Lynn Kearns and the Rhythm Club Orchestra. By the 1960's, big swing bands like these were already on the decline due to competition from drive-in theatres, television, nighttime baseball, and something called rock n' roll. The musical torch had been passed. Interlaken Ballroom's owner, Wes Rau, was now booking only big name rock n' roll bands exclusively from the Twin Cities. Local Fairmont rock n' rollers had not achieved the reputation and status needed to be considered by Interlaken's standards. However, this all changed in 1972 when The Brotherhood members Keith Myhre (guitar), Gary Shaffer (drums), and Scott Montgomery (bass) recorded their own record and were now playing in ballrooms, teen clubs and youth centers all around the tri-state area.

In late winter of 1972, The Brotherhood was finally invited to play out their dream on the Interlaken stage. As kids, the members of The Brotherhood recall playing outside in the parking lot of the Interlaken Ballroom, searching for lost coins and sneaking peeks at the band posters displayed inside the front door lobby. Mesmerized by these posters, the boys dreamed that someday they too would play in a band and have their poster hung inside the door for all to see.

The Brotherhood played for their first and last time on the ballroom stage. On a cold and windy spring morning in '72, a tragic fire destroyed the ballroom forever. Their legacy lives on as the last band to ever play on the Interlaken stage.

In a recent interview with firefighter Melvin Sukalski, he recalls battling the blaze at the helm of a '46 La-France Convertible Fire Truck. Sukalski knew from experience it was a hopeless battle. The Ballroom's wooden structure and asphalt shingles would be gone in minutes with the high winds. Fellow firefighter Adam Mayberry narrowly escaped death as he exited from the building just as the roof collapsed into a ball of fire, leaving behind only ashes and fond memories.

The Brotherhood's original song "Money Can't Buy" recorded on a 45 record is on a public soundtrack display along with other Fairmont artist's recordings, at the Martin County Historical society.