

## Buster Keating Bandleader



Buster Keating was born in the year 1906. He displayed a talent for music at an early age. His mother, a former school teacher saw to it that he studied piano, classical guitar, and drums. He played in the Stevens High School Band and in the orchestra. He also joined the American Band and a local symphony orchestra.



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When the Magnet Theatre as built, he was employed to play there for silent movies. Following the construction of the Latches Theater on Pleasant Street he played with local musicians in the pit orchestra. The orchestra, led by Frank Stone, a classically trained violinist from Claremont, played during silent films and as accompaniment for various vaudeville acts. In the summer of 1924 he traveled with Frank and other Claremont musicians on a tour of the grand hotels of New Hampshire's north country.



**Frank Bush (waving), Frank Stone, Art Burgess, and Buster**



**Frank Bush, Buster, Frank Stone and Art Burgess (piano) At The Balsams**

**Buster formed his first band, "Keating's Jazz Orchestra." during his junior year at Stevens High. A talented musician, he was also a natural self-promoter. His band became very popular at the time and was featured at high school proms and receptions in Claremont, Bradford and Lebanon, NH, Windsor, and Bellows Falls, VT, and other nearby towns. Travel at that time was somewhat limited to railroad trains that served the area.**

**The original band was composed of local musicians, but after graduation in 1925, several of the original members left town to attend college or take jobs in other towns. They were replaced by musicians from Claremont and Newport, as well as Springfield, Woodstock, and Windsor , VT.**

**Upon graduation from high school he decided to pursue a career as a professional musician and ran various bands and Jazz orchestras for more than 20 years.**



In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century nearly every town had at least one dance hall. Claremont's first outdoor ballroom was the Pine Grove Park, located off Maple Avenue.



**Bud Parker, Trombone; Red Pollard, Trumpet; ; Addison Smith, Violin; Buster Keating, Drums; Eddie Miles, Banjo; Bennie Goulette, Piano John Chandler, Sax & Clarinet.**

## Pine Grove Park - 1925



Bud Parker, Trombone; John Chandler, Sax & Clarinet; Red Pollard, Trumpet;  
Buster Keating, Drums; Eddie Miles, Banjo; Bennie Goulette, Piano; Addison Smith, Violin.

# LAST BIG DANCE

THIS SEASON

Wednesday, September 30th, 1925

PINE GROVE PARK

CLAREMONT, N. H.

The Mecca of the Connecticut Valley !!

Most Popular Dance Hall in Northern New England with One of the Biggest Attractions.

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## MOREY PEARL

AND HIS

BRUNSWICK RECORDING ORCHESTRA

Direct from the "TENT" of Boston, Massachusetts

Broadcasting Headliners from Station W. N. A. C.

Tune in on this station and hear this wonderful orchestra. Drop in to your local Brunswick dealer and hear his records.

Your chance to hear and dance to one of the few nationally recognized orchestras ever visiting this territory, which took money and effort to bring them here.

Admission---Gentlemen 75c. Ladies 50c. Grounds 10c.

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### SATURDAY NIGHT FREE DANCE TO EVERYBODY

The Closing Night of Our Season

BE OUR GUEST

MUSIC BY BUSTER KEATING and HIS SNAPPY SEVEN

L. M. COLIVAS, Mgr.

For those who just wanted to listen to the music, 10 cents got them on the grounds outside the pavilion.

Three months out of high school and he was the featured band on Saturday nights at Pine Grove Park.



As the band began to travel to out-of-town dance halls and clubs more often, Buster purchased a 9 passenger Peerless touring car to accommodate the band members and their instruments.



**Touring car with high school sweetheart, Anna Pederson**

The band played one night stands in northern New England and southern Quebec, staying in inns and lodging houses while on the road.



**Buster with Norm Deloria, Dawson, Parker, Lockard and Lathrope**

This was the time of Prohibition, and it was not uncommon for the band to encounter road blocks set up to intercept smugglers bringing liquor down from Canada, where it was legal. These checkpoints were frequently manned by soldiers with machine guns and Tommy guns. Stories were told of band members crossing the Canadian border with pints of whiskey taped to their ankles beneath their bell-bottom trousers.



Tony Angelino, Joe Anadora, Hook Simonton, Buster, Marshall Morrow and Jim Greela



**These guys look more like bootleggers than musicians!**

# Coming Miner Doyle Orchestra

A GUARANTEED ATTRACTION

DIRECT FROM A SENSATIONAL  
ENGAGEMENT AT THE FAMOUS  
ROSELAND  
BALLROOM

NEW YORK CITY

*Exclusive Management*

*Paul M. Sullivan*

7 No. State St. Concord, N. H.

Phones 1462 - W 192 - W

# Coming Miner Doyle Orchestra

A GUARANTEED ATTRACTION

Concord, N. H.  
March 24, 1926.

Mr. Buster Keating,  
Claremont, N. H.

Dear Sir:

Will it be in order for this office to book you  
for any night during May or June?

Please advise us as to what arrangements you have made for  
these two months as we might be able to use you on June 16  
and possibly on other dates.

Very truly yours,

*Paul M. Sullivan*

*Planning on you for April 18 - Concord*

Signed with Paul  
Sullivan, top booking  
office for New England  
and Canada

## "Buster" Keating's Orchestra Reorganized

Reorganization by Buster Keating of his orchestra, which through loss of a number of players through entry in college or departure from town has been handicapped for several weeks,

has been completed, Mr. Keating announced today, through engagement of musicians from Claremont and elsewhere to form a musical team the equal to his former organization. The new orchestra played one night in Claremont and filled three engagements in surrounding towns during the past week.

The new members of the orchestra are: Francis Bruce of Springfield, Vt., banjo; Benjamin Bloomfield of Springfield, Vt., saxophone and clarinet; Richard Kainu of Newport, trumpet; Charles Dawson of Claremont, piano; Leonard Parker of Claremont, trombone and Norman Delorier of Claremont, trumpet.

A Treat For Claremont Music Lovers

# Special Attraction!!!

## Friday, Oct. 29th

# BUSTER KEATING

AND HIS NEW ORCHESTRA

Will Play From 7 to 9

at

## Russell's Music Store

This Will Give You an Opportunity to Hear This New Orchestra Playing the New Dance Hits.

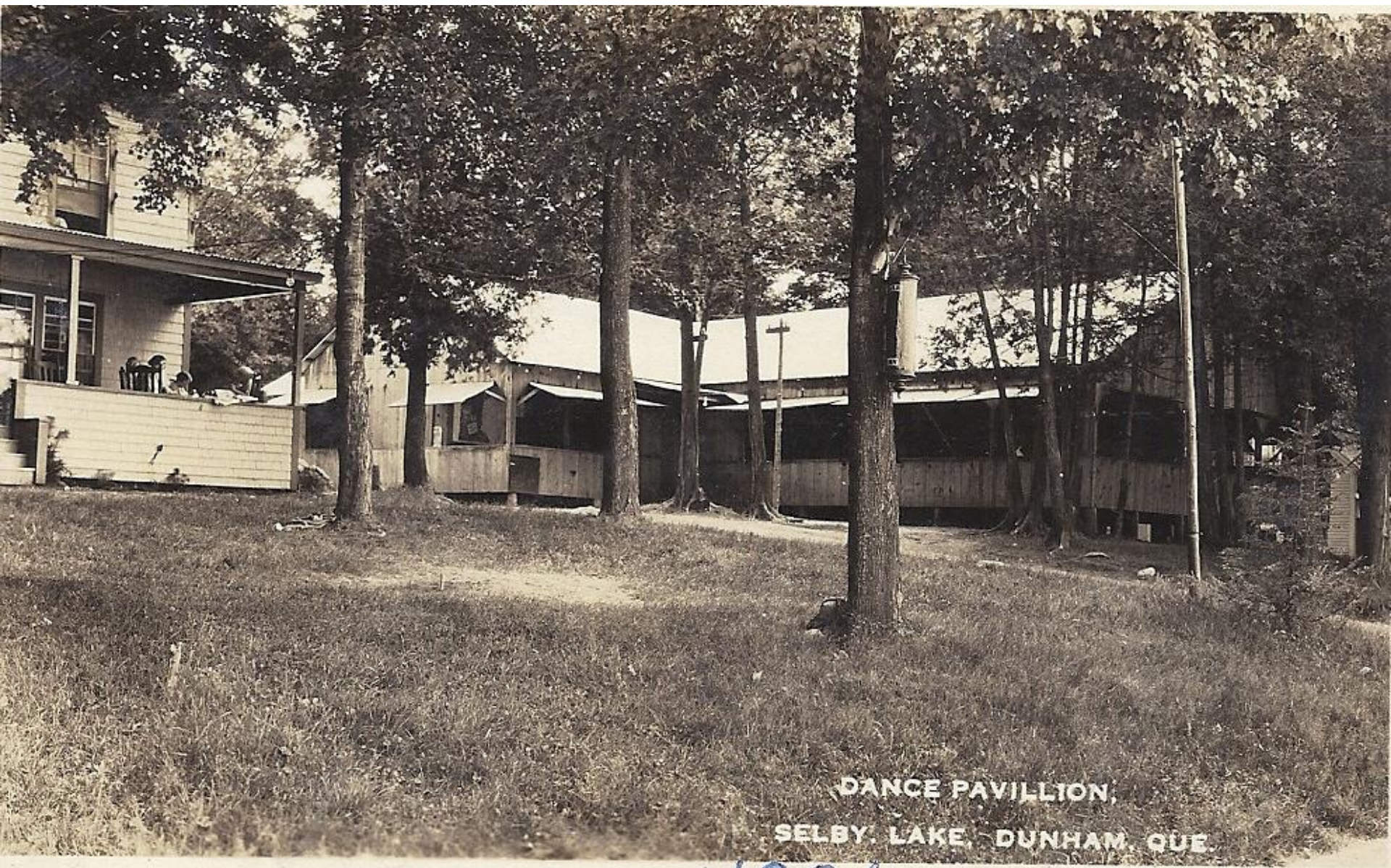
Step In and Hear These Boys Play.

The band experienced great popularity throughout the area.



PHANTASIA BY THE LAKE, HIGHGATE SPRINGS, VT. 12X,

1926 Phantasia by the Lake, Ryegate, VT



1926 Dance Pavillion, Shelby Lake, Dunham, Que.



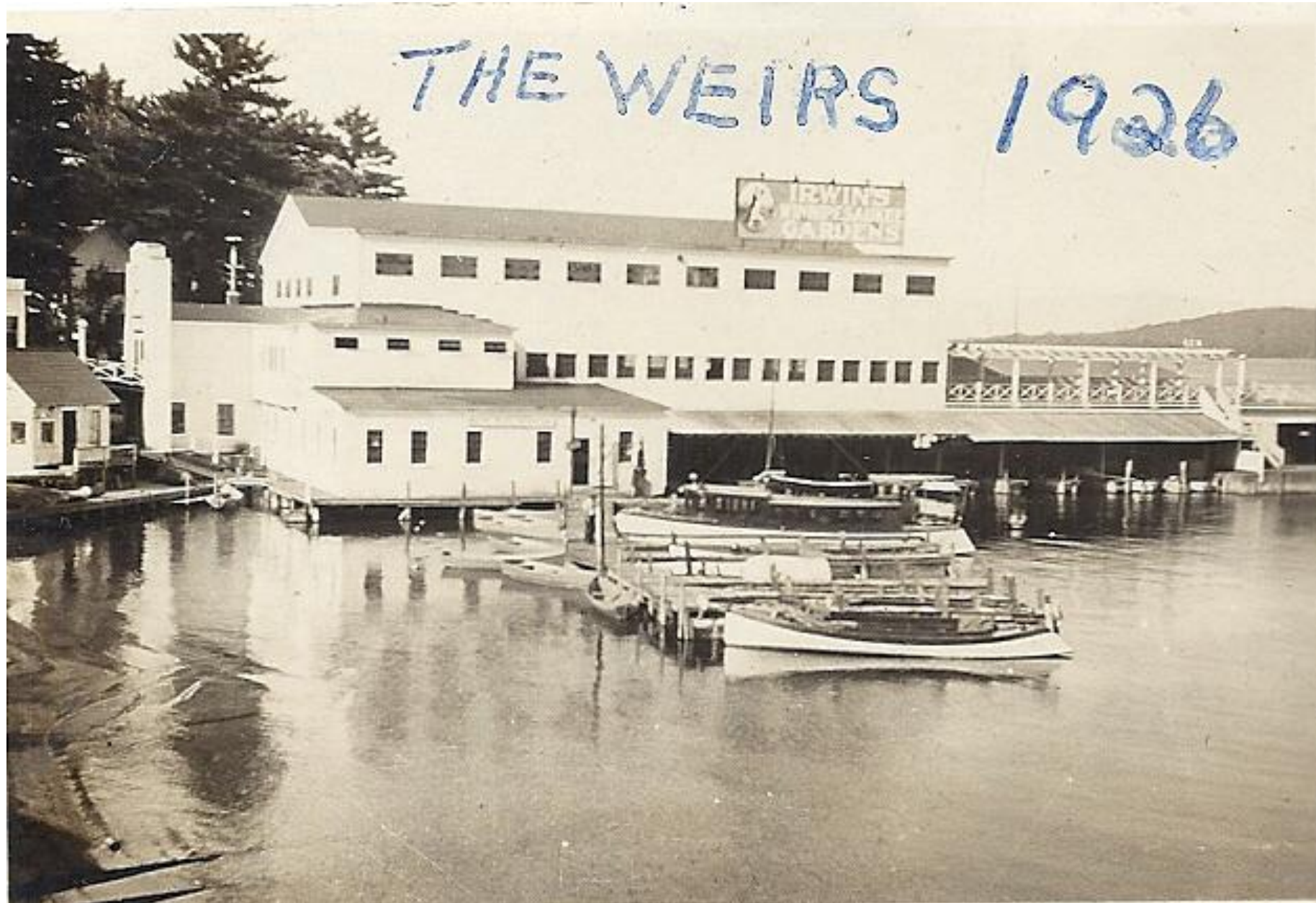
1927



The Bluebird Pavilion. Lemington. Vt. near Colebrook. N. H. on Conaan Road.

1927 Bluebird Pavilion, Colebrook, NH

Irwin Gardens at the Weirs on Lake Winnepesaukee, NH was a frequent venue for the band



## Holiday Dances Draw Big Crowds

### King Jazz and Buster Keating Furnish Music For Labor Day at Roseland

The holiday dances at Roseland Crystal ballroom opened Saturday evening with a good attendance, estimated at two hundred couples. Buster Keating and his jazz band of eleven pieces furnishing the music. Dancing was enjoyed until midnight with many added novelties by "Buster" and his orchestra.

At 12:01 Monday morning King Jazz and his eight-piece orchestra of Albany, N. Y., opened the Midnight Frolic. The Frolic was well patronized, well over 250 couples being on the dance floor. With the many novelties and lighting effects introduced by King Jazz, this band ranked as one of the best heard at Roseland this season.

Monday evening Buster Keating and his ten-piece band staged the ever popular "battle of music" with King Jazz and his eight-piece orchestra.

Approximately two hundred couples were on hand to dance and listen to the "battle." Although King Jazz furnished many novelties Buster Keating and his band drew more dancers and it looks as if the local orchestra was again victorious.

The Carnival Ball, the outstanding social event of the three-day carnival program, was held Friday evening in the town hall, which had been transformed for the occasion into a veritable ice palace. Many words of praise were heard for the decorations, consisting of a panorama of icebergs in blue and white frosted paper extending around all four walls of the hall and topped with a frieze of icicles, while thousands of snowflakes suspended from the ceiling in festoons added to the ice palace effect. The stage was remodeled in the semblance of an Eskimo igloo, with special suits for the members of Buster Keating's orchestra, which furnished music for the preliminary concert and for dancing which continued until one o'clock.

Buster Keating and his orchestra made a decided hit at the house party held by the Theta Chi at Norwich University. Buster Keating was using the same band that he had on Keith Albee vaudeville in Maine two weeks ago.

### Keating's At Weirs

Buster Keating and his orchestra played Friday night at the Winnetoes Garden at The Weirs, where they battled Ed. Murphy and his orchestra of Worcester, Mass., and made a decided hit with the dancers. Much credit is due the local orchestra in making the remarkable showing that it did against so strong an opponent. Buster has been booked for return dates at that ballroom.



King Brady, Chuck Bruce, Charles Dawson, Dave Lockard, Ben Bloomfield, Bud Parker, Norm Delorier  
Buster



1927

**Bud Parker, Trombone; King Brady, Tuba; Norm Deloria, Trumpet; Buster, Drums; Chuck Dawson, Violin; Ben Bloomfield, and Chuck Bruce, Reeds**

In 1926 he signed a contract with the Lake Sunapee Yacht Club to be the house orchestra during the summer seasons. Taking the name, The Yacht Club Orchestra, the band played at the Yacht Club until well into the 1940's.

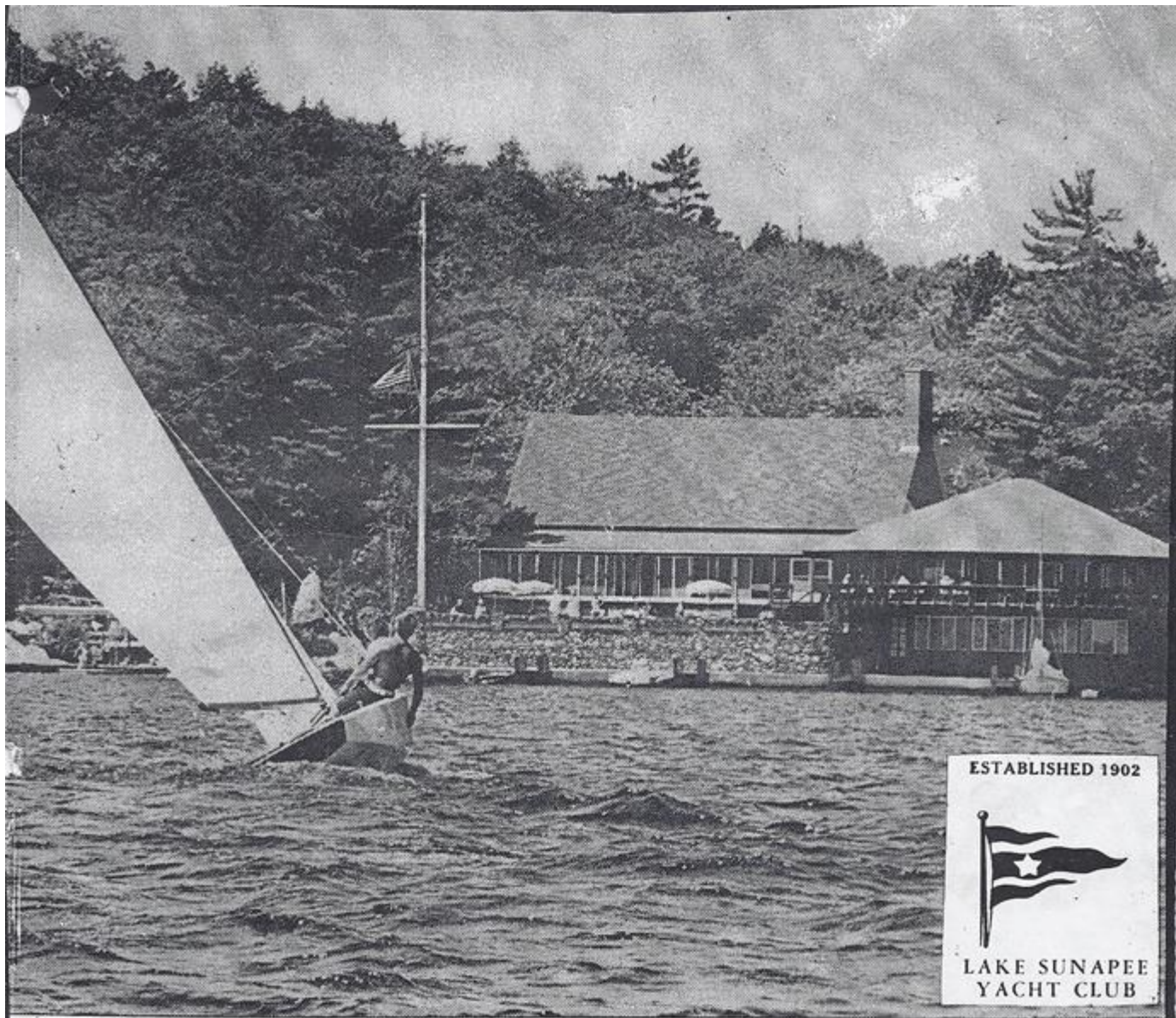


**Frank Cleary, Bennie Bloomfield, Burg Bourgoine, Charlie Angel  
Buster, Henry Montpas, Mac Rowell, Herb Whitcomb**

# 1927 Claremont Town Hall



**Bud Parker, Mac Rowell, Henry Montpas, John Richardson  
Capt. Bourgoine, Herb Whitcomb, Buster, John Angel, Ben Bloomfield**  
*(I believe Harold Bourgoine's nickname was "Burg" until he returned from World War II and acquired "Capt.")*



OVER ON HER PORT SIDE, this sailboat heads towards shore at the Lake Sunapee Yacht Club. Sail time at



In 1929 he went to New York City and auditioned for, and was awarded a contract with the United Fruit Company's White Fleet to play on one of their cruise ships. Before the contract could be executed, the Roaring 20's ended with the collapse of the stock market and the beginning of the "Great Depression".

The contract was cancelled, and the cruise ships never left the harbor.

To make ends meet he took a day job in the accounting department of Loft Candies on Long Island, New York, one of the largest candy makers of the day. However, he continued searching for music opportunities. At that time he contacted a good friend and former Claremonter, Joe Joy, a top-flight orchestra leader and in charge of recording a RCA Victor Records. With his help and contacts, he met New York musicians and the door was opened for him. He played in studio bands backing up recording sessions for major jazz stars and played at the Arthur Blyth Dance Studio. He canvassed the music publishing offices on Broadway and Tin Pan Alley. One way to get work was to go to the musician's union hiring halls for artist calls. He was hired by the Myer Davis Orchestra, a society orchestra, to play with a fourteen piece orchestra at the Caroline Country Club in White Plains, NY when he was first introduced to the 'big band sound.'

At around this time he contracted a serious case of strep throat, and was unable to work. Anna went to New York City and brought him back to Claremont to nurse him back to health. While he still wanted to pursue a career in music, he decided to get married and stay in Claremont, and the ongoing Depression persuaded him to enter a new career. He sold insurance for a couple of years, then bought out a small insurance agency. He and Anna moved into his parent's home on Trinity Street, and he began selling insurance from home.

He re-activated the Yacht Club Orchestra, focusing on summer jobs at the Lake Sunapee Yacht Club and became the house orchestra for the newly build Roseland Ballroom on Red Water Brook Road in Claremont. The band also became popular for high school proms.

# Roseland Pavilion



**Grand Opening!!**

of the New

**ROSELAND  
PAVILION**

at WEST CLAREMONT

**WEDNESDAY EVENING**

...JUNE 22nd... 1927

MUSIC BY

**Prince Kavanaugh's Orch.**

featuring J. PAUL ANTHONY

Souvenirs for Ladies Admission 75c a Person

- - Saturday, June 25 - -

**Buster Keating**

10 Men and His Orchestra 10 Men

The Most Popular Dance Band in This Section!

During the Second World War, many members of the band were drafted, requiring a re-building of the orchestra. Dancing and listening to big band music were very helpful in keeping morale up, and the band was very much in demand at Roseland and other dance halls.



The band adopted uniforms which resembled US Navy uniforms and many stages were decorated with military motifs.



Going to the Saturday night dance at Roseland was a major social event for many Claremonters. With so many men gone for the duration, many wives came alone to the dances, and it was not uncommon to see women dancing with each other. The dance floor was usually crowded for every dance.

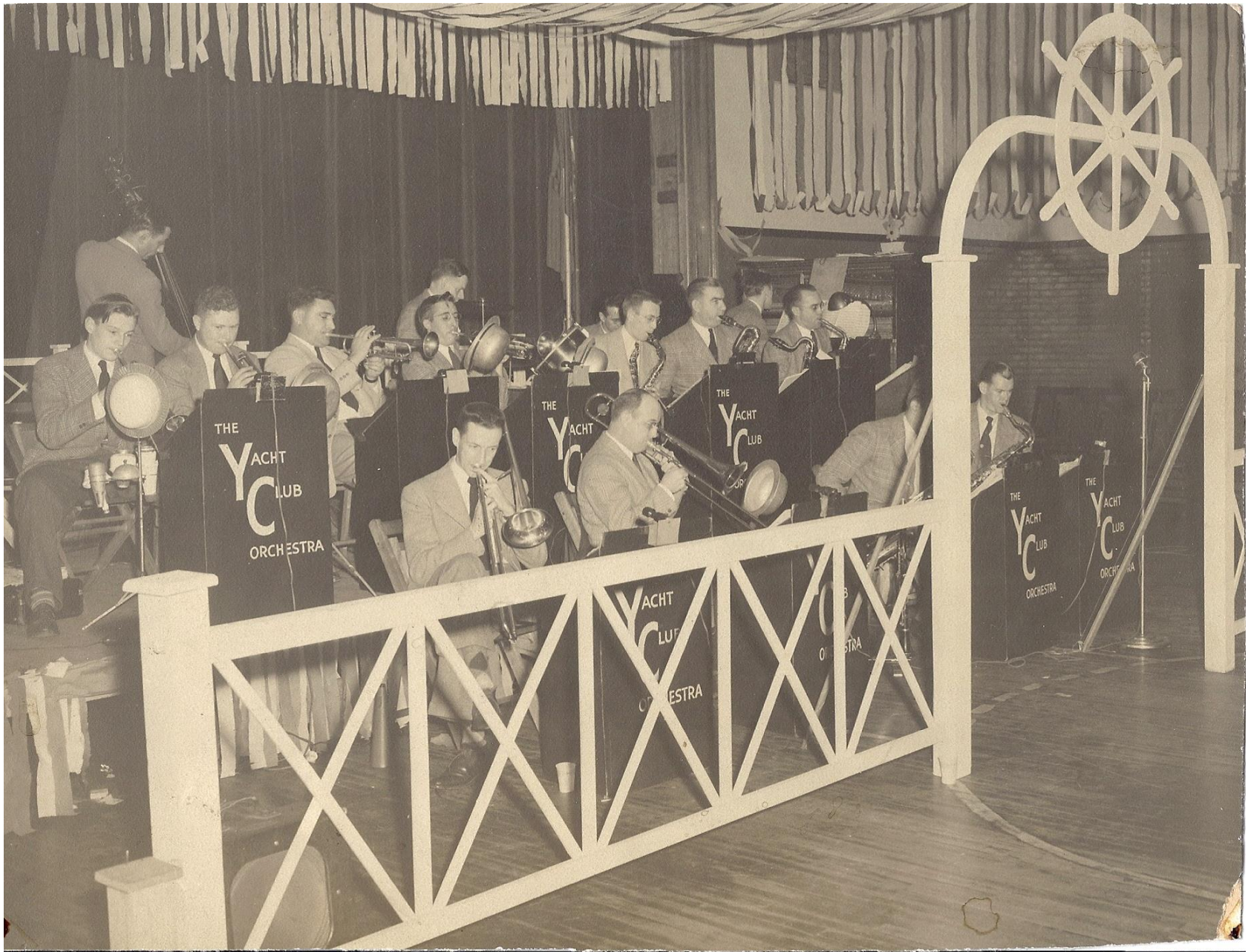
When the Yacht Club Orchestra was the featured band there would come a moment when the dancers would begin to shout, “Bus\_ter, An\_na, Bus\_ter, An\_na.” This would be the cue for Buster to leave the stage and dance with Anna. The crowd would clear a large space in the center of the floor to make room for them to dance. After they did a few turns, the others dances would applaud them and return to the floor to finish the dance with them.





1940

**Burt Gaudreau, Piano; Porter Dexter, Sax; Dick Bush, Bass; Bill Vaughn, Clarinet; Buster, Drums; Herb Whitcomb, Sax  
Vic Tardiff, Trumpet; Frank Bush, Sax; Laurie Bissonnette, Trumpet; Dick Keane, Sax; Bud Parker, Trumpet;  
Violet Melcher, Vocal**



On stage at the Stevens High School gym.





# WELCOME HOME VETS



Springfield and Windsor Vermont were heavily involved in defense contracting during the war. Morale boosting concerts were held on the factory floors.



With the end of the war, the demand for big band music began to diminish, and many organizations were forced to disband. Buster struggled to keep the Yacht Club Orchestra going as long as he could, but in 1947 he decided to retire from the music business. Buster quit the music business and devoted his full time to growing his highly successful insurance business. For a while other members of the band tried to keep the organization going, but with little success.

As big bands disappeared and dance halls were closed down (or in many cases burned down), many local musicians were forced to find full time employment in other industries. Yet their love for the music lead them to form small groups of four to six musicians to play together when they weren't working at their "day jobs". These groups were usually formed by a talented trumpeter, piano player, or other soloist who would then enlist a mix of other musicians who played the instruments that would round out the band's sound. Typical groups would consist of piano, drums and bass for backup, and one or two brass or reed players. Other bands would feature a vocalist.

During much of the 1900's membership in a club was a major part of a community's social life. There were the fraternal orders such as the Elks, Moose, and Masons, and there were ethnic clubs like the Polish/American Club, Italian/American Club or whatever other ethnic groups comprised enough members to start a club. There were also veteran's clubs like the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars. In addition, there were many bars and nightclubs in the surrounding communities.

Many of these clubs and bars had dance floors, and would hire these smaller bands to entertain their members on Friday or Saturday nights. Thus the music was kept alive. Other musicians, who didn't belong to a band or were not working on a particular night would often visit these clubs and bars to listen to their fellow musicians perform. It was quite common for members of the band to call up these musicians to "sit in" with the band on a few numbers throughout the evening.

If the guest musician played a brass or reed instrument, they usually carried it around with them and were always willing to augment the group. Piano players, drummers, and bass violin players were always willing to hand over their instrument to the guest and take a short break.

For many years after the Yacht Club Orchestra was disbanded younger musicians, many of whom had done time with Buster's bands, would call him up to the bandstand to sit in on a number or two. Everyone knew Buster Keating, and, to these young musicians, he was an icon.

As the popularity of this form of music grew, many clubs began to run charity concerts that were billed as "jam sessions" where several of the local bands would take part. Each would play a set, and then listen to the other groups do the same. These events would occur on a Sunday afternoon, and usually went on for hours. Many of the musicians would be called up to sit in with the other bands or to showcase a particular talent. Proceeds from ticket sales and drinks would be donated to the club's favorite charity. As an incentive to the musicians to participate they were usually admitted free and were given free or discounted drinks from the bar.

Most of these musical groups played the new jazz form that had evolved from the Big Band sound into less structured music in which the musicians often improvised around the theme of popular dance music. There were some groups that specialized in the music of specific ethnic groups. While the Polish/American Club in Claremont usually featured this form of jazz, the Polish Grange in Claremont's Lower Village featured Al Godek's Polka Band. (*I occasionally played drums in Al's band for the polka dancing*).

As the older musicians retired from music or died, the popular music culture turned more and more toward Rock 'n Roll. Slowly the little jazz groups started to dissolve until, by the late 1980's, they had all but vanished.

However, many of these old time musicians continued to be drawn together to reminisce about the good old days and play a few tunes to show that they still "had it". (See "*Clam Bakes*" to follow. )

## Yacht Club Orchestra Clam Bakes

In the early 1940's, Buster purchased his camp on Crescent Lake in Unity, NH.



Buster and Anna often used this place to entertain friends and band members. It became a tradition to have an annual Clam bake for members and alumni of the band.

Preparation for the Clam Bake started the day before the event when a large circle of stones was filled with wood and a great bonfire was built to heat the stones. In those days the Boston and Maine Railroad ran a train from Boston into the Claremont Depot, which was located off Pleasant Street on a site now occupied by LaValley Building Supply. Barrels of live lobsters and cases of steamer clams would arrive on the train, packed in fresh seaweed and heavily iced. Bushels of fresh corn on the cob we brought in from local farms. All this was hauled over the 10 mile, unpaved road from Claremont to Crescent Lake. Barrels of beer were placed in galvanized wash tubs and iced down to stay chilled during the hot summer days.

On the morning of the event the wives would be busy in the kitchen making clam chowder, rolls, and salads. The coals were raked from the fire, and seaweed was laid on the heated stones. Lobsters, clams, and corn on the cob were placed on the seaweed, and more seaweed covered it all. A large sheet of canvas, easily acquired from Claremont Paper Company, soaked in water, sealed everything to contain the heat. Meanwhile, Anna and some of the other wives busied themselves making a gigantic pot of clam chowder, homemade rolls and salads, and melting butter for the feast.



By noon everything was ready, and everyone would take their places at picnic tables laid with bright table clothes, silverware, and plenty of napkins.



?, Herb Whitcomb, Kaye Walker(rear), Arlene Whitcomb, Otis Vaughn, Polly Vaughn, Ray Keating, Donat Gagne(rear), Ted Allen, Frank Bush

In the mid 1940's Porter Dexter, Clarinet and Piano, purchased the camp next door. The clam bakes then alternated between the Dexter's and the Keating's camp, with activities usually floating between both camps. Porter's camp had a piano, so the necessity of importing a piano was eliminated. If the clam bake was at the Keating's, a few of the more rugged band members were enlisted to haul Porter's piano over there.

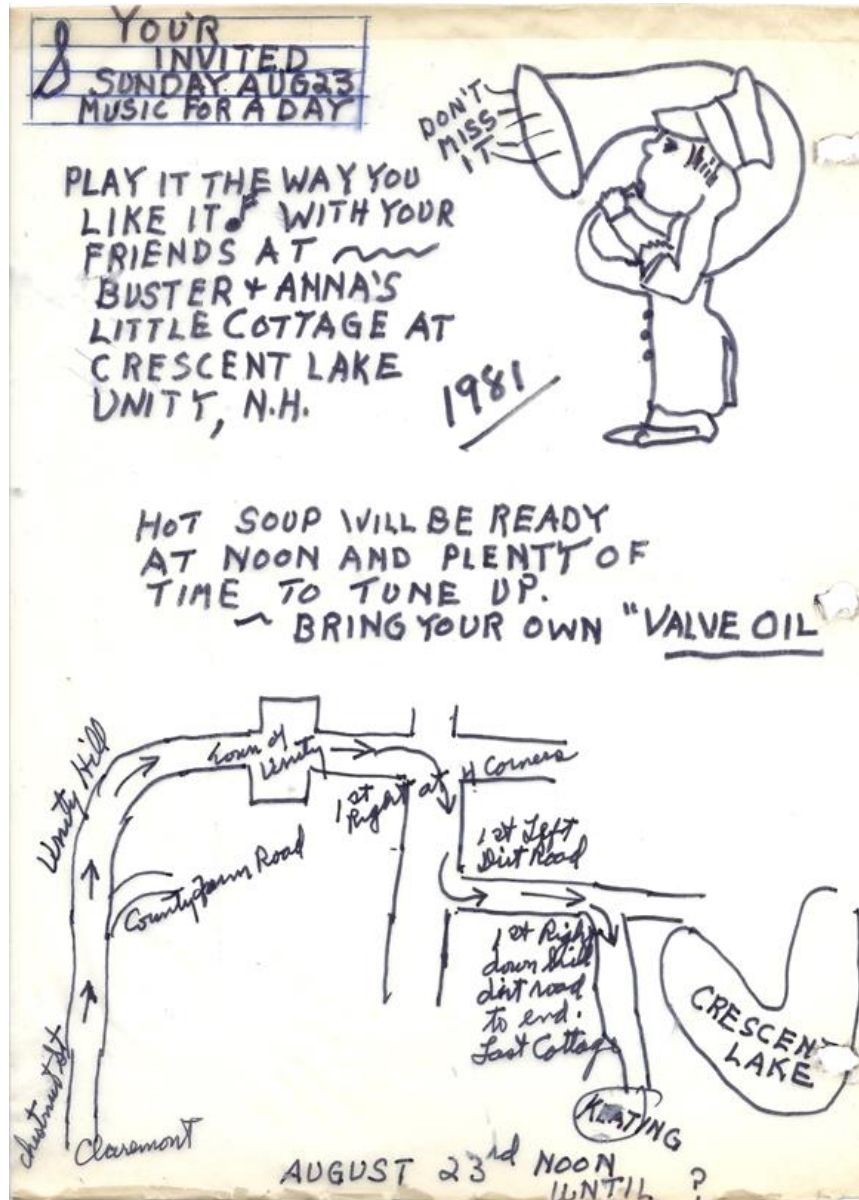


Maynard (Foxy) Walker (left) and Kaye, his wife (front right)  
Ted Allen is right behind Foxy; others are unknown.

*From the number of beer bottles on the table it looks like they didn't have a keg that year.*

## Reunion

Nearly 30 years after the disbanding of the Yacht Club Orchestra it was decided to have a reunion of Yacht Club Orchestra alumni and friends.



\*"Valve Oil" was the musician's equivalent of B.Y.O.B.



MUSIC THE WAY YOU LIKE IT !

AT... BUSTER + ANNA'S LITTLE COTTAGE  
CRESCENT LAKE - UNITY N.H.

SUNDAY AUG 22 1982

HOT SOUP WILL BE READY AT NOON

BRING YOUR OWN VALVE OIL *and*  
TUNE UP FOR ANOTHER *wavy line*

"MUSIC FOR A DAY"

AUG 22 - NOON - TIL ?

(SEE MAP ON BACK)

"DON'T MISS IT"

It was beautiful day, and the camp was decorated with memorabilia of days gone by.





1957  
Yacht club orch.



REMEMBER ?



Anna Shucking corn for the clambake.



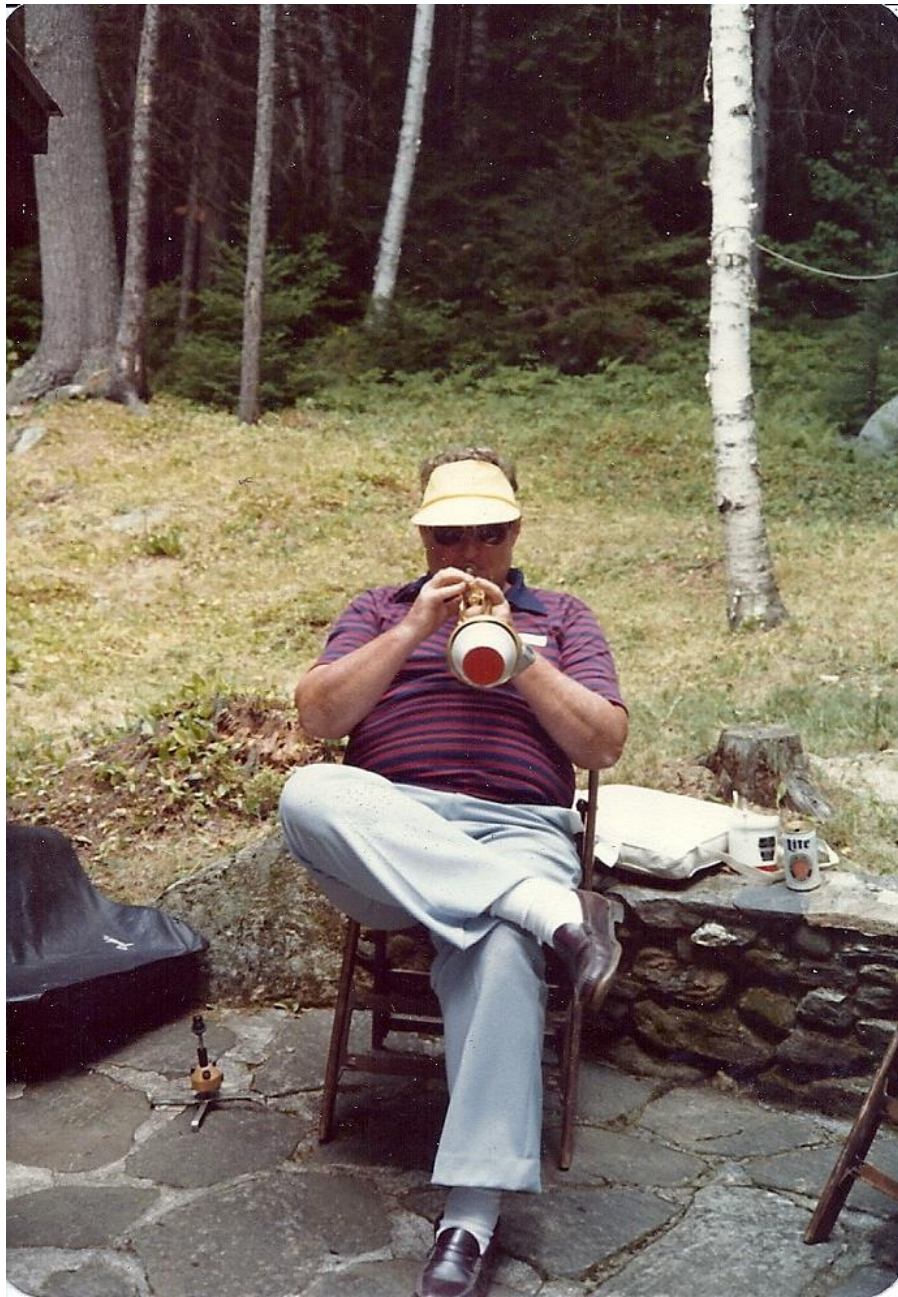
Anna's corn shucking complete, the terrace became a bandstand.







**Clockwise: Porter Dexter, Foxy Walker, Herb Whitcomb, Frank Bush, Buster**



**Andrew Hastings, Jr.**



**Millie Bissonette, Joe Bourgoine**



**Burt Martin, George Stevens, Lady Eve, John Angel**



**The Ensemble**



Mert Gregory, Lady Eve, George Stevens



**Frank Cleary, Burt Martin, Romas Bissonette**





**George Stevens, Laurie Bissonette**



**Clockwise: Mert Gregory(Guitar), Bert Gregory(Sitting this one out),Gil Pipen(Trumpet), Laurie Bissonnette(Flute), Charlie Dawson(Piano), Bert Bessie(Drums), Porter (Sitting this one out) & Ann Dexter**



**Pete Raymond on 'bone, Gill Pepin (hidden) on trumpet**

As usual, the wives sat it out.





**Herb Whitcomb, Foxy Walker, Kaye Walker, Ted Allen, Arlene Whitcomb**



Buster, Lady Eve & Don Whitcomb



**Doug Newton, Bert Martin, Porter Dexter, Buster, Herb Whitcomb**



Frank Cleary, Evelyn Cleary, Paavo & Frances Kangas





**Buster's still "got it"!**

**Buster and Porter Dexter**



**Ted Allen(Piano), Ray Keating(Drums),John Angel(Standing), Tom ?(seated), Porter Dexter(Clarinet), Foxy Walker(Sax), Herb Whitcomb(Sax), Frank Bush(Sax), Mert Gregory(Guitar)**



Donat Gagne & Bert Bessie



**Ted Allen**



Frank Cleary



Porter Dexter & Jo Bourgoine



**Buster at home with his great grandson, Tommy Griffiths**